Leadership for Learning: The Principal

and Instruction

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Dr. Karen R. Seashore

March, 2010

Dedication

The personal and professional growth that have gotten me to this place most definitely need to be acknowledged as well as all the people who have helped make this dream a reality. I began as a young professional looking to study administration and advance my career and knowledge in the world of educational policy and administration. Now after three years as an administrator and a beautiful and amazing daughter, I am reminded how very little I know. Pursuing my doctorate became a journey to discovery and understanding as well as an exercise in time management and prioritization.

Thank you to the University of Minnesota for allowing me this journey and providing the means to engage in the conversations and ask the questions that have brought me here. Thank you also to the excellent professors and my advisor for keeping the faith through the long process and helping me finish.

A specific thank you must be given to my family and especially my husband and daughter. I could not have done this without the unending love and support from Dave. You have dropped everything to support me through this process and been the stability for our family and for that I am ever grateful and hope I can continue to honor your unending commitment. Thank you Maiya for allowing mommy to finish this journey that was started before you were born. I am so excited to have more time to spend with you. My whole family has been extremely supportive throughout this process, from financial contributions, little encouragements, editing, and especially watching my daughter while I fought back the tears of guilt as I finished each step. Thank you to my Aunt MaryAnn and Uncle Wayne for your generosity which I am eternally grateful, and will honor throughout my career and in the future as I use my degree to make my contributions to

the field of education. My parents, Ron and Nancy have been so supportive and always encouraged me to do my best. Thank you for helping me to see the light at the end of the tunnel. My in-laws David and Gloria kept me motivated through the tough times. Thank you for your tireless support. To Reggie and Maria, my fellow cohort friends, who have been such supports throughout this entire journey. From the study sessions for written exams to preparation for my final defense, your words of encouragement and check in emails have given me the push to finish. I dedicate this final step in my journey to everyone who has supported me along the way. Thank you to everyone for your unending belief.

Abstract

Schools are faced with many challenges, with the most emphasis on increasing student performance. This challenge can only be grappled with in educational institutions with the help of the principal, who must take on the role of instructional leader.

The ability for principals to balance the management and instructional leadership practices is critical for the success of education now and in the future. The challenge is that instructional leadership cannot be easily defined and therefore enacted in schools. Instructional leadership practices vary from school to school and principal to principal. Due to this fact, there is much to be learned from the specific thoughts and processes of individual principals as they take on this challenge.

This research will look at the role of the elementary principal as an instructional leader. Through the process of interviewing twenty elementary principals in their first five years of being a principal, this research will illustrate the perspective of instructional leadership from the practitioners' point of view. Included in this investigation is how principals view instructional leadership in their settings as well as the behaviors they associate with it. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes. A grounded theory approach was utilized in the analysis to bring forth the prominent themes. Upon the themes, further analysis will be drawn and implications will be shared. There were four major findings from the study, which help to inform the field of education on instructional leadership. First, defining instructional leadership is a complex process and there is some evidence that suggests a perception of little formal training to help principals with this definition. Second, according to the principals interviewed, it takes more than the principal to lead instruction within the school. The principal alone

cannot undertake instructional leadership; it must be a collective effort. Third, accountability helps to inform practice and lead conversations to focus on individual learning. The pressure felt by principals affects how they use data to guide decisions and change efforts. Fourth, the principalship is highly reliant on relationships. In order to inform and change practice, which addresses instruction, principals must foster relationships with colleagues and staff.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

With the demands of No Child Left Behind, principals are being held accountable for student learning in their school. They are judged and given a report card rating as to how well they are meeting the adequate yearly progress goals for their school within each subgroup of students. NCLB holds states and districts accountable for student learning. Much of the immediate pressure is felt at the school level. This has resulted in a significant change in the role of the principal, according to some researchers. Previous years had principals responsible for assessing the quality of instruction through observation of teachers' practice; the current emphasis is on monitoring students' tested achievement (Holland, 2004). It is through this tested achievement that students are monitored for meeting adequate yearly progress. That adequate yearly progress is used to determine the learning of the students, and therefore the success of the school. When the school is shown to not be meeting adequate yearly progress, the principal is responsible for changing the practices and efforts to ensure that progress is met the following year. Changing practices includes looking at the instructional leadership a principal enacts in his setting.

The difficult task of looking at instructional leadership is that it is not easily defined. This fact is illustrated by the many interpretations of instructional leadership given by different researchers. Avila (1990) states that there is little consensus about a definition of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership has been described both narrowly and broadly (O'Donnell & White, 2005). The narrow view looks at the specific

activities that make up a separate component of the principal's responsibilities, while the broad view consists of all the activities that affect student learning. A middle ground approach can also be seen, which credits the specific activities that a principal does to help instruction and does not include the strictly managerial tasks, that do not have a direct connection to the students' learning. Even with an agreed upon definition of instructional leadership, the principalship is composed of complex tasks in instructional leadership as well as management. The principal needs to be able to balance the management role and the instructional leadership role. It is this balance that allows schools to effectively run and therefore students to learn. It is very easy for principals to get wrapped up in the management of the school day. How principals handle the balancing act between management and instructional leadership has an impact on the school and indirectly the students. Principals acting as managers without instructional leadership have limitations. Administrators who perform mostly managerial responsibilities have little involvement in classroom practices (Coldren & Spillane, 2007).

Being an effective instructional leader and manager takes a certain level of skill and is a highly individual aspect of the principalship. What factors influence the instructional leadership role of school principals? The experiences leading up to becoming a principal may have a large role in how effective instructional leadership strategies and skills are utilized within the organization. What types of leadership experiences has the principal engaged in prior to becoming a principal? Was there some

type of middle level leadership experience as a teacher leader, mentor, or coach? If so, did this inform the balance between instructional leadership and management?

Research Focus

Schools are faced with many challenges, with the most emphasis being placed on increasing student achievement. Student achievement can only improve with the help of the principal, who must take on the role of instructional leader. Principals' demands also include management tasks, which can consume most of the principals' time and efforts. Organizations will not be able to uphold the increased expectations and accountability measures without the instructional leadership commitment of school principals. The ability for principals to balance the management and instructional leadership practices is critical for the success of education now and in the future.

In addition to the balancing act between instructional leadership and management tasks, the uncertainty of how to define instructional leadership creates a challenge for principals. The variation of instructional leadership practices varies from school to school and principal to principal. Due to this fact, there is much to be learned from the specific thoughts and processes of individual principals as they take on this challenge. Included in this investigation is how principals view instructional leadership in their settings as well as the behaviors they associate with it. A reality for most principals is the complexities of the notion of a vision for instructional leadership practices and the actual instructional leadership behaviors in the school setting.

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Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors influencing the instructional leadership role of the PreK-12 principal in an urban setting. This study will address the following questions.

1) How do principals define instructional leadership in their setting?

2) What reflections do principals have about instructional leadership?

3) What formal training have principals received that has informed their instructional leadership practices?

4) What experiences have principals participated in that have informed their instructional leadership practices?

Definition of Terms

To help clarify the meaning of terms used throughout the research some definitions will be explained in this section. For the purpose of this paper and the following research, instructional leadership will be defined as: the decisions and actions that people (including but not limited to principals) make that affect teachers' instructional practice and therefore student learning. Examples of the actions include the following: observations (formal and informal), formal reviews, discussions, and staff development. Principal will be defined as the leader in charge of the school from a daily management and visionary standpoint. This person is hired by the district and approved by the school board to oversee the school and take on the responsibility for student success. In other words, while Assistant Principals have the title, they are subordinate to the actors that are the focus of this study.

Organization of this Study

Chapter one introduces this study including the research focus. Four questions serve as a framework for this research. A review of the literature around the topic of instructional leadership provides the focus for chapter two. Chapter three outlines the research methodology, while chapter four includes an examination and analysis of the results. The last chapter highlights the major findings of this research and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The formal role of school principal is a relatively recent introduction in U.S. education and was not widespread until the 1920's (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Since then, the role of school principal has evolved and responsibilities have been added. Today the vast amount of literature on leadership describes the principal's role as both manager and instructional leader. Both roles are commonly expected to be within a principal's expertise, but the two roles are, in reality, two distinctive but complimentary jobs. To identify the power and potential of principals, it is important to look at the differences between leadership and management.

This literature review will begin with an examination of the complexity of the term instructional leadership within the accountability movement. Then I will look at the current status of instructional leadership and management in schools. The management of the school is an essential part of the role of a principal and will be reviewed by looking at the principal's responsibility for staff observations and evaluations. While looking at the duality of management and leadership, I will bring insight into the context of the issue of instructional leaderships through the principal's role in building trust and establishing a culture of learning. As a final examination, I will investigate principal preparation. The above information will help to ground this review of literature and inform the research on principal's influence on instructional leadership and its impact of schools.

Instructional Leadership Defined

Most educators believe they understand the general concept of instructional leadership and what it might look like in practice. Instructional leadership is a term that has been increasingly bandied about in the last two decades as a means of identifying a break from the management focus that was previously prevalent. The term "instructional leadership" sounds worthy and supportive of student learning, but just what does it mean? Does it mean the same to everyone? According to Avila (1990) there is little consensus about a definition of instructional leadership (Avila, 1990). "Perhaps the major obstacle on the road to effective instructional leadership for principals is that it remains a construct which eludes exact definition" (Ginsberg, 1988, p. 77). It is, therefore, not surprising that principals who are asked to be instructional leaders are often unclear about what this might mean in practice.

Two views.

There have been two general approaches to defining instructional leadership in the past 30 years. The narrow view consisted of activities as a separate component of the principal's responsibilities. In contrast, the broad view consisted of all activities that affect student learning (O'Donnell & White, 2005). "Broad forms encompass organisational and teacher culture issues, where narrow forms restrict themselves to leadership which focuses only on teacher behaviors which enhance pupils' learning" (Southworth, 2002, p. 77). These two opposing views make it difficult to know how to engage in instructional leadership and just what that looks like.

An example of the narrow view is that of leadership content knowledge (Stein & Nelson, 2003). This content knowledge includes the knowledge of academic subjects used by administrators when they are functioning in the role of an instructional leader. Content knowledge includes the specific knowledge of a subject area, such as mathematics, how students learn the subject, and how the subject is taught. The focus on instruction through specific content knowledge is a very narrow view of how principals can affect the instructional quality of teachers. Knowing strong instruction when a principal sees it and being able to encourage strong instruction when they don't see it exemplifies the narrow approach to principals' influence as instructional leaders (Stein & Nelson, 2003). According to Stein and Nelson (2003), "Given their roles as both supporters and evaluators, administrators constitute a critical leverage point in the systemic improvement of instruction" (p. 425). Stein and Nelson (2003) continue their discussion on content knowledge to include nested learning communities, which include subject matter (content) at the center. Within the nested communities, principals can be seen to have both a leadership and teaching function with the teachers in order to provide instructional leadership to the organization (Stein & Nelson, 2003). The difficulty with the narrow view is the implication that instructional leadership is a separate set of activities that can be distinguished from other aspects of leadership. In the practicing principal's view, this neat segregation is unrealistic: activities that are designed to foster improved instruction may be hard to separate from other motives or initiatives related to school improvement. This view ignores the indirect effects that a principal can have on students' learning.

In contrast, the broad view may give credit to actions or activities that were never intended to impact student learning. Researchers have approached the definition of instructional leadership with this broad perspective. Leithwood and Duke (1998) view instructional leadership as a separate role orientation that focuses on the behaviors of teachers as they participate in activities that relate to the direct affect of student growth. Phil Hallinger, (1990) describes the principals' influence as the following, "The principal shapes the school's instructional climate and instructional organization through interaction with teachers and students, as well as through development of school policies and norms" (p. 11). This broad view encompasses everything that a principal does including policies and norms. "Under this new vision of leadership, principals guide school planning and decision making based on data and are keenly aware of the nature of instructional practice occurring in the school" (Janc & Appelbaum, 2004, p. 1). Jerry Patterson (1993) conducted a comprehensive study of the behaviors that characterize effective instructional leaders and reported on five. They include: providing a sense of vision, engaging in participatory management, supporting instruction, monitoring instruction, and being resourceful (Gupton, 2003). These patterns of behavior are not meant to be prescriptive but can be used as recommendations for school leaders to help ensure effective instructional leadership is happening in the school.

Instructional leadership is also broadly seen as a relationship according to some researchers who imply that the principal, because of interpersonal connections established with teachers, has an influence on what the instructional practice looks like. Spillane et al (2003) defines instructional leadership as, "an influence relationship that

motivates, enables, and supports teachers' efforts to learn about and change their instructional practice" (Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond, 2003, p. 1). Grogan and Andrews (2002) state that the leader is focused on building human capital in other leaders and students (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). These definitions imply that this process is not an isolated set of procedures that a teacher can perform to provide quality instruction. The engagement with other people to make the change is a key step in the process of improving instructional practice. This implication supports the notion that principals have a part in the process and are therefore vital for the improvement of instruction in schools. Along with this notion is the understanding that to truly improve this instruction, a principal must be skilled at influencing teachers in their instructional decisions. All of the above-mentioned researchers look at instructional leadership through the broad lens, incorporating all the things that principals are doing to help students be successful.

Middle ground view.

In addition to the narrow and broad definitions of instructional leadership, some researchers have taken more of a middle ground perspective. The middle ground includes both narrow and broad perspectives, with some definition and clarification to specific responsibilities that have a link to managing instruction. Acknowledging all of the activities principals perform that affect instructional leadership, while keeping those truly managerial activities separate signifies this middle ground. Robert Marzano's *School Leadership that Works* (2005) lists twenty-one responsibilities of the school leader derived from his review of the literature. Three of these responsibilities fit into the general category of instructional leadership: knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and

assessment; involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and

monitoring/evaluating. The two areas that deal with curriculum and instruction stress the

responsibility of the principal in the design and implementation, including a hands-on

approach to classroom practices, and the knowledge of best practice in the domains of

learning. Monitoring and evaluating have as their focus, creating a system for principals

to provide feedback on school practices and their impact on student learning (Marzano,

Waters, & Mcnulty, 2005). Another researcher, Jerry Patterson (1993), lists five

behavioral patterns of instructional leaders. Two of the five behavioral patterns describe

instructional leaders as supporting and monitoring instruction (Patterson, 1993). Patterson

found that leaders recognize that instruction facilitates student learning and are aware of

what is going on in the classroom. With these behaviors, leaders can have a good idea of

how teachers are teaching and therefore how students are learning. Marzano et al (2005)

and Patterson (1993) attempt to define in more specific terms the broad definition of

instructional leadership. Supporting and monitoring instruction, as mentioned by both

researchers, are broadly defined activities of the principal, but attempt to define more

narrowly which activities influence instruction. This research explains the middle ground

definition of what instructional leadership truly means for practicing principals.

Principal's interpretation of instructional leadership.

There is a broad range of ways that principals interpret instructional leadership.

Looking between buildings and districts shows the varieties of ways that instructional

leadership can be enacted. Teachers and other personnel in a school and district need to

have a common understanding of what instructional leadership looks like in order for

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them to actively participate and for the efforts to be successful. As Avila (1990) stated,

for principals to avoid miscommunication with both district superiors and staff within the

building, there must be a clear definition shared with the stakeholders in the building

(Avila, 1990). Prior to sharing the definition with all of the stakeholders, a principal must

know in his/her mind, what they want instructional leadership to look like and how the

instructional leadership will be enacted. How the principal understands quality teaching

will have an impact on instructional leadership and also impact the outcome. Another

factor is how the teacher receives the strategies of instructional leadership. At a

minimum, the principal must share his or her ideas of instructional leadership with the

teachers to help clarify intended goals. Principals also rely on standards to identify what

instructional leadership should look like.

Using standards to define instructional leadership.

Looking at a set of standards can help to define instructional leadership.

According to Gupton (2003) "Knowing and understanding standards for principals (i.e.,

standards for a principal's behavior, knowledge, and dispositions that are available

nationwide) is fundamental to being a responsible, effective school leader" (Gupton 2003

p. 31). What this means in practice may be understood best by examining how these are

played out in the rules and regulations governing the licensure of principals by states.

For example, like many states, the Minnesota K-12 principal competencies are

taken from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE),

which outlines twenty-one principal competencies. Demonstrations of the twenty-one

competencies must be presented to a panel in order to receive initial licensure. Of the

twenty- one competencies, three align with the middle ground definition of instructional leadership: Instruction and Learning Environment, Curriculum Design, and Staff Development. The Instruction and Learning Environment competency includes creating programs for the improvement of teaching and learning, recognizing the developmental needs of students in order to design positive learning experiences, and accommodating differences in cognition and achievement. The Curriculum Design competency includes understanding curriculum design models and the school district curricula, plan and implement with staff a framework for instruction, align curriculum outcomes, and adjust curriculum content as needed. The last competency, Staff Development includes supervising individuals and groups, providing feedback on performance, work with staff to plan, organize, and facilitate programs that improve effectiveness and are consistent with school goals and needs (http://cehd.umn.edu/EdPA/licensure/comp-prin.html).

Through these competencies a standard for what principals do that makes up instructional leadership has been made clearer. However, the standards can never encompass everything that a principal does as an instructional leader, or the expectations that others place on him or her on a daily basis. Standards simply serve as a guideline and comparison and do not take into account the context of the situation. Instructional leadership is not a widget being created, it is a collection of actions and decisions that changes an organization in order to provide positive experiences for students.

Working definition.

With the lack of clarity and common understanding, it is difficult to talk about instructional leadership and to know when it is effective and not effective. In order to

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bring clarity to this literature review, I will define the term instructional leadership as follows, based on finding a middle ground between the narrow and broad definitions cited above and taking into account the standards in place for principals' behavior: *Instructional leadership, for purposes of this review, is the decisions and actions that people (including but not limited to principals) make that affect teachers' instructional practice and therefore student learning. Examples of the actions include the following: observations (formal and informal), formal reviews, discussions, and staff development activities.* This will serve as a working definition for this paper and the following research.

Leadership and Management in "The Accountability Movement"

There are many ways in which leaders should perform their functions in an era of accountability. To begin to understand educational accountability and the leadership practices associated with accountability four approaches can be identified: market, decentralization, professional, and management (Leithwood, 2001). Many leadership practices must be called on by an accountability-oriented policy context. Through the four approaches listed above, principals are required to exhibit certain behaviors or enact policies to meet the needs of the students, staff, and parents. For example in the professional approach, principals need to create professional learning communities to help staff determine areas for continued professional growth and the means for providing the professional growth (Leithwood, 2001). Whatever policies and or measures of accountability a school faces, principals will always need to help teachers realize the balance between governmental policy demands and what the students actually need in

order to learn. Accountability policies can have negative consequences for students if proper planning and implementation are not utilized. The role of the teacher is to effectively enact policies in a way that is serving the best interest of the students (Leithwood, 2001).

As an important piece to the accountability movement, the changing role of the principal becomes vital for student/school/district success. According to Crow, Hausman, and Scribner (2002) the tension between change and continuity, creates the context in which the principal role is being reshaped (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002). " The changing nature of work and the larger society in which schools exist is affecting how principals enact their role and how they are being pressured to change that role" (Crow et al., 2002, p. 190). The other challenge for the principal is the rapidly changing environment, which must be addressed with a redefinition of the role of principal (Crow et al., 2002).

The accountability movement has progressed through expectations required by students, then teachers, and principals. These expectations show the breadth of educational expectations from high performance on graduation standards, to high curriculum and instruction standards, to high-level accountability in principal preparation (Gupton, 2003). Margaret Grogan and Richard Andrews (2002) state that a shortage of qualified principal candidates is due in part to the additional stress of meeting state benchmarks to keep accreditation in this current high stakes testing and accountability era. The added pressure is due in part to the current performance-based emphasis on education. Quality will be determined by what students know and do rather than the

grades they earn or the courses taken. This notion is in conflict with state and the national

government assessments for measuring student, school, district, and state achievement

(Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Expectations on the part of teachers, parents,

superintendents, and school board members have grown even as the policy makers have

expanded the responsibilities of the principalship (DiPaola & Tschannen- Moran, 2003).

Federal and state legislation places high expectations on schools to be accountable for

student achievement. Student achievement must be monitored by someone, most often

the principal, to ensure not only student improvement, but also alignment with national

and state achievement goals. Schools will continue to have increased accountability

demands for some time (Leithwood, 2001). Examining the increased expectations for

instructional leadership by the principal, through the added pressures of NCLB, and the

standards movement, will help define the accountability movement for principals.

Increased expectations for principals through No Child Left Behind

Legislation.

There is a trend that involves an increase in expectations for what the principal

does as an instructional leader. The role of the principal has become dramatically more

complex and overloaded in the past decade (Fullan, 2007). According to DiPaola and

Tschannen-Moran (2003), the role of the principal has been expanded to include

significant instructional leadership. This includes the pressure of high standards and the

individual needs of children with disabilities. Increased expectations and responsibilities

put added pressure on the principal, who is trying to run the school and ensure the

success of each student. "With the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation,

expectations for principals as instructional leaders have been ratcheted up even further"

(Janc & Appelbaum, 2004, p. 1). Carter and Klotz (1990) weigh in on this issue as well.

> As the public clamors for better schools, better curricula, better teachers, and
> better-educated students, the pressure weighs heavily on all educators, especially
> the principal. Principals are held accountable for boosting student achievement,
> and the eyes of America are trained on principals and their role as instructional
> leaders (p. 36).

Much of the current pressure to increase instructional leadership in schools is a direct consequence of the accountability movement that has gained traction and culminated in The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). According to Rorrer and Skrla (2000), NCLB legislation is based on the idea that accountability at the institutional level will improve the organization of schools, instructional practices, and outcomes of students on performance-based assessments (Rorrer & Skrla, 2000). To ground a discussion of the principal's role in NCLB, some basic foundations of the legislation need to be stated. NCLB requires that states meet minimum standard requirements in accordance with the state and federal government in terms of student achievement. States have assigned that responsibility to the districts, which then places the expectation on building principals. Principals must ensure that students achieve to the state standard level in math and reading in grades 3-8. If the pre-determined achievement level is not gained, the school is said to not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). High student participation in testing and high achievement are requirements. Failure to achieve participation requirements, also result in a school or district being placed on the AYP list.

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Principals must ensure that a high percentage of their students actually take the tests and achieve to the set standards. Further, district administrators and school principals must also hire and maintain highly qualified teachers in core academic subjects as well as highly qualified aids and paraprofessionals.

Knowing the basics of NCLB and what is now expected of principals leads to the specifics of how the principal must be accountable for student achievement. While NCLB holds states and districts to account for student learning, much of the immediate pressure has been felt at the school level, because it is schools that make or fail to make AYP. This pressure has resulted in a significant change in the role of the principal. Whereas in previous years, principals were responsible for assessing the quality of instruction through observation of teachers' practice, the current emphasis is on monitoring students' tested achievement (Holland, 2004). According to Holland, the role of principal as supervisor has changed to focus on monitoring student achievement on state standards rather than classroom observations. The principal is now more personally responsible for student achievement, which can determine the very survival of the school. Without success on the state standards, schools will go through a process of review and eventually closure if increasingly higher standards are not met. The principal is required to become involved in every aspect of the curriculum and instruction in order for the teachers and students to have the opportunity to achieve the high stakes goals set out by the state and national governments.

Mandates of NCLB can produce higher levels of student achievement, and staff schools with highly qualified teachers (O'Donnell & White, 2005) but not without

principal leadership helping to advance the efforts of the school and supporting the teachers. Coldren and Spillane (2007) support this assertion and state that the current climate in schools for high test performance and accountability require administrators to be involved in the leading of instructional improvement efforts. This push to engage administrators is one important way to ensure that students are learning and there is someone invested in the leadership of that effort. The role of the principal is to manage the structure of the school and include the academic structure into the plan for success.

According to Carnoy and Loeb (2002), the main measure that states use for gauging educational improvement is students' performance on tests (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002). State tests are generally administered once a year, and that single snapshot is what the state/ federal government deems as the indicator of student achievement. This data is then translated into numerous documents published for parents, students, teachers, and the broader community. Student achievement is ultimately the responsibility of the entire school, through the direction of the principal. This important and powerful responsibility for principals is a serious demand on their leadership.

Another factor of school-level accountability as it relates to student achievement involves the academic standards. The standards movement has heightened the concern of principals when it comes to student achievement. In the past, the performance of students, classes, and schools on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) had few consequences for schools. Administrators did not utilize results and a decline in scores often did not prompt any action. It was not until the 1980's that educators developed the notion of standards-based reform. This effort allowed accountability and assessment to be connected and a

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part of the administrators' action and concern (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002). "Leaders who serve as policy mediators in responsible and positive ways within a strong accountability environment, integrate accountability aims and components into school and district purposes and goals and align structures, policies, and practices to support increased academic performance of all students" (Rorrer & Skrla, 2000, p. 55). Accountability is a reality for the principal and one way to work towards success is to manage school resources and personnel.

Observation as Management Role

Managing personnel is a large part of the role of the principal, which affects instructional practice. The way that principals manage personnel is through observations and evaluations of teachers and staff. According to Holland (2004), the managerial values of a principal inform much of what a principal does. "The very job description of a principal is essentially based in this value that involves responsibility for overseeing the work done within the organization and for monitoring the quality of what that work produces" (Holland, 2004, p. 4).

According to Cotton (2003), principals of high achieving schools study their teachers' instructional approaches and follow up with feedback and mutual planning (Cotton, 2003). One of the most important predictors of student achievement is a regular visit to the classroom by principals. This is supported by research that states that frequent visits for instructional purposes are supportive of high performing, productive schools (Cotton, 2003). Robert Marzano (2005) states that one of the twenty-one responsibilities of principals is monitoring/evaluating. This responsibility includes two specific behaviors

and characteristics as found in Marzano's meta-analysis. The first is that the principal continually monitors the effectiveness of the school's curricular, instructional, and assessment practices. The second is that the principal is continually aware of the school's practices and their impact on student learning (Marzano et al., 2005). Walking by classrooms and being visible in the halls is consistent with the managerial value of oversight. Some teachers even view a supervisor's observation as little more than a cursory inspection (Holland, 2004). Any administrator's presence is viewed as formal evaluation and therefore managerial oversight.

What teachers usually see from principals in this respect is formal evaluations through classroom observations. One widely accepted method for guiding teacher evaluation is the Danielson model. Charlette Danielson (1996) created a framework for enhancing professional practice that many districts have adopted as their structure for teacher observations (Danielson, 1996). The framework is divided into four domains: planning and preparing, classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibility. These domains guide a principal to focus his/her observations on key skills teachers should exhibit in order to effectively teach their students. Through this process teachers receive direct feedback on their practice as well as develop individual goals for future lessons (Danielson, 1996). Principals must include this observation time in their schedules and make time to provide feedback after observations. High quality feedback to teachers helps ensure that successful, meaningful instruction is taking place in each classroom.

The perception of the observations can be varied and often depend on the relationship between the principal and the teacher as well as the established culture in the school. It is the role of the principal to ensure this type of management is a working part of the structure of the school. State requirements for observations of nontenured teachers exist to assist the principal and ensure quality education in the school. When teachers have completed their probationary years, the guidelines are not as defined. The district and state, as well as the vision and practice of the principal define how a principal continues to observe and evaluate teachers' performance.

Management and Instructional Leadership

The role of a principal is a complex mixture of managerial and instructional leadership. Management can be seen as the daily operations, which are the most directly observable functions in a school. A principal must oversee all aspects of the physical environment as well as the human beings, e.g. teachers, custodians, kitchen staff, parents, and community volunteers. Effective management of resources and personnel is of vital importance for meeting the goals of the school. Management tasks can be all consuming and often dominate a principal's day. Principals spend nearly all of their time on organizational maintenance and discipline (Cotton, 2003). The demands of management are great for principals (Timperley, 2006). Thomas Hoerr (2005) defines management as executing the vision, maintaining standards and working with employees (Hoerr, 2005). Leadership, as defined by Hoerr (2005) is creating the vision, working with people outside of the organization and providing inspiration. Both of these must work in conjunction for principals to effectively run an organization. Having a vision and

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executing it are two important aspects of leadership and management that help to ensure success. Providing inspiration to employees and then dealing and working with them day to day show again how important the leadership and management activities overlap and work together to help the school move forward. "Management values define ends as important considerations, whereas professional values define means for achieving desired ends" (Ervay, 2006b; Holland, 2004, pp. 12-13).

Leadership in teaching and learning.

In addition to the managerial functions of the principal, it has been proven that teachers require leadership in curriculum and instruction or teaching and learning (Ervay, 2006b). According to one of the six professional standards, identified by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, the principal should be:

an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (Officers, 1996, p. 2).

Coldren (2007) suggests that administrators can become more involved in instruction if they see themselves as instructional leaders in addition to the managerial responsibilities. This involvement in instruction will provide opportunities for principals to bridge the gap between what principals do and what teachers do (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). Stein and Nelson (2003) support this idea of becoming more involved with instruction with the concept of leadership content knowledge. This is defined as the administrators' understanding of subject matter and how it should be taught effectively (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Content knowledge includes being aware of how teachers learn

and effective ways of teaching teachers. Stein and Nelson (2003) state that as the role of the principal is removed from the classroom, the subject matter knowledge does not disappear or become more generic. What principals need to be knowledgeable about is the specific subject knowledge and how students learn it. Stein and Nelson (2003) challenge administrators at all levels to "be quite thoroughly grounded in one subject the way it is learned, the way it is taught, and ways to best support it from a leadership perspective" (Stein & Nelson, 2003, p. 443). Stein and Nelson (2003) continue that with the single subject knowledge (ie math, language arts, science, social studies, etc.) principals posses, there is a carry over to other subjects (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

Dual role of principal.

The dual role of management and instructional leadership has been in place since the first half of the 20th Century, where the role of the principal became associated with business management and instruction (G. Carter & Cunningham, 1997). By the late 1980's and early 1990's the building principal was conceptually known as the building manager and instructional leader (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). The 1990's introduced self-managing and governing schools, which led principals to become focused on efficient management tasks along with the professional direction for schools. The research on principals' impact on student results shows that the principals who know and are actively involved in their school's instructional programs have higher achieving students compared to those principals who just manage the noninstructional parts of their school (Cotton, 2003).

According to DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003), the balancing act between instructional leadership and management responsibilities creates an ongoing challenge for principals. What can end up happening is that the management tasks of the principal are more specific, and compliance becomes a high priority, while instructional leadership is neglected (DiPaola & Tschannen- Moran, 2003). Principals acting as managers without instructional leadership have limitations. "Administrators whose roles are defined primarily by their managerial responsibilities have few specified ways to be involved in the classroom practices" (Coldren & Spillane, 2007, p. 392). When principals are consumed with the managerial tasks, there is little time to practice instructional leadership. This can begin to form a cycle, which is hard to break because all of the principal's time is eaten up by management tasks. Ervay (2006) suggests that principals "create a decision making and action taking culture that separates managerial considerations from matters having to do with curriculum, instruction, and assessment of student learning" (p. 84).

The time involved in both instructional leadership and management roles are demanding and often pull principals in different directions. Research shows little time if any is spent with a focus on instructional leadership. The reality of the workday for a principal indicates that even for those principals who would like to be instructional leaders, there is no time to act in this way (Ginsberg, 1988). According to one principal, many years of experience as a principal have given her the ability to complete the management tasks of her job more efficiently so she can devote time to instructional leadership. Coldren (2007) states that the effectiveness of instructional leaders may have

something to do with tenure of the leader. The time it takes a principal to build up tenure allows for him or her to get a handle on the management side of the job, leaving more time for instructional leadership. For most principals, the real problem was the amount of time required for the job as well as the competing demands to complete other tasks (Timperley, 2006).

The Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI), a non profit organization that has worked with hundreds of school districts since 1991 to improve academic programs, suggests that districts recruit and prepare administrators who can take on both the role of manager and academic leader (Ervay, 2006b). The CLI requires their participants to think in terms of organizational dichotomy, with two distinct domains in a school that need to be considered separately for day to day operations, but work together for particular organizational goals. An example in the business sector is in the running of a hospital. The hospital administrator manages the workings of the hospital, and is usually not educated as a doctor. The chief of staff, the head doctor, runs the daily operations with the staff, including a form of instructional leadership (Ervay, 2006b). In education it is often the one principal who must be the manager and instructional leader.

"Someone who is inherently a good manager is not necessarily good at academics" (Ervay, 2006b). According to Ervay (2006), principals are often appointed because they have good management skills rather than academic or pedagogical skills. This structure has not been explored with much research, but there might prove to be an impact on the effectiveness of the principal as an instructional leader. What context a principal is leading in has a direct effect on the success.

Context of Leadership and Management

Since instructional leadership is not a tangible item, the contexts in which the decisions and actions are made play a very important role. Context is a driving factor when principals make decisions. "But to completely understand instructional leadership as a practice, we need to understand how leaders do what they do as well as the role of context in shaping what they do" (Coldren & Spillane, 2007, p. 372). "The ultimate test of a leaders' expertise is how well they know and understand themselves and the context—both organizational and people dimensions—in which they work" (Gupton 2005 p. 25). According to Hallinger (1990), there are two contexts that influence the principals' instructional leadership behavior: community and institutional (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1990). Features of the community context including social economic status of families, parental expectations, and homogeneity can serve to provide different opportunities of leadership. Institutional contexts include school and district size, special programming, staff experience and stability, level of school, and district support. All of the institutional contextual factors can shape the approach a principal takes in their instructional leadership efforts (Hallinger et al., 1990).

Situational.

In both the community and institutional contexts, principals must consider the situations in which they are faced and the specific needs of their students and teachers. Principals adapt to their organization and therefore change their thinking and behavior over time related to the context of which they work (Southworth, 2002). Southworth (2002) continues by stating that leadership is socially constructed, which suggests it

varies from setting to setting (Southworth, 2002). One widely accepted proposition about leadership as stated by Bolman and Deal (2003), is that "good leadership is situational: what works in one setting will not work in another" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 339). "Just as the appropriate leadership style is situational, definitions of instructional leadership may vary to allow principals to realistically meet the demands of the particular context within which they operate" (Avila, 1990, p. 53). Hersey's situational leadership model relates four levels of readiness to the four basic leadership styles. A leader would assess the readiness of the people he or she was working with (followers) and find where that readiness intersects with leadership behaviors. The point at which the two cross will determine the amount of task behavior and relationship behavior needed for the situation (Hersey, 1984). This prescriptive plan allows for the context of the situation to be considered in the process of leading.

Setting.

The setting in which a principal is leading plays a large part in the context of leadership. The actual implementation of instructional leadership looks different in each setting, whether it is an elementary, middle, or high school. Firestone and Herriot (1982) argue that elementary principals have more opportunity to be instructional leaders by influencing classroom management (Firestone & Herriott, 1982). The one variable that was statistically different at the elementary level over the secondary level was influence over classroom management, which is central to instructional leadership. Elementary teachers generally have more influence compared to secondary level teachers. Elementary schools have more of a shared sense of focus on basic skills, while secondary

schools find it difficult to come to consensus on goals because of the diversity of content taught in a building. Elementary schools require more of a general instructional leadership basis, as the teachers teach all subject areas to their students. Elementary teachers are trained to teach all areas and instructional methods are broad and inclusive. Instructional leadership at the elementary level is, therefore, geared more toward methods of instruction and strategies for helping students learn. A principal of a small elementary school has the ability to spend more time in the classrooms working directly with instruction and curriculum (Hallinger, 2003). At the secondary level, this instructional leadership shifts focus as the teachers are more attuned to a subject area with little knowledge of other subject areas (Firestone & Herriott, 1982).

Size.

An additional factor in the context discussion is that of the size of the school a principal is leading. For elementary schools the ideal number is 250-300 students, for secondary it is 600-700 students (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Most elementary schools are smaller than secondary schools, and the argument Firestone and Herriot (1982) make states that in smaller schools, the principal has more contact with the teachers than in secondary schools, where there is often one or more assistant principal making those contacts. Elementary principals are like the coach of a team, while secondary principals are the CEO of a corporation (Firestone & Herriott, 1982). Southworth (2002) assumes that principals of smaller schools have stronger direct influence than larger school principals (Southworth, 2002).

By contrast, in a study by Helen Marks and Susan Printy (2003), it was found that schools that had less leadership, in the form of transformational and shared leadership, were smaller schools where students were low achieving, poor, and contained a higher minority population. In the larger schools with a lower portion of the student body poor, minority, and lower achieving, the leadership was integrated (a balance of shared and transformational leadership) (Marks & Printy, 2003). These conclusions show a relationship -- schools that have a strong school performance have a higher level of integrated leadership, despite the number of students in the school. One caution to consider is in the study, the lower performing schools were either operating without a principal deliberately, they were in transition with leadership, or they had an established but ineffective principal. The instructional leadership present at these low performing schools came from the teachers (Marks & Printy, 2003). Interestingly, the smaller schools were lower performing and had lower leadership as defined by the research group. The implications are that the number of students and staff in a building do not play as big of a role as the leadership style or traits of the principal.

Culture

School culture is the one thing that is felt by teachers, parents, staff members, and especially the students. "Culture is an expression that tries to capture the informal, implicit-often unconscious - side of business of any human organization" (Deal, 1985, p. 605). Creating a culture that is rich in learning and fosters a love for learning is a difficult task. "Behind effective schools, like high-performing businesses, there is a strong culture that encourages productivity, high morale, confidence, and commitment" (Deal, 1985, p.

608). Culture is often defined differently in multiple contexts. According to Gruenert, (2005), culture is the way people do things and relate to each other. In Gruenert's study of the collaborative nature of schools' culture, culture is defined as, "guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that are evident, in they way a school operates" (p. 48).

"The local environment of any school represents a fluid set of variables and priorities that influence the work of educators and the efforts they make to improve that work" (Lee, 1991, p. 83). According to Deal (1985), "Understanding the symbols and culture of a school is a prerequisite to making the school more effective" (p. 602). The primary operating units in schools are the classrooms, where learning occurs. The perceptions of individuals are based on the shared values and symbols (Deal, 1985). "A strong performance is dependent on a cohesive culture- a set of shared values, that notice and shapes behavior inside the company and inspires commitment and loyalty from customers or clients" (Deal, 1985, p. 605). In the school setting the strong performance can be likened to student success. With a cohesive culture, a well-developed network of cultural players will be developed. Staff will begin to have a feeling of belonging and the students (customers) and clients (parents) will be positively influenced.

Collaboration.

"Elementary school cultures differ from high school cultures, and middle level schools are unique to both" (Gruenert, 2005, p. 48). The amount of collaboration appears to be more prevalent in the elementary schools. There is a stronger sense of professional community in the elementary schools compared to secondary schools, especially high schools (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). This is not to say that collaboration does not

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occur in the middle and high schools. The statement would support a closer look at collaboration in the elementary setting and what makes that effective. It is not argued that collaborative cultures seem to be the best setting for increased student achievement. The further question becomes how do the elementary schools foster their collaboration? One possibility is the staff development efforts by each of the different levels of school. Staff development efforts were successful where norms of collegiality and experimentation existed to foster the norms of collaboration. Leithwood (1998) cautioned people that culture might be responsible for stifling norms, assumptions, beliefs, and values that guide behavior. Due to this fact and other limitations, the culture in a school is a vital part of the success for students and staff.

Principals should not only perform the tasks related to coordination and evaluation of the educational system but also in relation to further developing the educational system via transformation of the school culture (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). There must be more to education than the teaching that any one teacher performs. It is a collective effort, as can be seen in any elementary school, where each teacher relies on the teacher before them to have taught the students the skills they need in order to be successful to advance to the next grade. In middle school and high school this interdependence is even greater as teachers teach based on curricular areas. The efforts of all the teachers in a grade must be combined to create the overall success of a student. The analogy that it takes a village to raise a child is especially true in this day when high stakes testing is determinant of a school's success.

Professional communities.

Research supports the concept of professional communities in schools. Bryk, Camburn, and Louis (1999) define professional community as, "schools in which interaction among teachers is frequent and teachers' actions are governed by shared norms focused on the practice and improvement of teaching and learning" (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999, p. 753). Bryk et. al (1999) state three core practices of professional communities including: 1) reflective dialogue; 2) deprivatization of practice; and 3) peer collaboration (Bryk et al., 1999). In addition to the three core practices, two additional practices must be present at a minimum level to ensure a school-wide professional community: 1) shared values, and 2) focus on student learning (Louis et al., 1996). What holds the communities together are the shared norms that are student learning focused and the shared responsibility for school improvement and operations (Bryk et al., 1999).

Professional communities must also have strong principal support. One form of support comes on the managerial side, allowing for time and resources to ensure the professional communities occur (Bryk et al., 1999). According to Louis et. al (1996), professional communities are strengthened by providing teachers with scheduled time for collaborative planning and including them in on key decision making (Louis et al., 1996). The involvement of principals with faculty members should be regular, but go beyond regular contact. Principal involvement should encourage teachers to be involved, to take risks, and to be innovative (Bryk et al., 1999). Creating a teacher culture of professional collaboration and professional learning is associated with schools becoming learning

organizations (Southworth, 2002). "When school leaders work towards establishing a collaborative, learning culture they simultaneously create the climatic conditions for instructional leadership because professional cultures characterized by openness, trust and security appear to be the one's where teachers feel confident to become learners" (Southworth, 2002, p. 89). The research of Bryk et. al (1999) suggests, "when professional structures and faculty norms are in place, a climate often develops in which faculty are encouraged to seek out and perhaps even try new ways of teaching" (Bryk et al., 1999, p. 771). The structural components of professional communities have received much attention, and Louis et al. (1996) state that creation of culture also has an impact on the professional community and deserves more research attention (Louis et al., 1996).

Principal's influence on culture.

Principals have an influence on schools in many ways including the culture of the school. According to Barnett (2004), principals influence school culture. Blase and Blase (1999) state that principals' effective instructional leadership is embedded into school culture.

For schools to be effective learning institutions, there needs to be a culture conducive to student learning. "Most studies of effective schools show that the principal plays a key role in how well students perform" (Deal, 1985, p. 611). The indirect influence on student learning comes through the culture that is created by the staff and students under the direction of the principal (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). The hierarchy starts with the principal who sets the expectations and then involves the staff and students in the process. Creating cultures of collaboration, inquiry, lifelong learning,

experimentation, and reflection all occurred in schools with principals who practiced effective instructional leadership (Blase & Blase, 1999). According to McCay (2001), "Principals must work to create an empowering learning community, focused on collaboration, reflection, and moral purpose" (McCay, Flora, Hamilton, & Riley, 2001, p. 135). Through this collaboration comes a development of leadership skills in the principal, as well as in others in order to impact the organization positively. Marks and Printy (2003) state, " Whereas the principal remains the educational leader of the school, teachers, who have requisite expertise or information, exercise leadership collaboratively with the principal" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 374). "Collegiality encourages positive interactions, atmosphere and rapport" (Butt & Retallick, 2002, p. 31). Principals are able to develop and nurture relationships and interactions that influence teacher and student performance (Rorrer & Skrla, 2000). Teachers reported on principal instructional leadership characteristics in two themes 1) talking with teachers to promote reflection and 2) promoting professional growth. These culture-building activities serve to help connect the staff to the principal and provide opportunities for shared decision-making (Blase & Blase, 1999). The relationship that principals have with staff is an important factor in how the school operates.

Principal and Teacher Relationship

The principal's influence plays a large role in the relationship between teacher and principal. One characteristic that fosters positive influence on teachers is the de-emphasis on principal control (Blase & Blase, 1999). Being a team member of the school rather than an isolated authority figure will allow for a more collaborative culture to be

developed (Janc & Appelbaum, 2004). The influence of the principal and his expectations for task-focused goals have been observed to promote task-focused instruction. When a principal can express task-focused goals and model those for teachers, there is a likely chance that teachers will transfer the goals into their own teaching and incorporate the goals into their teaching structure (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Influence can also be viewed as a power relationship between principal and teacher. Power can be seen as power 'over' which is the more authoritarian, top down influence and power 'with' which is a position that supports collaboration between principal and teacher. When a principal's power can be practiced as power with others rather than power over others, the influence a principal has is viewed by teachers as more supportive (Brunner, 2001). Power with implies a shared responsibility within the organization, which is a step away from authoritarian practices of leadership.

The relationship between teachers and principals is an important one and should be fostered carefully because there is an indirect relationship to the students and therefore to student learning. The leadership that a principal provides is characterized by the one-to-one relationship between the leaders and followers as a total group (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). No two teachers have the same perception of the leader, which makes this relationship difficult to study and intriguing to learn about.

Communication.

How principals and teachers interact and communicate affects the culture of the school and therefore affects how students feel about learning in that school and a particular classroom. The best way to combat this potential negative is for the principal to

have an individual relationship with each teacher. Personal relationships allow the principal to understand more about the individual concerns of the staff (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Richard Butt and John Retallick (2002) echo this notion of the importance of the teacher and principal relationship. "Administrator-teacher relationships in schools are clearly fundamental to the professional wellbeing and continued workplace learning of teachers" (Butt & Retallick, 2002, p. 31). Feeling like you belong and are a contributing member of the organization all help the organization to move forward. When the principal shares his vision with teachers, they are more likely to respond to that vision when the principal has an individual relationship with the teacher (Barnett & McCormick, 2004).

Shared leadership.

The relationship that principals have with teachers fosters a sense of shared leadership. Sharing the responsibility for the success of the organization is a large part of what helps establish effective schools. "As recent Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory research has shown principals who practice instructional and shared leadership are more able to create a positive school culture and sustain reform" (Janc & Appelbaum, 2004, p. 6). Sharing the leadership and taking advantage of the rich resources that are available at the school are two ways that principals positively influence school culture. Educational leaders must work with all of the stakeholders instead of managing them (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). "Shared instructional leadership involves the active collaboration of principal and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 371). If a principal decides to work against the stakeholders,

they run the risk of losing effectiveness in their leadership and therefore in the school. Terrance Deal (1985) remarks that, "A principal who fights the informal network usually loses. One who works with the cultural cast of characters can have a powerful effect on a school" (p. 618). Isolating himself as the authority figure does not seem to produce the type of culture that is productive and accepted by staff. Working with teachers as the instructional agent is much more effective than working against them.

Fostering a team approach seems to be the best way for principals to ensure that an effective culture of learning is being created. According to Leithwood (2004), a form of distributed leadership that is shared, collaborative, democratic, and participative is most beneficial when creating the culture of a school (Leithwood et al., 2004). There are six ways that principals can foster professional growth with their staff, as suggested by Blase and Blase (1999): 1) emphasize study of teaching and learning 2) supporting collaboration efforts among educators 3) developing coaching relationships among educators 4) encouraging and support in redesign of programs 5) applying principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development 6) implementing action research to inform instruction decision making (p. 135).

Setting directions, according to Leithwood et al (2004), is a set of practices that help staff develop a shared understanding of the organization and its purpose. Realizing the importance of the teachers and their knowledge base helps to foster a culture of learning that is central to the students. "Teachers are key," and evidence suggests, "their pedagogical content knowledge (knowing about how to teach particular subject matter content) is central to their effectiveness" (Leithwood et al., 2004, pp. 10-11). McCay,

Flora, Hamilton, and Riley (2001) stated, "Innovation in curriculum and instruction will be directed not by the principal alone but by multiple work teams in which new forms of experience and learning community driven results are dominant" (p. 136).

Trust

The culture of a school is highly affected by the trust felt in and outside of the organization, with the principal being a large part of the trust-building endeavor. Trust is a vital element in organizations that are high functioning (Tschannen- Moran, 2000). How trust is defined and what it looks like will help to gain a better understanding of the concept. There is a lack of a clear definition of trust because it is a complex concept, states Tschannen and Hoy (1997). There are many factors that trust is based on and the fact that it can vary depending on the different kinds of relationships it is in accordance with, makes the definition hard to pinpoint (Tschannen- Moran & Hoy, 1997). "Trust is a dynamic phenomenon that takes on different characteristics at different stages of a relationship" (Tschannen- Moran & Hoy, 1997, p. 337). Tschannen And Hoy (1997) attempt to define trust as "a general confidence and overall optimism in occurring events; it is believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1997, p. 342).

Types of trust.

There are different types of trust, which makes understanding what trust is in schools challenging. Byrk and Schneider (2002) talk about three types of trust: organic, contractual, and relational. Of the three types according to Bryk (2002), relational trust is the most appropriate for school, especially since the focus of schools is on the technical

instruction. "Relational trust includes the social exchanges of schooling as organized around a distinct set of role relationships: teachers with students, teachers with other teachers, teachers with parents and their school principal" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 20). The effective-schools research points to the importance of social relationships. In schools, as in other organizations, where a dichotomy of organizational authority (principal) and subordinates (teachers) exists, there is the potential for mistrust between teachers and principals. Trust would ensure that the opportunities for joint outcomes would prevail (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). "Fostering an atmosphere of trust pays significant dividends for schools" (Tschannen- Moran, 2000, p. 314).

Relational trust.

Looking closer at relational trust can help clarify trust in schools. Relational trust is built on four considerations: respect, personal regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity. "Relational trust is grounded in the social respect that comes from the kinds of social discourse that take place across the school community" (Bryk & Schneider, 2004, p. 42). According to Tschannen and Hoy (1997),

> Relationships within organizations tend to be ongoing, in that people expect to continue to relate to the same network of people over time. When this is the case, there is incentive to behave in ways that are trustworthy, to develop a reputation for trustworthiness, and to reap the benefits of trusting relationships (p. 334).

Social respect in the form of trust can be very powerful to an organization. There is a dependence that is formed in the school organization. The principal must depend on a cohesive working staff; in turn the teachers' work depends on the building principal.

There is mutual vulnerability between players in a school. Strong relational trust makes it more likely that reform initiatives will diffuse broadly across the school because trust reduces the sense of risk associated with change (Bryk & Schneider, 2004). All staff members and administrators feel the positive benefits of trust within a school. As trust is fostered, the feeling of belonging increases. Staff members are more likely to share ideas with their colleagues, and therefore, have a direct impact on teaching and learning. Trust must be enacted consistently and in day-to-day social exchanges. Tschannen (2004) supports this idea and states that the work of schools is through relationships.

Principals' role in trust building.

Trust is not an easy thing to build and practice. Edward Deming, considered the founder of Total Quality Management, aligned effective leadership with fourteen principles that pertained to all organizations. Those fourteen principles have been organized by Waldman into five basic factors to help define the specific actions of an effective leader (Marzano et al., 2005). One of the five basic factors is trust building. This is described as, "the process of establishing respect and instilling faith into followers based on leader integrity, honesty, and openness" (Sosik & Dionne 1997 as cited in Marzano, Waters et al. 2005 p. 16). According to Tschannen-Moran (2000), building trust requires five facets of trust including: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness (Tschannen- Moran, 2000). The principal has a key role in developing this relational trust through respect and personal regard (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). According to Tschannen and Hoy (1997), the behavior of the principal determines the trust in the principal. Interestingly, Tschannen and Hoy (1997) found that the trust that faculty have

with each other is determined by the behavior of the faculty, and the principal has little influence on the trust that teachers have with each other. The authenticity of the principal was found to be correlated with the trust in the principal, as well as teacher authenticity being correlated with trust in colleagues (Tschannen- Moran & Hoy, 1997). Trust is established by the leaders' actions each day and their interactions with their employees including knowing the employees' concerns, motivators, and conditions to effectively operate in the organization (Marzano et al., 2005).

According to Ruff (2005), it is easier for experienced principals to build trust and sustain a productive culture, indicating that a level of knowledge and experience is needed. By using team building, a principal can help to show the school that everyone's opinion is valued (Ruff & Shoho, 2005). Shared decision-making contexts must work within an established climate of trust for the efforts to be effective. Principals need a high degree of emotional intelligence, a common characteristic of all effective leaders. Practical intelligence, a component of emotional intelligence, is the ability to effectively select, adapt to, and shape the environment. Understanding needs and emotions is crucial to being an effective leader and to controlling one's own emotions. Withholding judgment before acting helps enable principals to build a culture of trust with their staff (Hausman, Crow, & Sperry, 2000).

With increased trust between teachers and administrators, there is an increased positive effect on climate (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Establishing an atmosphere of trust is an outcome that is created by constructing a climate, which supports collaboration. Collaboration will not be obtained authentically without the trust of one

another (Tschannen- Moran, 2000). Looking further at relationships can help to provide more information into the organization.

Relationships.

Wheatly (1996) states that relationships are the pathways to the intelligence of the system. "None of us exists independently of our relationships with others" (p. 35). It is the duty of the principal to help provide opportunities for staff to build relationships. Further, a large part of the role of the principal is to foster meaningful relationships between principal and teacher. By building on relationships a critical high level of trust can be formed. One way to enhance trust is to move towards self-organization. Leaders are an essential part of this process. "Employees earn trust, but leaders create the circumstances in which such trust can be earned" (Wheatley, 1996, p. 7). Thinking about earning trust is realistic because trust cannot be given. The situations and circumstances of day-to-day life, foster trust or mistrust. The principal's role in this process is an important one, often the deciding factor in the direction of the organization. Trust cannot be forced on staff members. The true key to fostering trust is the guidance and encouragement of the building principal allowing for the exercise of initiative. According to Louis (2007) "teachers' trust in administrators is based on behaviors (caring, concern, respectfulness) and administrative competence and reliability in initiating and orchestrating a complex change"(Louis, 2007, pp. 17-18). Louis (2007) continues to state that daily relations with teachers helps to provide trust by inspiring confidence in administrators (Louis, 2007). "Teachers are not passive actors in the school, but co-constructors of trust"(Louis, 2007, p. 18).

Building and maintaining the trust of teachers and staff members in schools is difficult, but principals can do this through building one-to-one relationships with staff, students, and families. Principals, by nature of their role, are in the middle of the relationship between teachers and external ideas and people (Fullan, 2007). This can be difficult because of the teacher-principal hierarchical structure. In order for trust to be built, both the teacher and principal should "understand the curriculum and its social and hidden messages" (Kanpol & Weisz, 1990, p. 17). The responsibility lies with the principal to build and sustain trusting relationships. The trusting relationships are crucial for shaping trust across the entire organization (Fullan, 2007). Effective leadership is comprised of 21 key areas of responsibility according to Waters et al (2004), with relationships and communication being two of the key areas. These two areas combined help to build trust with teachers (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004).

Connected Role Between Principal and Teachers

Administrators and teachers have a connected role in providing quality education for students. "Administrators can be seen as playing a role, with teachers, in communities of practice centered around instruction; and teachers can be seen as playing a role, with administrators, in school or district-based communities of practice centered around leadership for instruction" (Firestone & Riehl, 2005, p. 50). It is through this understanding that both teachers and principals can become cognizant of their connected roles. Principals must build on the collective efforts of all the teachers and provide multiple opportunities for teachers to see the connections and build those into their daily structures and lessons for students. Another way that principals can help to bridge the gap

is to participate in professional development activities with teachers. This will foster a shared understanding between teachers and principals and help both groups engage in meaningful dialogue about instructional practice (Prestine & Nelson, 2005).

"For administrators to engage in instructional leadership and connect what they do to what teachers do, they must find ways to span the boundary between them" (Coldren & Spillane, 2007, p. 392). It would seem that there is a potential disconnect in the minds of teachers and principals when it comes to working together on increasing student achievement. If both parties do not see their roles as connected, there would be limited impact on the organization as well the students. According to Coldren (2007), principals must find ways to make connections between what teachers do and what they as principals do to ensure that students are learning. "For administrators to become more involved in instruction, they need to see themselves as instructional leaders in addition to their usual managerial responsibilities and find ways to bridge the gap between what they do and what teachers do" (Coldren & Spillane, 2007, p. 392).

There often is a misunderstanding or lack of knowledge when it comes to teachers' perception of what the principal's role in instructional leadership truly looks like. The overall perspective that each group takes as they go through the motions of their job can create this misunderstanding. The principal's view is through the organization as a part of the district. The teachers' perspective is through their individual classroom as a part of the school. These are two distinctive views of education with the similar goal to ensure that students are learning and are prepared for the next year as well as the life ahead of them.

Connection Among Principals

Principals can connect with other principals and learn a lot from each other when it comes to instructional leadership. Southworth (2002) suggests that principals can benefit from group and one-on-one activities that deepen the knowledge and understanding of their context (Southworth, 2002). The definition of a principal's job is truly personal and has a unique look in every school, but there is always something to be learned from another perspective. "The perception of practicing principals of the tasks that comprise instructional leadership on a daily basis give a realism to the definition-seeking process that input from the staff, superiors, and the literature fails to supply" (Avila, 1990, p. 54). The personal decision of what type of a leader a principal will be, including the person's instructional leadership goals, will help to provide clarity for staff and help produce and support instructional leadership. Timperley (2006) states that leading for learning is to reclaim the professional role of principals. This opinion is biased on the common impression that professionalism has been lost. Some would support this view as they spend the majority of their day looking at the structure/function and management of the organization rather than focusing on the learning goals of the students.

Principal Preparation

There are two roles the principal must perform, management and leadership. One would expect that the training of principals would include theory, skills, and knowledge in both areas. In general, the traditional emphasis of preparation programs has been on management. According to Grogan and Andrews (2002), changes in the nature of

principal preparation programs have been slow to follow conceptual changes in the actual

work of the principal (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Southworth (2002) weighs in on the

issue of leadership development and suggests that principal preparation programs include

knowledge and understanding of curricula, pedagogy, and students and staff, along with

the technical knowledge about management and leadership processes. Utilizing the actual

contexts of schools and making the work experience the content of principals'

professional learning, will help to strengthen all principals' skills (Southworth, 2002).

The research on instructional leadership shows considerable variation on the

meaning of instructional leadership and what that looks like in a school. With differing

opinions of instructional leadership, how have principals been trained in this skill? Can it

be assumed that anyone working towards an administrative license has mastered the

components of instructional leadership during their prior experiences and, therefore, does

not need to receive further training in this domain? This area needs to be explored further

and could provide insight into how well current administrators have been prepared to take

on the role of instructional leader as well as manager.

Training.

The training that principals acquire in graduate school may not be all inclusive of

what they need in order to be an effective instructional leader. This would imply that

what is currently being done in terms of preparing principals is not helping to produce

effective leaders. Rallis and Highsmith (1986) concluded that management training for

principals is more prevalent and the school's needs for instructional leadership are not

being met by principals (Rallis & Highsmith, 1986).

An example of what principal training includes is stated by Ginsberg, (1988) "Currently, in states across America, potential principals accumulate a certain number of university credit hours before being awarded certification" (p. 77). The implication is that accumulating credit hours does not provide all of the needed knowledge and skills. More recently, according to Fullan (2007), "The capacity to be a good leader requires understanding and skills beyond the preparation and in-service development experiences of most principals"(p. 168). In most states certification requires at least 30 credit hours and a clinical experience. Credits are accumulated in similar courses from institution to institution and include such classes as, finance, law, supervision, principalship, and personal administration.

The collection of courses most universities offer does not seem to be adequately preparing administrators for the reality of the job as well as how to be an effective instructional leader. By recommendation of Grogan and Andrews (2002), the self-contained courses that make up most administration programs need to be rethought (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Arthur Levine led a study that looked at administrator preparation programs from around the country. The study concluded that most programs had little connection to the reality of running a school or district and were "little more than a grab-bag of survey courses" (Schmoker, 2006, p. 160). Rallis and Highsmith (1986) conclude, the training most principals receive is in administration, not teaching or curriculum or philosophy of education. This leaves principals unprepared to lead instruction in their buildings (Rallis & Highsmith, 1986). The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) recommended that 300

universities stop preparing principals (Ginsberg, 1988). Ginsberg (1988) states, "Even if

we accept broad definitions of the concept of instructional leadership, the training

programs only tangentially prepare future administrators for it" (p. 78). The National

Policy Board for Educational Administrators' reported in, *Improving the Preparation of*

School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform, that the 500 graduate administrative

programs were performing mediocre, irrelevant, outdated and unchallenging curricula (C.

Carter & Klotz, 1990). The Board made a recommendation for curricula to have a

common core of knowledge and skills that all administrators must have. This puts

principal preparation programs in a uniquely powerful position. This position allows

programs to alter expectations and current practice to affect teachers and leaders

(Schmoker, 2006).

The status of principals' instructional leadership is still inadequate today due to

many factors that do not prepare principals for the task. Graduate programs fail to include

skills associated with instructional leadership (Ginsberg, 1988). No formal training in

instructional leadership, along with the lack of curriculum and instruction knowledge,

creates a difficult situation for future administrators. In support of more specific

curriculum knowledge and training, Kanpol (1990) states, "A leader cannot effect

instructional change without understanding the kinds of content and meanings conveyed

to students" (p. 16).

There is much more to the relationship between the curriculum and the principal

than was first thought. Research states there are different types of curricula, which create

a complexity for learning about instruction. Kanpol and Weisz (1990) identify four

different types of curriculum: pragmatic, masked, overt, and hidden. The pragmatic curriculum deals with what is taught as a function of the time available. Masked curriculum is intended curriculum taught in non-traditional ways. Overt curriculum is the specific academic material, and the hidden curriculum is the implicit or unstated assumptions. With all of these areas as a part of instruction, it is extremely difficult to come up with a method for teaching principals (Kanpol & Weisz, 1990).

For principals to lead the school effectively they need to know the curriculum and understand how it works at all levels. "The heart of effective leadership lies with the understanding of the curriculum. Concurrently, the justification in understanding curriculum lies at the very core of what school is all about" (Kanpol & Weisz, 1990, p. 17). This level of understanding is the indirect way that principals have an effect on student achievement. The indirect link goes through teachers' instruction to the students. Knowing the curriculum, will aid in the principal's instructional planning and overall leadership of the school.

Conclusion

The question of whether principals have the necessary training to take on the added role of instructional leader remains unanswered. It cannot be assumed that a principal has had extensive teaching experience; therefore the teaching and learning background will vary depending on the principal. Some principals are entering into unknown territory when it comes to curriculum and instruction. There is no requirement that signifies a principal must have been an excellent teacher. According to Ginsberg (1988), "there is no evidence to suggest that principals are required to be particularly

effective as master teachers, so it is reasonable to assume that instructional leadership is ignored as well" (p. 78). In fact the teaching skills are often not even considered when principal candidates receive their licensure. Many principals were trained as teachers, but may or may not have had a focus on instruction. Many also have limited formal principal preparation to be a leader of instruction. It is arguable that some professions and experiences will better prepare a principal to take on this instructional leadership role. The interesting thing is, it appears that strong instructional leadership skills are not considered when hiring principals. Despite all of the talk about instructional leadership, the hiring decisions do not reflect this (Ginsberg, 1988).

There is no single vision for the meaning of instructional leadership and no single set of characteristics for what instructional leadership looks like in specific organizations. Every school and every principal is unique, and no two principals would need the same instructional leadership strategies. Because schools are dynamic organizations in a constant flux, pinpointing just exactly what effective instructional leadership should look like over time is a difficult task even in a single building. Within the preceding stated research, were many intriguing ideas, including the balance that principals must strike between management and instructional leadership, culture building, and creating trusting organizations. The research suggests that balance between management and instructional leadership is most essential for an effective organization to function and for students to learn.

"Effective" or "Successful" leadership is critical to school reform (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 2). The pressures that are felt through the No Child Left Behind legislation

serve to put principals and schools under scrutiny. When Adequate Yearly Progress is not made, schools must look within in order to come up with a plan to raise student achievement. "Public dissatisfaction with American schools and the students they produce is increasing, and principals are under greater pressure than ever before" (C. Carter & Klotz, 1990, p. 36). There is no disagreement within the research; instructional leadership by the principal is vital to student learning. What remains unclear is how leadership plays out in individual schools and how principals gain the skills needed to achieve a high level of leadership within the unique context. According to Ervay (2006), "there is no argument that students' learning is the school's only real purpose and, regardless of how that term is defined and assessed, the main responsibility of all educational leaders is to work together in reaching that goal" (p. 84). The principal, as leader of the school has a great responsibility, with the weight of many children on their shoulders. The managerial and instructional leadership of the principal are vital for a school's success.

Chapter 3

Research Questions

The research in this study examines the reflections of instructional leadership from the perspective of practicing elementary principals. The goals of this study is to understand more about how elementary principals define instructional leadership and what it looks like in their school. In this study, the research questions below framed the literature review and research themes:

1) How do principals define instructional leadership in their setting?

2) What reflections do principals have about instructional leadership?

3) What formal training have principals received that has informed their instructional leadership practices?

4) What experiences have principals participated in that have informed their instructional leadership practices?

This chapter outlines the data gathering techniques for this study. Interviews were used as a method of data collection, to gain a deeper understanding for how principals view instructional leadership, how they enact that leadership in their school setting, and what has informed them to become the instructional leader they are. The make up of the interview group will be shared as a means to help inform the data analysis. The themes represented are revealed through a discussion of the data as they relate to the above-mentioned research questions.

Study Design

The study was qualitative in nature and provided insight into the instructional leadership role of the principal. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with elementary principals to gain an understanding of instructional leadership and the principal and the balance of management work with the instructional leadership demands. Interviews were selected in order to provide the best possible data to gain insight into the thinking and actions of principals in the field. "Qualitative interviews are conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 4). Each of the conversations are unique and gives the researcher the ability to find out what the principal knows by matching the questions to what he is willing to share (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In-depth interviews served this research well providing a focus on the topic of instructional leadership. Identified questions (See Appendix A) and probes were utilized to guide the process and elicit the most in-depth, rich responses from the participants. The questions were selected as a starting point for the interviews from the broad range of topics included in the literature review. The topics from the literature included defining instructional leadership, previous experiences that may have informed instructional leadership decisions, as well as the school culture, including relationships and their influence on instructional leadership.

When meaning was hard to determine, or further clarification was needed, the researcher asked follow up questions to aid in the research process (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Generating depth of understanding rather than breadth was the main focus of the interviews. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), "Responsive interviewers recognize

that each conversational partner has a distinct set of experiences, a different construction of the meaning of those experiences, and different areas of expertise" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 34). The purpose of the interview was to, " understand themes of the lived daily world from the subject's own perspective" (Kvale, 1996, p. 27). It is in the conversations that the unique experiences can be gathered and probed for further understanding. By looking collectively at all of the principals' experiences, a great depth of information was discovered. Utilizing grounded theory as an approach provided a structure that allowed codes to evolve from the data and be defined by further collected data or contracted b less data.

To better understand instructional leadership in its context, principals in their beginning years (five or less) were interviewed to gain the perspective of those professionals entering the principalship. Including principals in their beginning years of administration was intentional in order to gain the specific perspective of those principals who have been introduced to the demands of accountability most recently. Beginning principals were also interviewed in order to try and make connections to what types of previous work and/or experiences could have influenced the principal in their current administrative role. Female and male principals from suburban elementary schools were interviewed.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, there are 1,439 principals in the state of Minnesota. No comprehensive list of elementary principals exists through the Minnesota Department of Education or the Minnesota Elementary Principals Association (MESPA). Upon talking to both the state department and MESPA, it was

stated that accurate records are not tracked depicting time in the elementary principal profession. The only way to know exactly how many years a principal had been practicing was to ask them directly. This dead end caused a two-fold search for participants including a wide-spread email to the MESPA members and a web search via districts in the Minneapolis and St. Paul suburban districts. Initial contact was made via email with the first ten principals, and followed by phone conversations and in-person interviews. After many dead-end emails, the researcher changed the first mode of contact to a phone conversation, which resulted in the remaining ten principals in the study.

This sample provided an in-depth study of a special population of principals and allowed for a line of questioning including principal preparation programs (licensure programs) and skills that would not be as appropriate for more veteran principals.

Data Gathering

The data gathering process consisted of a purposive sample (Orcher 2005) to gain the elementary principals' perspective. Elementary principals within their first five years of the principalship made up the purposive sample. Beginning principals were considered for the study due to the change in accountability and the requirements of NCLB within recent years. Principals who are new to the profession are most likely to have recent training with a focus on accountability. Twenty elementary principals from the Minneapolis/St. Paul suburban districts were interviewed. Almost half of the principals were identified through MESPA via an email sent requesting participation. Upon response, email and phone exchanges occurred to share details of the study and set up an

interview date and time. Accessing district/school websites and emailing principals

requesting participation helped locate the remaining principals. During subsequent

telephone contacts with all participants, those who were willing to participate received a

detailed email explaining the study and asked for their consent in the interviews. (See

appendix B) Details pertaining to the time and location were arranged by telephone or

email.

Once the participants were selected, semi-structured, in-depth, interviews were

conducted. The interviews were conducted at a site of the principal's choosing, which

included his/her school in all but one situation. This was done to facilitate the needs of

the principal and respect the time given to the interview process. The interviews ranged

from sixty to ninety minutes in length. The researcher and principal were the only people

present during the interviews. All principals were fully licensed head principals of their

school and had not been in the principalship more than 5 years.

Demographic Data from Interviews

Of the twenty elementary principals, thirteen were males and seven were females.

The sample was predominantly Caucasian, with two Asian principals and one African

American principal. Principals ranged in years of experience from one to five years in the

elementary principalship. Five principals interviewed had one year of experience, one

principal had two years, five principals had three years, one principal had four years, and

eight principals had five years of experience. This sample created a variety of distributed

years. Six of the twenty principals were in the second phase of their career journeys.

They had been employed for at least ten years in education as a teacher or in another

aspect of education such as school psychology or speech and language pathologist. The

remaining fourteen principals had been in the field of education their whole career and

had moved up to the prinicpalship through a natural progression of leadership roles. This

resulted in a cross-section of experiences in the principalship including background and

prior knowledge entering into the administrative profession.

The principals represented suburban districts surrounding the Minneapolis/St.

Paul area spanning from Anoka/Hennepin in the north to Rosemount/Apple Valley/Eagan

in the south. Principals were located in a variety of districts, with no more than five

principals from the same district. Represented districts included, Anoka/Hennepin,

Bloomington, Burnsville/Eagan/Savage, North Saint Paul, Osseo/Maple Grove, Prior

Lake/Savage, Rosemount/Apple Valley/Eagan, Roseville, and Shakopee.

Suburban districts were selected because of their potential common

characteristics. The sample was representative within the suburban schools in terms of

size, free and reduced priced lunch, limited English Proficiency, and AYP status. The

schools ranged in size from 299 students to 987 students, with an average of 523 students

at each elementary school. The free and reduced levels ranged from 5% to 83%, with an

average of 36% of the students receiving free and reduced priced meals. The number of

limited English Proficiency ranged from 1% to 44%, with an average of 16%. Of the

twenty schools eleven were meeting adequate yearly progress, while nine were not. Six

of the nine schools who did not meet adequate yearly progress, failed to meet AYP in

both math and reading, with two elementary schools not meeting AYP in math only and one elementary school not meeting AYP in reading only.

Most of the elementary schools had one principal with no assistant principal. Five of the elementary schools had assistant principals and one elementary school had an instructional coach.

Interviews

Interviews are an in-depth way of gathering information from principals about their views and ideas of their actual roles and responsibilities. Semi-structured interviews allow for variation and in-depth questioning as the researcher continued along with the interview. Questions were open ended, yet specific in intent, allowing for individual responses. This is the most common type of interview in educational research (McMillan, 2000). Interviews allowed the researcher to ask for clarification and review the accuracy of the data collected.

The choice of open-ended questions was designed to allow for a depth of understanding from the principals' views on instructional leadership. The questions were loosely related to the categories from the literature reviewed in chapter two allowing for that deeper understanding and so as to allow for the diversity that is apparent when talking about instructional leadership. The literature clearly states that there isn't an agreed upon definition of instructional leadership, so taking that into consideration throughout the data collection process would allow for the broad topics to be shared and gather insight as to just how wide the scope of instructional leadership spans in the actual

contexts of schools as viewed by principals. These questions provided a link between the literature review and the current reality of principals in the school setting.

Principals were interviewed individually at a location of their choice. Most interviews took place at the principal's school, with one interview occurring off site at a neutral location, determined by the interviewee. Interviews were digitally recorded to aid in the data collection process and provide a manageable method for transcription. Each principal was asked a series of open ended questions with the following topics: journey to the principalship; working definition of instructional leadership; behaviors associated with instructional leadership; limiting factors to instructional leadership; how his/her view of instructional leadership has changed; other influences of instructional leadership; how he/she knows they are being an effective instructional leader; effect accountability has on instructional leadership; formal and informal training that is attributed to instructional leadership; and other leadership experiences that relate to instructional leadership practices.

Semi-structured interview protocols were followed with each participant. The interviews began with questions around the above-mentioned areas. Follow up questions were asked in relation to the interviewees' responses.

A formal definition of instructional leadership was not shared with principals intentionally to allow for principals to define the term for themselves. This resulted in a variety of definitions and some frustration on the parts of the principals due to the lack of a unified definition. One principal even commented that the term instructional leader should be defined at a district level for better success in the district and individual school

setting. Instructional leadership is defined in this research as: the decisions and actions that people (including but not limited to principals) make that affect teachers' instructional practice and therefore student learning. Examples of the actions include the following: observations (formal and informal), formal reviews, discussions, and staff development.

Role of Researcher

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher was highly involved in the collection and analysis of the data. The researcher conducted and transcribed the interviews for further analysis. As a result of the close involvement in the research process, there is a level of bias that was brought into the process. The background knowledge and personal experiences of the researcher are a reality and therefore had potential effects on the data being collected. The researcher engaged in self-disclosure prior to the interviews and during the interview process to account for factors that might affect decisions during interviews and analysis (Orcher, 2005). Since the researcher was a practicing administrator, there are potential biases that should be considered and could potentially have an effect on what type of information the interviewee shares.

Data Analysis

The individual principal interviews were taped and transcribed for analysis. In the process of analysis, grounded theory was utilized in order to find meaning in the collected data. Grounded theory is the discovery of theory from data that has been systematically obtained from social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Through this

research, grounded theory was used in order to provide a perspective on the instructional

leadership behavior of principals including the training and influences. "Grounded theory

is derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data" (Glaser &

Strauss, 1999, p. 5). The unique aspect of grounded theory is that the hypothesis and

concepts come directly from the data and are systematically worked out in terms of the

data throughout the research process (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

Generating theoretical ideas required constant redesign and reintegration of

theories throughout the process. Glaser and Strauss label this process the constant

comparative method. There are four steps to this process. 1) comparing incidents

applicable to each category, 2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) delimiting

the theory, and 4) writing the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). All of the data from the

interviews were transcribed into notes. During the interviews, the researcher took specific

notes highlighting key ideas and quotes from participants. From the transcribed

interviews and the specific notes, data was coded into the beginning categories. Codes are

defined as, "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential

information compiled during a study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The beginning

codes were derived from the research on instructional leadership presented in chapter

two. The literature reviewed was an extensive look at the potential factors related to

instructional leadership and potential influences. Initial codes were created prior to

interviewing and added on to throughout the process of interviewing and transcribing. A

"start list" was derived from the conceptual framework of the study, research questions,

hypothesis, and key variables brought by the researcher, provided a starting point for

analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding was completed throughout the research process because it informed the ongoing data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The interviews were first transcribed and recorded to a file by interview. This process was conducted following each interview, allowing no more than four interviews to happen between each transcription. Transcribing with this process allowed for the beginning codes to be defined. (See Appendix C) After all of the interviews had been transcribed, each interview was then decoded by its major topics creating a document for each beginning code comprised of all of the data from each individual interview. This data was then reviewed and the codes were expanded within the major finding codes to provide specific details. This data was further analyzed according to themes and patterns across codes to create a combined picture of the elementary principals' instructional leadership definitions and experiences that lead up to his instructional leadership practices. The final coding can also be seen in appendix C.

Codes were grouped into categories and were constantly compared throughout the process allowing theoretical properties of the category to be generated. Two types of categories emerged, those the researcher constructed and those that came from the language of the research situation. After coding four interviews, the researcher reflected on the themes that had presented themselves and used those to inform future interviews. Memos were recorded, after many points of coding, documenting reflections and categories that appeared. This also allowed for theoretical properties to emerge, which were grounded in the data. This process continued throughout the research until the last interview was coded.

The next step of the process involved integrating the categories and their properties. This involved looking beyond how the incidents compare to each other and began to compare the incident to the properties of the category. The next step was delimiting the theory and categories. This involved constant comparison and modification of the categories. Some categories were taken out all together or reduced, and some categories were modified to clarify the logic (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). From this constant comparison, theoretical properties of the categories began to appear (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

The last step was looking at the theoretical properties as a collection and formulating the results in a clear manor to best summarize the perceptions of elementary principals. The researcher looked at all the coded data, memos, and notes to generate the theories from the data. Multiple documents were created organizing the collected. Creating the documents required a full level of analysis in terms of the research questions and the data needed to answer them (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The entire process of grounded theory was not utilized as it became evident throughout the interview and transcribing process that a theory was not going to emerge. The data continued to present itself around the beginning codes and therefore by the last interview, a point had been reached where no further data was needed. Grounded theory proved to be a rich process that allowed for a large amount of data to be collected, refined and shared in terms of principals' perceptions on instructional leadership within their specific contexts.

Limitations

The limitations to this study included the specific region of which the interviewees were selected. Utilizing only one state, Minnesota, and the suburban areas limited the generalizability of the data. The results could be considered unique to the state or region of which the principals were interviewed. Due to the convenience sampling of the participants, the generalizability is again affected. The principals were all practicing in suburbs of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, with those principals in more remote rural areas not included. Interviewing only twenty principals at the elementary level provided a limited perspective into the thoughts of all principals and limits how the results could be applied across settings. Interviews were time consuming and did not allow for anonymity of the participants, which may have altered the responses. The potential for additional errors to occur due to the way the interview was conducted were high (MacMillan, 2000).

Another limitation was the role of the researcher. The researcher was an assistant principal and had preconceived ideas of what had been seen and heard about instructional leadership in a current setting. Utilizing self-disclosure strategies prior to interviewing helped to account for the researcher's potential bias.

Chapter 4

Study Background

Talking to principals about instructional leadership revealed many interesting insights. The findings from the interviews are organized around defining instructional leadership and behaviors associated with it. Principals' self-reflections on their instructional leadership, including the identified limiting factors and wishes for the future instructional leadership will also be examined. The chapter will conclude with a look at reflections on accountability, training, actual experiences, and other influences in relation to instructional leadership. Principal ideas and thoughts are interrelated and have been formatted to highlight the most compelling evidence for discovery and reading.

What is Instructional Leadership?

The literature review noted the gap in a consistent definition of instructional leadership. Moreover, no published studies examine what the term means to a relatively large sample of practicing principals. This section will explore how practicing principals define instructional leadership and how the role of instructional leadership reaches farther than the principal. The section will also explore the difficulties principals expressed in defining the term.

Definition of Instructional Leadership

Principals began defining instructional leadership by giving examples of actions that described what they did or wanted to do in their schools. One principal described his view of instructional leadership through the four domains of teacher observation: planning and preparing, environment, instruction, and professionalism. The principal

stated that his job was to "model, and have enough expertise in all domains, so that in conversations and modeling, formal teacher evaluations, meetings, and staff discussions about best practice there is an example set that these are the things we stand for. These are the things we engage in to bring the best possible instruction to every kid that walks through the door." This principal's words reflect a passion nearly universal among all the interviewees for living the life of an instructional leader. He went on to explain the importance of knowing the data produced around student learning, including the results of daily, formative, summative, and annual testing. He also stated that the goal should be to take all that information to inform practice and identify what is being done well and what can be done better. "We can't control raw materials that walk through the door, but we can control practice," he said.

Another principal also defined instructional leadership as desired behaviors— what he would like to do in the school. "I would look at what the district goals and objectives are and compare that to where the building is at with their goals. Looking at achievement data, more subjective data from teachers, curriculum articulation committees, and plans, we would try to set a direction for the school." This principal spoke of listening to and supporting teachers to help "make it so that you (teachers) can do what you need to do." He and other principals view instructional leadership as an action-based effort, with a high priority placed on the teacher involvement in the school community.

An overall theme gleaned from those descriptions was that instructional leadership includes more people than just the principal. Moreover, the stories reveal that

most principals believe instructional leadership requires both motivating staff and giving them the tools and development opportunities to reach the goals of the building. Looking at specific behaviors associated with instructional leadership, as well as self-evaluation of the effectiveness of it, helped principals define the term in their respective settings and contexts.

As noted in Chapter 2, there are broad and narrow definitions of instructional leadership. The views expressed through the principal interviews in this research are consistent with a broad definition of instructional leadership. The principals in this study shared thoughts and practices that support this view, and many stated that the principal is not a "lone ranger" who takes on instructional leadership for the entire building.

It Takes More Than the Principal to Lead Instruction

A prevalent theme among interviewees was that instructional leadership involves more than just the principal's actions. One stated, "It is impossible for me to be the only one carrying the ball all the time. We must involve other people, distribute the leadership, and get more buy in." Principals often pointed to the need to include teachers, other staff, parents, and even students in the process. One principal effectively summarized the responses by highlighting the collective role of instructional leadership: "Everyone is there for the kids to learn and grow." Another mentioned that it is necessary to "identify people's talents and passions to put them in a position to lead the building."

These thoughts reveal a focus on shared leadership. In the comments, the distinction between shared leadership and instructional leadership became blurred. The principals continued to support the broad definition of instructional leadership, and some

shared that everyone within the school setting has some connection to student learning through direct or indirect methods. One principal stated, "I consider everyone an instructional leader; teachers, custodial staff, secretaries." Another noted that, "An instructional leader doesn't have to have 'leader' as a part of their title. It could be a teacher as they are leading students in the process of learning."

Other principals articulated the importance of working together with other designated building leaders in order to lead school instruction effectively. Two principals were specific, stating that the instructional leadership tasks were shared with assistant principals, instructional coaches, learning specialists, and testing coordinators. One stated that he takes on the role of an instructional coach, and explained the collaboration between the instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal. This collaboration allows him to coach more teachers. Collaborative coaching also allows him to expand his influence of instructional practice. The other principal said, "Working in conjunction with the testing coordinator, who comes out to analyze NWEA MAP data, helps to gear instruction to where it needs to be and helps to continue with the things that are going well." Thus, even within the broad view of instructional leadership as shared leadership, the principal chooses a variety of others to be involved.

Broad Responsibility Leads to Difficulty Defining Instructional Leadership

Principals could easily identify actions and practices that supported instruction and student learning. But when asked to go beyond desirable behaviors, defining instructional leadership became harder. This difficulty came not from a lack of actions and practices that supported instruction and student learning, but because they did not

have a guide or resource to narrow down the aspects of instructional leadership. More specifically, principals could not narrow the focus of particular behaviors that define their unique roles in instructional leadership within the broadly expressed, shared responsibilities. Each principal has a different view of instructional leadership practices and has a personal way of implementing those practices in their school.

One, for example, stated, "I hope I am the person that keeps the reason why we are here in the front of everyone's mind. Everyone should be focused on children's entitlement." Another explained how broad the defining process can be: "I am looking at everything you do through an instructional leader lens." So it is through the principal's lens, then, that reality is created for each leader. The interviews revealed a diverse set of realities that reflected the personal characteristics and priorities of the principal. Other principals supported a diffuse and ambiguous character of instructional leadership: Because many people in the school are responsible for it, it is hard to attach to an individual person like the principal. To further clarity what instructional leadership looks like, we look at what types of behaviors principals associate with instructional leadership.

Behaviors Associated with Instructional Leadership

As suggested above, most principals tend to define instructional leadership in terms of leadership action. As the principals spoke about what they wanted to do (or were already doing), they pointed to specific themes: motivating staff, creating school culture, participating in professional learning communities (PLCs), being visible, conversing with teachers, and providing focus.

Motivating Staff

In addition to viewing instructional leadership as a shared venture, six principals reported motivating staff as important. Being an instructional leader includes "really getting staff on board and understanding the importance of knowing, the importance of what they need to do in order to teach the kids."

The motivation comes from being seen and having people "step it up a little" when they see the principal, stated another. "I don't want people on pins and needles. I want people to know that I am going to look at what's going on. If you don't let people know, by nature people just shut down and say 'it is good enough.'" The principal is the link between the instructional strategies and how they are actually performed in the classroom, and therefore the impetus for whether students learn.

Providing the link between best practice instruction and what is actually implemented in the classroom requires monitoring teachers and offering staff development. Principals saw their monitoring behavior as motivation rather than holding teachers accountable. They saw their role as an informant and support for sound, standards-based instructional practices. The process includes imparting to teachers knowledge of best practice instruction as well as helping ensure they are implementing that best practice instruction. The following statement best describes a common theme: "I must give them (teachers) the tools they need to carry it over into their classroom." This principal spoke about the necessary instructional support needed for teachers to be able to effectively engage in classroom instruction that informs and supports learning. Motivation of staff is related to creating a culture of learning, which leads to the next theme.

Creating School Culture

More than half the principals commented on the culture of the school and its relationship to instructional leadership within a school. "Community, culture, is the key. There is that fine line with having to make tough decisions, and also the trust that you have to get between the staff." This statement summarizes the thoughts of many interviewees when it comes to how instructional leadership is embedded in the building's culture. When there is trust among the staff and between staff and principal, a community can be built. During the interviews, principals engaging in this conversation broke away from instructional leadership directly but always tied back to the foundation of the culture necessary for effective learning. Working within the culture are the professionals, who, when aligned, can create a professional learning community within the school community.

Participating in Professional Learning Communities

Half the principals mentioned that PLC's could help a school ensure that quality instruction was being implemented in the classrooms. Among that group, most of the discussion focused on the structural components of PLC's rather than engendering a culture of professional learning and sharing. The comments about PLC's centered on including everyone in the teaming concept and making time for meetings. Only one principal made a clear connection between PLC's and changing relationships and work within the school. "PLC's provide discussion on curriculum. They help administration figure out if teachers are not teaching appropriately," he said, highlighting the connection

between PLC's and effective teaching. None of the other principals framed the significance of PLC's in this fashion or for this purpose.

Being Visible

Nine principals reported being visible as yet another key factor in their approach to instructional leadership. They talked passionately about "being out in the trenches," as one said. Visiting classrooms to watch what is going on in the learning environment was noted as an important piece of instructional leadership. This kind of visibility allows principals to stay connected to classroom practice and provides a knowledge base from which to speak to teachers, parents, and others that may ask about classroom learning. Visibility was also considered from the perspective of the teacher—principals reported that having teachers see them in staff development sessions or out in the lunchroom or classrooms helped them earn respect from the teachers and, in addition to the verbal affirmations principals make, showed teachers their commitment to best practices.

Talk is the Work

Visibility was usually linked to the importance of conversations principals had with teachers about instruction, which five principals reported as an important part of their instructional leadership practices. These conversations are categorized into two areas: goals and instruction, and constructive comments. Using pre- and post-conferences with teacher observation allows principals to address instructional goals with teachers. Tracking and monitoring individual goals has helped frame the instructional leadership process between principals and teachers. Some principals view just talking to teachers informally about instruction and curriculum as an element of instructional leadership.

Principals reflected that in their perspective, informal conversations about instruction and curriculum help guide the teachers to make important instructional decisions in the classroom.

Principals also think about conversations of a constructive nature in a range of ways. One principal shared the view that "the instructional leader should ask really good questions of teachers. The best way to be a leader is not to tell what to do, but to ask the pointed questions to get them (teachers) to think and ponder their own instruction." Involving people in the process of reflection during a conversation can provide a different level of instructional leadership.

Another principal stated, "You cannot be afraid to engage in conversations about items that people aren't going to agree with you on." This comment reflects a very different view of principals' roles as instructional leaders than the preceding opinion. Principals spoke about having to make the hard call and getting "tight," on instruction. Sitting down with a teacher to share ideas for improvement in instruction after witnessing poor instructional lessons is considered a hard conversation. Principals stated that it is important to make it clear that their own view of quality instruction is worth discussing, especially if the teacher's approach does not match the principal's expectations. Discussing consistency of practice, as well as encouraging teachers to check their egos at the door, are both challenging but necessary conversations that principals feel are important to instructional leadership practices.

Providing Focus

Providing focus and direction for teachers and staff was another theme that came out of the discussion of defining instructional leadership. Nine principals provided some insight into creating focus as a means for instructional leadership. Principals are the center point for school focus in terms of all the instruction and initiatives going on in a school. "The principal must keep everyone focused on the bigger picture," one interviewee said. Keeping the focus during staff meetings and throughout the school year is a key role shared by principals, "to ensure that everyone has a clear picture of where they are going," one said. These comments were not as widespread among interviewees as expected, but they definitely came out strongly among some. There was a passion behind limiting the "extras" within the school setting and focusing the time and energies on students and learning.

Self-Reflection on Instructional Leadership

Following the discussion of definitions of instructional leadership, the principals were asked about how they judged the effectiveness of their own approach to instructional leadership. We can turn to principals' self-reflections on instructional leadership for further clarity. Whether or not a principal is an effective instructional leader is hard to measure because each principal defines it in a different context and based on a different set of experiences and prior knowledge. The principals reflections about their own instructional leadership are grouped into the following themes: feedback,

data, observing practices in the intended contexts, how principals' view of instructional leadership has changed over time, and change in perspective.

Feedback

One-quarter of the principals interviewed mentioned surveys as a form of gathering feedback. Their surveys range from simple 10 question/short answer instruments to specific questions set up on a web-based system where parents, teachers, and students can all respond. In all cases, the surveys were said to be a means to gather data for the principal to interpret. One principal spoke of how he created a survey from feedback given to him during individual goal-setting meetings. This principal meets with each teacher one-on-one during the year to talk about professional goals. From that conversation, he solicits input on what teachers need from him as the principal. After that data has been interpreted, this principal created staff surveys based on the goals reported in the conversations. Each of the principals who discussed surveys noted that they were not required by district administration to use a survey instrument. The principals were interested in the results to inform their practice and grow as a professional. Only one principal mentioned modifying the questions on a Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) evaluation tool to fit his current setting (this elementary principal was a former middle school assistant principal).

Five principals mentioned using unsolicited feedback from teachers to judge their own instructional leadership practices. Occasional comments from staff are indicators the instructional leadership is effective. When teachers talk with the principal about a recent staff development activity, the principal views that as a success. As well, direct

application of the concept or topic presented by the principal and used in another context by the teacher is considered a success.. In one case, a principal had a conversation with a staff member who admitted not teaching reading for three weeks. The principal was disappointed to hear this, but encouraged that the teacher was admitting a lack of understanding of the new writing curriculum and asking for help. Teacher support and follow-up were vital in this situation and allowed the principal access to concerning behaviors. Another specific teacher told her principal that students' weekly assessment scores were down that week. The principal noted that there must have been some acknowledgement of what the principal had said about student data at the last workshop that prompted the teacher to make this comment to the principal. The principal reflected on that information and realized that all of the efforts taken to talk with staff about classroom data had made an impression on teachers—if teachers are informing principals that scores are low, teachers are using data effectively to measure growth. Forging the conversations in the direction of instruction and having dialogue about struggles was expressed by principals as a sign of growth and seen in a positive light.

Simply hearing teachers talk about instruction and bring up instructional questions in different settings revealed to principals that teachers heard their instructional leadership efforts. One principal commented that during a site council meeting, teachers brought up instructional questions in addition to the more managerial topics usually on the agenda. Again, this mere question was a signal to the principal that a change was taking place and the instructional leadership work being done was having an effect on teachers.

Data

When considering data in this age of accountability, one usually thinks of state and national testing scores used to compare one school to another. In the context of self-reflection and effectiveness, only one-fourth of the principals mentioned state testing in terms of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or yearly data. With the intent of the NCLB legislation to ensure that all students achieve a higher standard each year, it might be likely that principals use the data to judge their instructional leadership effectiveness. The majority of the reflections of the principals interviewed did not support this assumption.

Data in the form of test scores was mentioned by one-fourth of the principals as an indicator of instructional leadership effectiveness. This data interpretation ranged from the broad perspective of a school being off of AYP to a more narrow view, looking at the individual student growth model and monitoring how students' scores have gone up over a period of time. According to the reflections of the interviewed principals, "Test scores don't tell the whole picture." Most of the principals spoke more of other methods by which to judge their instructional leadership effectiveness.

Observations in Intended Contexts

Principals also consider their instructional leadership efforts successful if they see them at work in the classroom. "Part of it is the staff going back and implementing what we talked about. Is it happening?" This comment typifies the hope of many of the principals interviewed. One principal commented, "I saw differentiation! When I walked by the media center, a small group was by the SMART board, ELL students were with the teacher, and the gifted and talented kids were working independently close by."

Perspectives on Instructional Leadership Evolve Over Time

Discussing definitions of instructional leadership led naturally to queries about how the principals' views of instructional leadership may have changed over time. Principals said they have become more informed. More than half explained that the beginning of their principalships were about, "trying to figure out, What does a principal do?" Learning the ropes and surviving were mentioned as basic goals for their first year. In one response, a principal stated, "I had a fairytale view of what instructional leadership was. I think I just thought you were an instructional leader because you were leading instruction." Starting out in any field has a straight-up-hill learning curve. In all cases, the professional learns as the days, months, and years pass.

Principals stated that they became more knowledgeable about the work it takes to be an instructional leader as they spent more time in the role of elementary principal. "It doesn't happen unless you work really hard at it. It has to be a choice," one said. They explained that they began to see the importance of instructional leadership more and more, and eventually become smarter about what they were doing. "I have learned to never claim to be an expert. I have to continue to get smarter about what is happening here," another said. Principals now have a better idea of what questions to ask and the importance of an instructional leader's work to the school's success.

Mastering the skill of instructional leadership was not discussed by any of the principals. It was never spoken about as a quest for perfection, but simply a means to reach the end, which was student learning for all. The journey and hard work it takes each year to ensure that all students are learning was expressed as an endless pursuit.

Change in Perspective

One observation made when talking with the principals was perspective as related to the job. Because these were relatively new principals, they were able to reflect on what they do now, which they see as instructional leadership but did not when they first started their principalships. There was a noted change of scope in their expectations since entering the principal ranks. They were able to see the whole school as an organization of many teachers together rather than the individual role they played in the school. This was a different view from that of an individual in a school and the school leader. Judging by the comments they shared, one could make the assumption that most of these principals were successful in school. Several noted their shock when they realized that not all teachers were like them. Some didn't take their jobs seriously, and perhaps had not even removed the required curriculum from the shelf. Coming to terms with the fact that not all teachers are in the profession for the same reasons opened their eyes to their roles in helping to change bad teacher habits and behaviors. *One principal realized after a year of being in the position,* "Early on teachers teach curriculum. Veteran teachers—good ones—diagnose where kids are and key into that with their instruction."

Limiting Factors

A look at self-identified limiting factors provides a deeper understanding of how elementary principals view instructional leadership. Principals broadly defined time, which can be broken into many sub-themes, as a limiting factor. The other limiting

factors—teachers' contract/union issues and money—also tied to time, specifically the lack thereof to complete what they wanted and needed to do.

Time Away from Instructional Leadership

Time was categorized by principals in terms of "time away from doing what the principal wanted to do as an instructional leader," as one expressed it. A major time-taker noted by six principals involved meetings outside of the building. One principal said:

As administrators, we attend a variety of meetings—they are limiting and beneficial at the same time. I am pulled away from my building, but I return with the knowledge for what I need to know when I go into the classrooms and look at curriculum and standards.

Not all the principals thought about the time away from the building this way, though. Most principals who thought that time was a limiting factor stated that district-level administrative meetings were a "whole day shot," as one put it, while they simply waited to return to their desks to get work done at the building, often after the teachers and students had left. The combination of missed time during the school day and added items to complete with no additional time to complete them, created a sense of frustration among principals.

Dealing with phone calls, paperwork, and student behavior also meant time away from the "desirable tasks of instructional leadership." These factors were sometimes referred to as the management side of the principal responsibilities, but they were characterized as limiting factors because they took time away from the principals doing what they wanted to do as instructional leaders in their schools. Some tasks were viewed

as immediate concerns that had to be dealt with, putting the instructional leadership practices on hold. Four of the principals identified student behavior, even when described as "not too bad," as a limiting factor. The timing of behavioral issues was seen as a limiting factor by those principals because they needed to be immediately prepared to respond to a situation and leave whatever they were doing behind for the time being. "Behaviors aren't too bad, but I am the one person in charge of all the discipline," one principal stated. This outlook typifies the situation for most elementary principals, who do not have an assistant principal or other adult in their building to help with discipline situations. It also raises questions about structural guidelines in the building that could be altered to allow someone else to take the first lead on a discipline situation.

Lack of time for Professional Development

Another view of time as a limiting factor includes the lack of time principals have to provide staff development opportunities for their faculty. Two principals mentioned that they would like to give teachers more time to observe master teachers within their building or at other buildings in the district. Another principal mentioned "there are only so many hours in a day. Trying to get it all done just doesn't work." Principals expressed a need for more time to go into further depth about instructional practices and to clarify items and initiatives. Lack of time, principals felt, limits effective instructional leadership.

Despite the limited district-supported time, one principal challenged the common complaint of lack of time with the notion of working "smarter, not harder." This principal still viewed the lack of time as a challenge for him personally to provide all the

professional development needed for the school. He did, though, exhibit a different view from all of the other principals, in which he views it as a two-way street—he attempts to use what little time he has more effectively.

Of the principals interviewed, only one mentioned speaking with teachers about creative ways to work smarter within the school day. He spoke about defining the actions of teachers in terms of effective practice versus an inefficient use of time. In the reflections of the principals, it appeared that the lack of time barrier was real, and they were not in a position to address it. This could be due in part to the fact that the level of relational understanding needed to seek out alternate solutions had not yet been attained by the principals within their first five years of the taking on the job.

Teacher Contract/Union Influence on Time

Upon further inquiry about limited time, six principals considered teachers' contract and unions an obstacle. Despite the fact that the responses were limited, this idea is intriguing and has potential implications for how principals view instructional leadership and how they are able to implement the strategies in their schools. Principals expressed feeling that their hands were tied with regard to the amount of time available for effective professional development, and they pointed out that completing all the necessary staff development efforts within the contract time limited their ability to implement effective instructional leadership. One principal also expressed a fear that his decisions would get him into trouble with the union. He believed that the union could reprimand him based on what he said or did for not following the contract or breaking the district's agreement with the union. Other principals who mentioned a fear of union

repercussions did not curtail their ideas or practices, but rather thought through the potential issues before rolling out a new initiative or asking teachers to comply with a new policy.

Money Equals Time

The last issue that one principal raised in terms of time was the lack of money to pay for the time they wanted to have for teacher staff development. PLC's were considered positive times during which teachers could meet, but the limited structure of the day did not allow for the time necessary for the PLC to be effective. More money would be needed to pay for teachers to meet outside contract hours in order to participate in instructional leadership activities.

Five principals, all from the same large district, stated that their schools had recently found a way to create more time during the day: Recess supervisors were hired at all the elementary schools. The supervisors watched students so teams of teachers could use that time for meetings. This was a district-wide initiative with a very high cost, and most of the principals worried it might not be in place the following year due to budget cuts.

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Future Hopes for Instructional Leadership

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While reflecting further on instructional leadership, principals connected their limitations to their future hopes for effective instructional leadership. Most of the reflections on limitations led to a wish for instructional leadership. For example, principals viewed time as a limiting factor and a wish for future instructional leadership,

specifically time to work directly with students, to gain a more thorough understanding of the curriculum, and to offer more staff development.

Time Working with Students

More than half the principals want to spend more time in the classroom, either to interact with students or observe classroom instruction. Four of the principals said they wished they could be in the classroom working with students, taking a more hands-on approach. "Next year, maybe I could take a group of students a week and work with those kids to focus on what they need to get to the end of the year," one principal said. Another principal offered:

I would like to work more directly with some children in a study group once a month. I celebrate writers with a writer's round-table once a month. I think about the time I am spending and what it is keeping me from.

This comment reflects a definition of instructional leadership as the time the principal spends directly interacting with students. These principals viewed their personal instruction and conversations with students as an achievement on the path to becoming more effective instructional leaders.

Deeper Understanding of the Curriculum

Two principals talked about wanting to know the curriculum more deeply. They stated that being able to dig into the curriculum and learn what students were learning would help them become better instructional leaders. One principal stated that she takes the spelling tests with the students to gain an understanding of the curriculum at the student level. Another principal commented that she often feels stuck when she doesn't

know about the curriculum. The struggle is that there is so much to know and remember specific to each grade level. "It is challenging at times to be sure that teachers are doing the curriculum correctly and showing it. If I had more time, I would be more aware," one commented.

Staff Development

Principals wished staff development, both time with teachers as well as professional development for themselves with other principals, could be a larger part of their approach to instructional leadership.

Time with teachers for staff development.

Three principals said they are looking for more ongoing staff development for teachers, rather than one- or two-hour sessions. Time is needed throughout the year to devote to staff development of teachers—a one-shot staff development workshop does not accomplish their goals. One principal stated, "I am not sure about the one-day workshop where a grade level goes to a Bureau or Educational Research workshop." Another principal stated a desire to analyze more of the professional development within the school and look at best practices from other places. This was offered in contrast to sending teachers to outside sponsored workshops.

A small group of principals stated that a key to their growth in instructional leadership was realizing that they needed to establish relationships with teachers in order to move forward with instructional leadership. One principal took that sentiment in the direction of building relationships with trusted teachers in the building so that he could confide in someone. This person can be used to pitch ideas to and help identify a school

perspective before rolling out initiatives. Another principal stated that building connected relationships with his staff helps in terms of followership. The staff will "run through a wall" for him if they are connected and have a relationship. Three principals who wanted more time in the classroom noted that this time would allow for more discussions with teachers and direct classroom observations. This would allow the principal to observe directly and comment on classroom practice.

Principal staff development time.

Principal staff development was only mentioned by four of the interviewees, but it raised a perspective worth discussing. Of those who responded, half stated they would like to engage in more professional development driven by district-level administration and guided with a district focus. They noted that there are some efforts, from district administrators, to bring this discussion and action to their administrative structures. The other half stated that principal professional development is self-directed and centered on reading and organizing their own groups of professionals. "I feel connected to other principals. I feel pretty connected and accountable in that way. We share stories of where we are at with our schools," one principal explained. This principal said the connections to other principals were a means to help grow professionally, and he would like more time to build these connections to support his own learning.

Accountability

In this age of accountability and No Child Left Behind legislation, the question of how accountability affects what a principal can do as an instructional leader proved

worthy of discussion. Five principals clearly stated that accountability was not the most important thing to them. Others said the accountability within NCLB, individual student performance, current practices, and school culture/climate drive their instructional leadership decisions.

No Child Left Behind

Principals equate accountability with NCLB and data. Eight principals spoke at length about a focus on data and accountability. They stated that accountability through NCLB forced them to have conversations around data at the building level. One principal responded that he is now required to use data in a way that he hasn't been asked to use it before. This allows the principal and school to know students better now, and yields specific details about groups of students. Another principal stated, "Our drive was special education reading because of AYP. We were forced to discuss what we were going to do about that." One principal's goal was to use data to work smarter and more efficiently. All of these principals had changed their practices as a result of NCLB.

Individual Student Performance

The interviewed principals noted the focus within the NCLB legislation on individual performance. A new level of specificity has been gained that truly answers the question about how to meet the needs of all students. Principals reflected that bringing the conversations to the student level focuses the efforts of the school. A forced discussion about specific results with specific individuals at the school drives the focus of the school. This level of discussion forces a discussion of goals and how to achieve the desired results. One principal stated that, "Growth is crucial; we must keep our eyes on

the prize. I am much more keyed in to growth and RIT scores from year to year rather than MCA IIs."

Look at Current Practices

Accountability also forced principals to look at their current practices and specific data in terms of student performance. One of the eight principals who stated that accountability has been a result of his reflection practices, stated that, "Accountability is forcing us to look at where the gaps are at in the school." Another principal said, "We must break the data into strands building-wide, so that we can change." One principal discussed a change in practice as a result of reflection forced by the data from NCLB. "We tried to push it back on others and didn't look intrinsically. Now at X school we are really looking inward to say, What can we do?"

Culture and Climate

Culture and climate were discussed previously with regard to behaviors associated with instructional leadership; we now turn to culture and climate as a factor of accountability. One principal shared, "Part of it is just the climate, kids wanting to come to school, being safe and not bullied." Buildings posses a culture of their own already, one principal said: "If I leave tomorrow, the culture will continue. It is not reliant on me." Principals who have a broad definition of instructional leadership that includes school culture shared similar reflections.

One principal commented, "Instructional leadership, initially for one to two years, takes a back seat to re-teaching the culture in my building." This comment was the only one of its type but warrants mention here. If more principals follow this reasoning,

how will schools ever get out of constant flux, given that the turnover rate for principals is approximately five years? In contrast, "some principals waste too much time building relationships and observing past practice," one principal said. Obviously, given both these views, a delicate balance must be reached. The context of the school, and therefore culture, is also a factor of instructional leadership that cannot go without being said.

Training that Informed Instructional Leadership

As with any profession, training plays a significant role in how professionals do their jobs. A principalship resembles many other professions that require a license to practice. The current system in Minnesota requires that principals receive training from an accredited K-12 administration program. Upon completion of coursework and any other requirements, candidates receive a license allowing them to become a practicing administrator. Principals were asked what types of formal training experiences they encountered in their careers that influenced their instructional leadership. They responded that schooling, specific training, and informal training were the most influential in terms of becoming a principal and instructional leader.

Formative Educational Experiences

Eight principals referenced their own educational experiences as a component of formal training that influenced their instructional leadership. One principal mentioned that an undergraduate class he took spent a significant amount of time on the art of instruction. The class viewed actual lessons via videotape and analyzed instruction. This learning has stuck with this principal for many years into his administrative career.

More than one-third of the principals mentioned schooling, in particular principal preparation classes and graduate classes. Long pauses followed when interviewees were asked for further clarification about specific information imparted during the courses that helped prepare them for a role as an instructional leader. In fact, none of the principals could name a specific class or discussion that they recalled helping them become an effective instructional leader. Classes were mentioned in some instances with a loosely noted connection to instructional leadership. There was a mention of leadership classes and specific discussions about being a good leader, dealing with people, problem-solving, and balancing the many duties of the principal. These concepts appeared to be passing thoughts, though, and not true influential factors. A lack of a clear link between principals' perceptions of their formal coursework and instructional leadership shows a gap in what is being taught and its relation to an upcoming principal.

Specific Trainings

Nearly half of the principals cited specific training events (aside from education classes), including both district training and outside agency trainings. Five principals, from the largest district in the state, mentioned that the district trainings on specific curriculum were as comprehensive as national conventions. One principal mentioned PLC training and felt strongly that this specific training influenced his daily and weekly progress at the building. Principals noted that specific trainings by the Breakthrough Coach, Three Minute Walk-Through, and Johns Hopkins provided good strategies and practices that they took back to their buildings to help guide their instructional leadership decisions.

Informal Training

There seemed to be no connection between the experiences principals had in informal training and their instructional leadership. Some principals spoke of coaching, community leadership, and having children of their own as experiences that influenced their instructional leadership. All the examples of informal training focused on relationships with people and learning. For nearly half the principals, the trail of leadership could be traced back to high school or college, but the direct connection between early leadership experiences and instructional leadership practices was not clear. However, a history of leadership experiences at an early age truly had an impact on some principals, whether it was in instructional leadership or not.

None of the principals, with one exception, decided early on in their careers to become principals. A path of multiple experiences or, in some cases, a convincing word from a former principal or district leader led them into administration. Unless one believes that all experiences help inform who a person is at this moment and how they perform their job, it would not be clear from the principals' responses that their level of formal and informal training prepared them to be an instructional leader.

Actual Experiences

Most often, principals mentioned actual experiences, rather than coursework, as having influenced their instructional leadership practices. Actual experiences in the form

of teaching, internship/dean, mentorships, and non-teaching situations form the themes for this section.

Teaching Experiences

Five principals attributed their instructional leadership practices to their own teaching experiences. "My own bias being a teacher and having been a part of that world for many years helped to influence my instructional leadership," one principal said, succinctly capturing the sentiment expressed by these five principals. Teaching experience helped influence this principal's instructional leadership because he had been in the classroom to experience the actual struggles of teaching students with a variety of abilities. As with schooling, principals mentioned teaching experience but provided little specific detail, and when pressed for details, some principals could reflect on their teaching experiences and the types of students they encountered, but they could not make a direct connection between their teaching experiences and their approach to instructional leadership.

A majority of the principals were teachers at one time, thus some made a connection between leadership positions they held as teachers and their instructional leadership. Principals stated that being a grade representative at the building level, and being responsible for bringing information back to their colleagues, was the start of their leadership experience. Many principals also spoke of district-level leadership on committees or presenting to the school board. The skills they gained through these experiences, they said, helped when speaking to people and understanding the curriculum process.

Internship/Dean Experiences

Half the principals who responded about the importance of actual experience mentioned an internship or dean position, prior work experiences, and on-the-job training. One principal stated, "Like teaching, you can take all the classes in the world but until you are actually put in that position as principal and experience successes and failures, you have not really learned anything." Another principal said, "The context of being in the situation is far more valuable than any simulation a class can provide." Even more succinctly, one principal offered, "You don't know what it is like to be a principal until you have to send someone home or run your first staff meeting." The principals placed more stock in internship or dean-of-student-type experiences when it came to gaining an understanding of instructional leadership. None made any mention of a skill set or type of work that contributed to instructional leadership development.

Non-teaching Experiences

Three of the principals responded that prior work experience as a firefighter, social worker, and school psychologist helped inform their approaches to instructional leadership. These principals learned people skills that became vital when carrying out their instructional leadership practices. The common thread among them was the nature of *service* within their experiences—each had served people in some capacity and worked with people to ensure safety, whether physical or emotional. One principal mentioned that the specific behavioral and relational training he received and the work that he performed had given him the knowledge and comfort to work with people in multiple

settings. Another mentioned that the hierarchy of power was similar to the principalship and allowed for a transfer of skills and knowledge into the elementary principal position.

Other Instructional Leadership Influences

Although instructional leadership is influenced by training and actual experiences, principals also noted that other factors, including mentorship, reading, district-level influence, and principal discussions, played a role in developing their instructional leadership approaches.

Mentorship

Four principals mentioned that mentors influenced their instructional leadership approaches. Actually seeing other principals in action and working together with a mentor helped instill the traits of an instructional leader that they wanted. These principals also noted the support system mentors provided. Of all 20 principals, only two mentioned formal mentoring programs, where the district office assigned a mentor to new principals. Even in those districts, though, principals observed that their best mentoring came from people they had known previously and sought out. "I was assigned two mentors by my boss. It was a bummer because they didn't really want to seek me out. The intention was to have a mentor, but it didn't really work," one principal said.

Reading

More than half the principals interviewed saw reading as a means of gathering instructional leadership expertise. Readings ranged from literature about great and effective leaders and leadership (two mentioned reading about leaders outside education)

to professional development books about specific topics a school was initiating. Most principals mentioned reading as it related to Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), educational leadership, or specific topics in which they had an interest, and stated that the readings helped them stay current on topics and keep up with what is going on in the classrooms and with instruction. Principals did not mention specifics about how their readings translated into practice.

District-level Influences

Nearly half the principals mentioned that their district office influenced their instructional leadership through readings, advice, and/or mandates. Whether through curriculum mapping or other staff development options, principals felt there was a focus or direction from the central office for what type of instructional leadership should be initiated at the building and monitored by the principal.

Principal Discussions

Half the principals also mentioned the influence of principal discussion. Through informal dialogue with colleagues, principals felt driven forward in their instructional leadership. Some of the conversations came out of the district meeting time, where new curriculum or strategies were introduced. In one of the larger districts, principals met twice a month, once with all elementary principals and then next with specialized groups related to the initiatives and programs at the schools. This allowed a focused discussion of specific struggles or strategies that pertained to individual programs or groups of students that the principals had in common.

Principals have also been known to create their own learning groups to address their needs. One principal started a group that gets together once in a while to take time to step back to gain perspective" and look at best practices from their respective districts. They take the time to look at data and discuss how they can close the achievement gap.

In addition to groups, principals stated that having someone "on speed dial," as one principal put it, to discuss a situation with or just review a decision was extremely helpful. With a support network as close as a phone call away, principals could have the dialogue they needed to work through tough decisions and consider different scenarios prior to presenting them to teachers.

Conclusion

Instructional leadership does not come with a universal definition that all principals apply to their settings. By nature, defining an action is complex and highly interpretational. The only way to gain a better understanding for instructional leadership is to ask the very people charged with the task of being instructional leaders. After interviewing 20 principals, we have a clearer understanding of the individual perceptions of instructional leadership. Elementary principals have just as much difficulty defining instructional leadership as researchers do. The fact that principals acknowledge that it takes more than the principal alone to lead instruction was a key finding from this research. The best possible experience for a principal is simply talking with teachers about instructional practice and then seeing that implemented in the classroom.

The themes surrounding time, accountability, and actual experiences show how complex an action instructional leadership can be. Time was expressed as both a limitation and a desire as a means for instructional leadership. Time for professional development was viewed as the most limiting of factors. Accountability served as a reminder for principals of the importance of talking about student data and making informed decisions, rather than a threat of forced action. Principals' actual experiences, rather than training, proved to be more influential for informing instructional leadership.

This comprehensive picture provides a better understanding of instructional leadership. The next step is to continue the conversation to include connections to future practice and extended opportunities for research.

Chapter 5

Overview

This qualitative research project involved interviewing 20 practicing elementary school principals about instructional leadership. While the findings are presented in detail in Chapter 4, in this chapter I will highlight those that have particular significance for both leadership theory and practice in education. I begin by discussing the relationship of the major findings to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Then I will briefly summarize the implications of these findings for the four research questions that motivated the study:

1. How do principals define instructional leadership in their settings?

2. What reflections do principals have about instructional leadership?

3. What formal training have principals participated in that has informed their instructional leadership practices?

4. What experiences have principals had that has informed their instructional leadership practices?

Finally, implications for practice and further research will be shared, along with the limitations of this study.

Relationship of Major Findings of the Research to the Literature

This study discusses the four topics identified in the literature review, each of which will be discussed in more detail:

1. The complexities of defining instructional leadership, and the multiple views of instructional leadership discussed in the literature.

2. The principals' formal training and actual experiences as they inform instructional leadership practices.

3. The relationship between accountability, school culture, and instructional leadership.

4. The role of the principal in building an instructional culture within the school.

Complexities of Defining Instructional Leadership

Defining instructional leadership proved to be a complex task for respondents, even though their initial responses appeared very practical and focused on their actions. As principals spoke of their actions, and identified limitations and goals for instructional leadership, individual definitions became clear and principals' responses became more varied. As stated in the literature review in Chapter 2, three views of instructional leadership were noted: broad, narrow, and middle view. In this research, the principals' responses mirrored the literature, which identified all three views of instructional leadership.

In the narrow view, some principals expressed wanting to know specific content in order to help guide instruction and know how to help teachers. In contrast, some principals took the broad perspective of instructional leadership and viewed everyone in the school organization as instructional leaders who have an impact on instruction.

Two dominant mindsets emerged from the data. Some principals expressed the view that every decision they made was related to instruction, and that everything they did was related to instructional leadership. These principals identified connections between budgeting decisions and instructional leadership, specifically in allocating

money for the benefit of instruction. This broadly viewed definition is consistent with the research of Grogan and Andrews (2002). The other mindset reflected the view that there were certain specific behaviors related to instructional leadership, such as observing instruction in the classrooms and evaluating data.

No two principals defined instructional leadership the same way, much as Avilia (1990) found that there is little consensus on one definition of instructional leadership. There were similarities in the reported behaviors associated with instructional leadership, but even those areas of agreement were conditional because individuals attributed different degrees of importance to them. Given this level of variation, it is reasonable to conclude that there is no common working definition of instructional leadership. Instead, individual actions of principals in a dynamic setting with teachers, students, and parents create a working behavioral definition of instructional leadership that varies from school to school. This is consistent with Ginsberg's (1988) finding that principals' struggled when asked for their definition of instructional leadership. A decade later, little has changed, despite increasing rhetoric about the importance of instructional leadership. Each principal brought to the table their own definitions of instructional leadership, which translated into a wide variety of behaviors in each elementary school building under that principal's leadership.

To seek further clarification, principals were asked what behaviors they associated with instructional leadership. Again the variation among specific behaviors reported as a component of their instructional leadership supported the finding that there

is no single, defined list of instructional leadership tasks or behaviors that all principals are taught to follow.

Formal Training

According to the literature, the traditional emphasis of principal preparation programs has been on management, rather than instructional leadership. The principals interviewed confirmed this, although most of them had completed their training well after Ginsberg's (1988) observation that most universities failed to include instructional leadership skills in their preparation programs. Principals attempted to recall licensure or graduate classes that may have given them some information about instructional leadership. Most were unable to make a connection, but a few did state that leadership classes provided instruction about dealing with people, which has been useful while implementing instructional leadership practices. Only one principal mentioned a specific class about the art of instruction, which helped clarify what quality instruction looks like. The class viewed tapes of instruction and discussed the content and elements of good instruction. Aside from this one principal, the perception of a direct correlation between formal graduate or licensure classes was not supported by those interviewed.

It was hard for principals to link their formal or informal training to their instructional leadership practices, which is in line with the overall theme of the older research on formal training presented in Chapter 2. Rallis and Highsmith (1986) found that training is administrative, rather than focused on teaching, curriculum, or philosophy of education. When principals recalled classes or activities from their licensure training, they said the focus was mainly on management or administrative duties, rather than

improving instructional practices or informing curricular decisions. One reason for this disconnect could be the variation in how principals individually define and implement instructional leadership. We must also ask, however, how much has really changed in the preparation experiences of a group of leaders who completed their licensure work well after the broad consensus had emerged that instructional leadership was a core task for the principal?

Actual Experiences

Given this, it is only natural that principals would seek to draw on experiences to define and implement instructional leadership in their setting. Principals felt that their actual experiences influenced their instructional leadership more than any formal training or classes they had taken. Experiences noted included actual on-the-job moments rather than those from preparatory programs. Whether it was working as a dean or assistant principal, principals noted that those real-world experiences informed their instructional leadership practices much more than studying theory in a class. They valued learning from people and actual situations.

The principals' comments supported the argument that programs do not adequately prepare principals for the realities of the job. The literature states that principal training is merely an accumulated set of hours. Learning from experience is, however, the school of hard knocks: The principals interviewed confirmed this and often expressed a feeling of frustration when expected to take on the instructional leadership tasks of the job when in fact they were unclear about what those tasks were.

Role of Accountability

Given the role of NCLB in schools today, accountability and instructional leadership appear to be intertwined. This research showed that principals did not fear accountability, rather it served more as a springboard for conversations within the school to occur.

Test scores not a driving force.

With all the talk about NCLB and the pressures it places on districts and schools, it would make sense to think of AYP as a significant driving force for how principals implement instructional leadership decisions. Interviews with 20 principals showed that was not the case. There was a definite awareness of the NCLB legislation and the impacts of AYP on the district and school, but neither was a driving force for instructional decisions and leadership, the principals said. The awareness of data and student achievement was evident, but the forces behind yearly, state testing were not a direct indicator for instructional and organizational decision-making. Even the general pressures of tested achievement were mentioned by only a small number of principals as a driving force for their instructional leadership practices. This is counter to the assumptions in the literature, which highlight increased pressure on the principal as related to instructional leadership and NCLB (Carter and Klotz 1990). Principals interviewed frequently mentioned test data and interpretation as important pieces of information, but quickly noted that they did not see tests as the only indicator for instructional success or failure as a school. Holland's (2004) assertion that principals' monitoring of tested achievement was an influential factor for change was not supported in these interviews.

Using NCLB to start the data conversation.

The effects of NCLB did force conversations and inform decision-making. The principals who use data looked to more specific forms of data at the classroom and student levels to inform instructional leadership practices. The effect that NCLB had on most schools and principals was related to discussions and planning. Many principals reflected that NCLB had forced the conversations to happen and forced a closer examination of individual student data to ensure that *all* students were achieving. Principals minimized a focus on actual test scores and viewed them only as a snapshot, not the whole picture of what was working or not in their schools. There was little fear of repercussions from NCLB among any of the principals, and that led them to associate NCLB with instructional leadership practices.

School Culture

Creating the culture at the school is a collective effort by teachers, led by the principal, and vital to a school's success. Examining the important roles of creating culture, professional learning communities (PLCs), and relationships with staff will shed light on the major findings from this research as they relate to the literature.

Important role of creating culture.

Every school's culture is shaped by the collective efforts of teachers and the influence of the principal (Barnett, 2004). McCay (2001) argued that stimulating a positive culture was a primary role for the principal. This group of respondents clearly operated from that perspective. They viewed the job of creating a productive learning environment for students as the most important focus of the culture. In order to create a

culture focused on student learning, principals also required a culture that encouraged teacher learning. Principals believe that a highly effective school culture emerges through collaboration and relationships.

Professional learning communities.

PLCs were not described in detail by the principals interviewed, but they were referred to in many cases as a culture-building activity. Having the time set aside to meet and discuss instruction and student learning was always at the center of the PLC conversation. Principals viewed this as a means to achieve the level of focus on instruction that they hoped for with their teachers. The time to meet in teams was a must for principals and structuring that time around conversations about student learning were of the utmost importance to the principals interviewed. The idea of PLCs was viewed as part of the process of creating a positive culture for instructional leadership, just as Blase and Blase (1999) argued.

Relationships.

Key to the culture process was the relationship between principal and teachers. This relationship helps clarify the definition process of instructional leadership. Barnett and McCormick (2004) found that leadership is characterized by the one-to-one relationship between leaders and followers. The principals in this study showed signs of supporting this notion, coming to the conclusion that without the relationship between teacher and principal, there will not be an effective work culture. The culture will be affected by the type of relationship between the leader and followers, and therefore have an indirect impact on student learning.

In particular, this relationship provided the means to gain knowledge about what was actually happening in the classroom with student learning. The principals interviewed said a relationship with teachers that allowed a free flowing conversation about instruction helped instructional practices in the classroom. When teachers felt comfortable sharing with the principal their specific students' scores, successes, or failures, the principal viewed the relationship as supportive and positively affecting instructional practices. This finding reflects Fullan's (2004) observations about the importance of trusting relationships between principal and teacher. Building trust allows for the teachers to come to the principal with questions and ask for help.

As the literature states (for example, Coldren, 2007), there is still a boundary between the principal and the teacher. To build relationships and inform instructional practices effectively, principals must bridge that boundary. One method principals reported was attending staff development activities with staff. They viewed engaging in the actual learning with their teachers as an aid in relational building and personal learning. This supports Prestine's and Nelson's (2005) observation that principals need to share recent instructional experiences with their staffs to be more effective instructional leaders. Principals noted being a part of the learning process through staff development and professional growth at the building level, and the research of Blase and Blase (1999) supported this.

Principals stated that being a member of the culture rather than the authority figure of the school helped to bridge the relationship between principal and teacher and therefore span the gap between the two roles. "Being real and honest as far as being an

instructional leader will help teachers understand that you have been in their shoes before," one principal said. This principal's words typified the thoughts of many, who spoke of just how important it is to be a part of the culture and have power with others. Brunner (2001) found that the practice of having power with others, rather than having power over others, is viewed by teachers as more supportive, again helping to bridge the gap.

The gap was also addressed through building relational trust between principal and teacher. As the research reflects, trust in schools will ensure that joint outcomes prevail and that significant dividends are reached (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2000). The principals interviewed spoke of the high value of trust within the building in order to encourage teachers to be honest so that they can tackle real issues together. One principal also spoke of trust, which the teachers must gain through a positive attitude and good relationship. With this trust, teachers will run through walls for you, one principal explained. Providing the circumstances in which trust can be earned, Wheatley (1996) found, is an essential part of the trust-building process. The principals interviewed supported this notion with their ideas about building connections and giving opportunities for honest feedback and reflection. Through all the efforts, both principal and teacher play important roles in the relationship-building needed to support student learning and growth.

Spillane (2003) supports the value in the relational aspect of the principalship. Further, Grogan and Andrews (2002) imply that human capital building is the main focus of instructional leadership. Principals viewed forming those relationships with teachers

through conversations and discussions as the work of instructional leaders. The interviewed principals saw their relationships with staff as a collaborative effort rather than an isolated authority over staff. Blase and Blase (1999) support this notion with their finding that a relationship is built through a de-emphasis on principal control.

Principals also felt a need for relationships with other principals. The principals in this study value the informal dialogue between principals, whether face-to-face or on the phone. Principals mentioned the importance of being able to network with other principals for the purpose of learning strategies and gaining perspective on tough issues. Some principals even felt supported when there was just a collegial voice on the other end of the phone. Often, the elementary school principal is the only formally identified leader in the building, and therefore can become overwhelmed with the immense tasks of the principalship. Southworth (2002) found that principal-to-principal interaction provides structure for working through the hard tasks an instructional leader faces.

Implications for Current Policy and Practice

The implications for current policy and practice are limited because the practice of instructional leadership itself is so variable. This variability can be seen in the distinct needs of individual elementary schools and the varying experiences and thought processes of principals. Implications for current policy and practice stem from the challenges and opportunities of instructional leadership. The purpose of this research was to find out how principals define and view their role as an instructional leader. This research also looked at what elementary principals do and think about when they are

implementing instructional leadership within their schools. There were four influential

factors that became evident from the research: defining instructional leadership, impact of

licensure classes, actual experiences, and district-level involvement.

Understanding How Principals Define Instructional Leadership

Elementary principals are responsible for guiding instruction within a school and

are held accountable for the success and failures of the students and staff. Navigating the

process to meet this reality is challenging, especially when it comes to the highly variable

actions of instructional leadership. Defining instructional leadership is very challenging.

Due to the fact that the definition requires an explanation of action, it is difficult to

regulate a single way to view instructional leadership. One definition is not necessarily

appropriate either, considering the extremely diverse and fluid environments of

elementary schools. To simplify instructional leadership to one list of actions would, on

paper, seem to help regulate what the principal does in each building, but it would fail to

capture the true essence of instructional leadership in the elementary school. Due to the

endless variables in a school system, as well as the multiple needs of staff and students, a

one-size-fits-all definition would not suffice. This research did not attempt to correlate

specific instructional leadership actions with increased student achievement or improved

school culture.

Lacking a universal definition of instructional leadership, principals create their

own definitions and apply their own strategies to their practices. For some, this process is

revealing and beneficial in guiding self-discovery about what it really means to be a

principal and be responsible for all the staff and students in a school. For others, it is

scary and often frustrating that principals do not have direction or clarity about actions because the important instructional activities often get pushed to the bottom of the list so they can address more immediately pressing issues and actions. To truly become an effective instructional leader, one must plan and prepare first and then fit the rest of the "job" around the "non-negotiables." Without the foundational planning for improved instruction, an organization often flounders or hops from initiative to initiative without putting the necessary time or efforts into what really matters, and therefore help teachers and students learn and grow throughout the year.

Instructional leadership is a very complex concept to define, as the 20 respondents to this study illustrated. Without an absolute definition of the intended results of effective instructional leadership, how could principals ever go about achieving it? With nothing to compare to, principals are charged with the task of creating a system that is high-functioning and successful according to many standards, including NCLB, state and local requirements, and often a district strategic plan. All these documents guide principals in their quest for instructional leadership, but none of them contain an exact process or formula for instructional leadership.

Continuing the conversation to provide strategies and support for principals in this quest would be beneficial. This research shows that opening the discussion and having dialogue helps define the highly complex interactions in elementary schools today. The principals interviewed were open to discussing what they do and eager to know the "answers" for how to get the important, instructional work of the principal done. The term instructional leadership seems to be present everywhere and used by many. Despite

its apparent popularity, though, there is still a lack of complete understanding about the term. Assumptions are made about what it looks like or sounds like in context. Starting the conversation and beginning to define what the role of the instructional leader should look like would greatly benefit the profession. Knowing that this definition must look different in each context, there is great value in helping principals define for their own schools what good instructional leadership looks like. The next step after defining instructional leadership is putting that definition into action. The principals in this study were eager to achieve high levels of instructional leadership and would be well-served by more direction about how to do so.

Licensure Classes

According to the data collected in this research, principals do not recall their licensure classes providing the necessary skills or strategies to become an instructional leader. This creates a potential situation for universities that offer principal licensure programs as well as for aspiring principals. According to the principals interviewed, there was little relation between courses in the licensure program and the actual instructional leadership principals felt needed to be performed in the school. One possible explanation is that the concepts of instructional leadership were embedded in the licensure programs. One principal interviewed said that he developed a "leadership" lens through which to view schools. His leadership classes focused more on relational situations and the importance of building relationships with staff. A gap in how to use those relationships to inform instructional practice was noted. Even if principal license programs do integrate the important instructional leadership lessons and guidance into leadership classes, it

proves interesting that the principals in this study could not recall that experience or make that connection freely.

An additional explanation could be that instructional leadership, as a term, is shifting in some circles to leadership for learning, especially in light of research on PLCs. In this research, though, none of the principals mentioned leadership for learning as a substitution for instructional leadership.

Actual Experiences

Given the lack of both a definition and specific classes that provided at least a working definition, this research revealed that instructional leadership is informed by principals' actual individual experiences, internship experiences, or on-the-job training. Considering how new principals gain their internship hours, these could have been positive or negative experiences. There is limited regulation of how internship hours are facilitated or guided. Some principals reported that the instructional leadership they learned was from examples of effective instructional leadership practices or non-effective instructional leadership practices of principals they worked with during an internship or other specific experience related to leadership.

Becoming a principal is a very personal journey guided by many factors. The variation in how principals practice instructional leadership is wide and presents many opportunities for further research. Deciding the most important thing to focus attention on is determined by many factors of the school that the principal takes over. Could there be some type of guide that provides basic foundational actions that would help to inform the practice of the principalship in terms of instructional leadership?

District-level Involvement

Another aid in instructional leadership could be district-level involvement in defining practices and working with principals. One principal suggested that an understanding from the district of the expectations of instructional leadership could go a long way toward helping principals ensure success in their buildings. What if districts used the same instructional leadership practices PLCs use, and worked with their administrative staffs to define for the district what instructional leadership should look like? They could also go so far as helping principals explore strategies and ideas for implementing best practices at their buildings. Could there be a disconnect between the lack of definition or a simple misunderstanding of what the district deems important and how the principals respond? That being said, there is still a disconnect between what is being talked about as instructional leadership and how to make that happen in a school culture.

Some conversation between district personnel and principals centers on professional goals, rather than instructional leadership specifically. Two principals spoke about sharing professional goals with their supervisors, and noted that this helped them reflect on their individual instructional leadership practices. With only two of the 20 principals mentioning this type of conversation, though, the impact in this study was not significant.

Does the sole responsibility of instructional leadership lie with the principal or does the district, as a larger organization, play a part in that process? In terms of strategic planning and organizational success, it is the combination of multiple buildings that

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makes up the larger organization. The leadership at the multiple buildings, therefore, affects the overall goals and missions for the entire district. The notion that the whole is only as good as the sum of its parts could have implications for instructional leadership when viewed from a much wider lens.

Limitations

As with any study, limiting factors must be considered in context to fully frame the arguments being made. This research is subject to many limitations, which must be carefully considered when making broad generalizations and when looking at avenues for further research and understanding.

The limitations of this study include the fact that only 20 principals were interviewed. According to Orcher (2005), "How the participants are selected is usually much more important than how many are selected." Despite this fact, relying on only 20 principals' views to represent a larger body of thought ought to be undertaken with some caution. In the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, many districts, and perspectives were not represented by the 20 principals selected.

Using a homogeneous, purposive sample limits the variation among the principals' opinions. This type of sampling, though, does allow the researcher to narrow the scope of the study and limit the number of variables (Orcher, 2005). In this specific study, only principals in their first five years of a principalship were considered. This factor was limiting, but also broad in that the principals interviewed were of a variety of ages and came from a variety of background experiences. The views of the principal who

had been a teacher for 30 years were much different than the principal who had worked as a speech and language pathologist for many years prior to becoming a principal.

Another limitation was the actual process of interviewing. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), "Interviews involve personal interaction; cooperation is essential" (p. 110). It can never be fully known whether the principals were comfortable sharing all the details of their situations, or whether the questions asked provoked a deep level of response.

While certainly a notable limitation, it was also a risk worth taking to gain a deeper understanding from individuals about their thinking and professional practices. In a semi-structured, open-ended interview, the interviewee takes the lead and the interviewer follows (Orcher, 2005). This can cause one interview to go in a very different direction than another. The topics presented and ideas shared could potentially have a very different spin. To help account for this fact, each interview began with the same template of interview questions, thus providing some commonality for analysis. Also, gathering personal stories proved to be unregulated, and therefore a limitation, because the stories shared could be determined by the time of year, time of day, or prior daily experiences that influenced the interviewees' responses.

Digitally recording the interviews and taking notes proved a thorough method of data collection. This method, by nature, can be limiting in that the interviewee may feel reluctant to participate fully knowing that their exact words are being recorded (Orcher, 2005). All precautions were taken to account for this limitation, including notifying subjects prior to the interview as well as asking again just before the interview began.

However, it appeared that the principals were unaffected by the recording device and spoke freely about themselves and their instructional leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

The prevalent theme from this research is that the unclear definition of instructional leadership has a great degree of influence on each elementary school principal's individual practices. Creating the "one" definition of instructional leadership will not provide the clarity and consistency it would appear to in theory. Due to the highly personal aspects of leadership and varying contexts within elementary schools, it would be impossible for instructional leadership to look and feel the same in each school, therefore making a definitive definition moot. Future research could help inform the practice of instructional leadership by providing research-based actions that are then used in conjunction with a guide for evaluating the actions and their effectiveness.

As with many ideas in education, semantics can both muddy the waters and define practice more clearly. If instructional leadership is no longer the buzzword, something new will encompass the same concept, likely holding the principal accountable with even tighter strings than before. Just what do principals use as their standard for effective practice? Is that the same across all principals? How do we support principals in this effort if it is not clearly identified? The one thing that became clear from this research is that principals are doing amazing things in their schools with what appears to be little direction or training.

One area of further research to consider is the potential correlation between the difficulty of defining instructional leadership and effective instructional leadership practices that impact student achievement. Is this same notion shared among principals in middle school and high school settings?

Another study could examine the district level and the actual support structures for principals in a specific school district. Does that district's administration define instructional leadership or the practices they want their principals to implement? If so, is that made explicit to the principals? Do district personnel engage in the practices they want their principals to engage in at their respective sites? Does district-level leadership guide principals in an effective way? Is there a correlation between the conversations at the principal/administrative level and those at the building level? If principal meetings and conversations are managerially focused, does that translate into similar situations at a building? If one way is modeled at the district leadership meetings in which principals participate, is that practiced at the building?

Further investigation of the actual principal licensure classes offered at universities and the intended lessons about instructional leadership would help inform the field of educational leadership and the principalship. Is there a conscious effort to teach instructional leadership to aspiring principals? If not, how is it assumed future principals will learn about instructional leadership? Through this research, it was evident that practicing principals did not make a connection between their licensure coursework and the day-to-day actions of a principal. The majority of the learning appears to be through actual experiences. If universities are trying to prepare principals for the real world, is

there some way to help facilitate actual experiences that get at the important skills needed to be an effective instructional leader?

A final area for research relates to the act of reflecting on instructional leadership practice and the effect on informing actual practice. Is there a correlation between talking about instructional leadership and reflecting on practice and the actual outcomes at the building? Do principals become better instructional leaders when they talk about their practices and frustrations? How does self-reflection and the support principals receive in relation to their self-reflections affect actual practice?

Questions like these further the learning process and inform future practice. Through future practice, we become more informed and change current experiences to achieve the ultimate intended result of doing things better than we have and for the right reasons.

Conclusion

The preceding research provides only a snapshot of what instructional leadership looks like to the principal in the elementary setting. Even with this limited view, though, much information can be gathered and more ideas for future research generated. Examining the research surrounding instructional leadership and then interviewing practicing principals helped to set the stage for understanding just how complex the process of leading an elementary school can be. Gaining a specific view into the elementary principalship may not prove generalizable to other levels of school leadership, but it does help inform the value and importance of self-reflection. Throughout the entire

data collection process, principals spent time reflecting on and thinking about their practices and what informs those practices. It is vital to learn and grow from that experience. If there is cause to think deeply about what is being done in the school system and why, then practice has been informed. With further definition comes clarity. Also with further experience comes a greater level of confidence, which was evident in the range of principals interviewed. Accepting the limitations and embracing the strengths allows principals to provide the leadership for the best possible learning environment for students. This is no small task and was never viewed as such by the principals interviewed.

There is a great level of integrity that accompanies the principalship and with that comes a great level of accountability. All the principals interviewed showed just how committed a person must be to truly affect students and staff in a positive way. Looking to the future, there are still many unanswered questions about instructional leadership, but the path to discovery is rich with learning and ever-changing, just as the dynamic system of education has and will continue to be in the future.

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Appendix A   Interview Questions

1) Explain your journey and how you got to be a principal?

2) When you think of the term "instructional leader" what comes to your mind?

3) What types of behaviors do you associate with instructional leadership?

4) What do you do at your school as an instructional leader

5) What are the things you would like to do, as an instructional leader but can't?

6) What are the limiting factors that do not allow you to do the things you want to do?

7) In the last few years has your thinking about instructional leadership changed? Has your approach changed?

8) What types of things influence your instructional leadership decisions? (ie. Reading, discussions with peers, reflection on what works and what didn't.)

9) Ho do you know you are being an effective instructional leader? What are the indicators you use to assess your instructional leadership proficiency?

10) How does accountability effect what you can and do to be an effective instructional leader? (state standards, testing, curricula)

11) What formal training have you received that has informed your instructional leadership practices? (What type of undergraduate degree do you have? What were the classes like in your principal preparation training? What types of instructional leadership training did you learn in your principal classes?)

12) What other type of training do you attribute your instructional leadership to?

13) How did and do the Minnesota Competencies (or equivalent) impact your learning?

14) What types of leadership experiences do your draw upon in your work as an instructional leader? (What types of leadership roles and experiences have you participated in prior to being a principal?

15) Have you had some type of middle level management experiences? (teacher leader, mentor, coach, staff development, etc.) If so, what skills have you drawn upon to balance management with instructional leadership?

16) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B   Instructional Leadership Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research study of instructional leadership and the principalship.
We ask that you read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by Karoline Warner, a doctoral candidate for the University of Minnesota in the area of Educational Policy and Administration.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of the principal as instructional leader. Instructional leadership is a vital part of the principals' duties and can look differently in each school. There is much to be learned by practicing principals including how they view instructional leadership and what that looks like in a school setting. The delicate balance of management and instructional leadership is a time consuming part of the principals' day. How principals deal with this balance and what that looks like in the school setting all can help provide insight into how principals can be effective instructional leaders and meet the ever-increasing demands of accountability.

Procedure:
If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to participate in a one-hour interview. This interview will require that you respond openly and honestly to the questions and provide the researcher with your personal perspective as a principal.
You will also be asked to review the notes from the interview and verify the validity of what was transcribed.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
The study has the following risks: First, the risks will be minimal as the only information being requested is that which is volunteered by the interviewee. The level of risk in sharing information lies with the interviewee and their comfort level of expressing their ideas.

Cofidentiality:
All material will be kept confidential including the tapes and transcribed notes. Within the research, all names will be replaced with pseudonyms to protect the identify of the participants. Any identifying details about the district in which the principal works will be protected and reported in general terms, so as to protect the chance of determining the principal by the district being described.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions

Karoline Warner
952-466-2216
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If you want to talk to someone other than the researcher, you may contact Dr. Seashore, the researcher's advisor at klouis@umn.edu. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature_____ Date _____

Signature of Investigator or Person Obtaining Consent_____
Date _____

Appendix C   Coding Process

Journey
Working definition of instructional leadership
Behaviors associated with instructional leadership
Formal training attributed to instructional leadership
Informal/ other training attributed to instructional leadership
Other leadership experiences
Other influences on instructional leadership decisions
Limiting factors to instructional leadership
Wishes for instructional leadership
Affects of accountability
Change of view of instructional leadership
How evaluate own effectiveness of instructional leadership

Expanded codes
Journey
      Teacher experience
      TOSA
      Internship
      Administrative experience
      Career dreams
      Life experiences
      Encouragement for administrative role

Working definition
      Reflection
      Data
      Bigger than principal
      Motivate staff
      Structure
      Give tools/staff development
      Hard conversations
      Visibility
      Teacher training
      Understanding curriculum
      Trust
      Accountability
      Frustration

Behaviors Associated with instructional leadership
      Listening
      Questioning
      Reflection
      Conversations with teachers
      Visibility
      Mentoring/ modeling
      Assistants
      Professional learning communities

Using data
Trust
Culture
Notice positives
Observations and walk throughs
Training with teachers
Principal training at the district level
Hard decisions and conversations
Focus
Research and reading
Reading 1st grant
Facilitate collaboration

Formal training
Undergraduate courses
Principal classes
Graduate school
Mentors
Actual experiences instead of formal training
Teaching experience
National and state standards
Reading first grant
District training
Other training

Informal training
Coaching
TOSA
Reading
Teaching
Personal high school leadership
District opportunities
Community leadership
Own children
National and state organizations
Union leadership
Mentoring
Who you are

Other leadership experiences
Graduate/ post graduate work
Reading
High school experiences
Community leadership experiences
Internship/work experience in quasi administrative role
Teaching
District administrative role
Teacher leadership experience
Work for the principal
National and state organizations
Union leadership
Work with others

Other influences
    District focus
    Principal PLC
    Principal discussions
    Teacher PLC
    Reading
    Reading first grant
    Mentors
    Internship
    Internal drive and perceptions
    Get to know culture
    Staff survey and analysis
    National mandates
    Professional organizations
    Professional workshops
    Looking at student data
    Accountability

Limiting factors
    Management
    Meetings
    Outside forces
    Other tasks
    Student behaviors
    Student needs
    Staff behaviors
    Observations
    Time
    Money
    Teacher contract and uninon
    School climate
    Individual challenges
    People not show weakness

Wishes for instructional leadership
    More time in the classroom
    Not feel rushed
    Curriculum learning
    Balance
    Restrictions
    Peer observations
    Principal self development
    Change
    Staff development
    Professional learning communities

Accountability
    Forced discussions
    Strengths of NCLB
    Downfalls of NCLB
    Self-reflection

Pressure
Positive results
Teacher evaluation
Importance of accountability
Other sources of accountability

Change in view of instructional leadership
Learning ropes first year
Increased comfort after time
Less is more
Ever changing definition
Shift from teaching to administrative leadership
Working with changing bad teacher habits/behviors
Specific curriculum and teaching
Establish relationships
Accountability with NCLB

Knowledge of effectiveness
Look to other principals
Surveys
Feedback from others
Evaluating the school
Observations from staff interactions and conversations
Viewing practices in the classroom or with other teachers
Data
Struggles
Self-reflection
Focus

<u>Final Codes</u>

Working definition
Bigger than principal
Broad responsibilities

Behaviors associated with instructional leadership
Motivating staff
Creating school culture
Participating in professional learning communities
Visibility
Conversations
Focus

Self-reflection on instructional leadership
Feedback
Data
Observations from staff interactions and conversations
Perspectives evolve and change over time
Shift from teaching to administrative leadership

Limiting factors
Outside forces, tasks that distract from instructional leadership

Time
Money
Teacher contract and union
School climate
Individual challenges

Training that informed instructional leadership
Formative
Specific trainings
Informal training

Actual Experiences
Teaching
Internship/work experience in quasi administrative role
Non-teaching experiences

Other instructional leadership influences
Mentorship
Reading
High school experiences
Community leadership experiences
District level influences
Principal discussions