LEARNING TO LEAD: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PREPARATION, INDUCTION, ROLES AND PRACTICES OF BEGINNING PRINCIPALS – A CANADIAN STUDY

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Abstract

The growing complexity regarding a principal's role and associated leadership tasks, combined with changing societal realms and educational reform pose serious challenges to even the most experienced educational leaders. For new school leaders, taking on the principalship within a given organizational context is predicated on the notion that learning the role is a continual process of "being and becoming."

This research inquires into the nature of early-phase leadership and strives to understand the phenomenon of the beginning principalship by examining roles, agency and practices of new leaders as influenced by their preparation and induction support. Given that school leaders impact the performance of organizational members and that new principals are required to perform the same job as their experienced counterparts, in order to identify ways to meet the needs of individuals transitioning into the position, it is important to understand new principals' experiences.

This qualitative phenomenological study used semi-structured interviews to investigate perceptions and experiences of sixteen newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals from two separate school boards in the following areas: preparation and induction experiences, developing relationships and building trust with colleagues, as well as how newcomers enacted their roles, utilized their agency and exercised their emerging leadership practice.

Evidence substantiates that beginning principals experienced role-identity transition in adjusting to the nature and demands of new leadership, including administrative overload, and challenges associated with organizational dynamics and external influences. New leaders developed compensatory strategies and immediately acted to acquire organizational information and improve conditions for teaching and learning. The investigation found that beginning principals employed engagement processes and attended to "three dimensional" trust criteria to develop relationships and build trust. In addition, although new principals valued the use of cohorts, real-time training and mentoring, they missed receiving formal support during the transition time frame referred to as the "crossover gap."

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my amazing parents
Beverley and Harvey Northfield
and
to the loving memory
of my brother Kevin.

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Chapter One

Framing First-Timers:

Situating the Beginning Principal

Stuck in the Middle with You

– Stealers Wheel, (*Album*), 1972

This chapter will set the foundation for my study exploring the beginning principalship by examining related research literature. First, I provide a preamble which introduces the phenomenon of the beginning principalship and signals the nature of my research questions. Second, I describe my own connection and interest in this topic and then develop three distinct yet related areas of literature integral to understanding the nature and design of educational leadership, including the processes of reciprocal influence experienced by beginning principals.

Three areas related to school leadership are examined; educational leadership (role and reform), the principalship (tasks, knowledge, skills and practices), and socialization (process, types and interactive influences experienced by newcomers). Beginning principals are situated in the middle of these three influencing factors related to educational leadership: role/reform, the principalship and socialization. A concept map illustrates the arrangement of topics areas discussed in the chapter (figure 1.1).

The first area of literature review looks at educational leadership and the changing nature and roles associated with the position in relation to the current educational reform context. As part of exploring the relationship between educational leadership and educational reform, there is a description of the emerging Canadian educational policy and reform philosophy which set the parameters and establishes the context for beginning principals' job expectations and leadership experiences.

The second area of discussion relates to the components of the principalship itself, the purpose of which is to examine the features of school leadership that new principals are expected to take on. This includes identifying the basic tasks, knowledge, skills and practices typically exhibited to varying degrees by school leaders and required at some point by newcomers. The final section of review explores the construct of socialization and

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demystifies the mutually influencing processes and types of socialization involved in becoming and being a novice principal. This entails discussion about the interactive influences at play for neophyte principals.

Figure 1.1 – Situating Beginning Principals

Educational Leadership

Tasks
Knowledge/Skills
Practices

The Principalship

Beginning Principals

Role/Reform

Socialization

Scope/Intensity
Policy/Accountability
Governance/Philosophy
Learning Communities

Process
Types
Interactive Influences
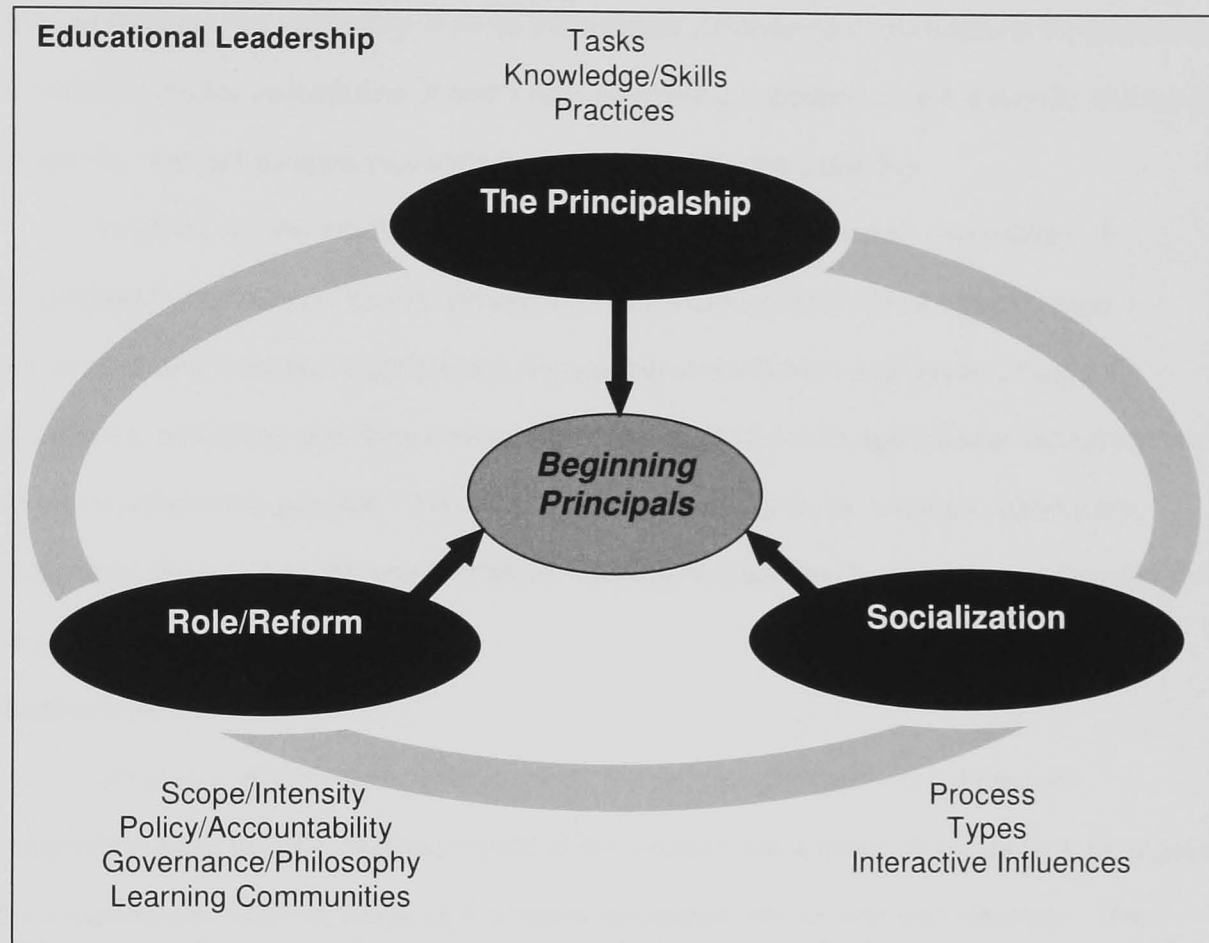
Preamble

The beginning principalship as a phenomenon is a lesser known, yet significant part of a much larger leadership construct – the principalship. Taking on the principalship and learning to perform the role within a given organizational context is predicated on the notion that learning the role is a continual process of "being and becoming." As such, the process of being a school leader certainly does not begin nor does it end with one's appointment to the position. For any individual taking on the post, the scope and sequence of the preparation and support processes involved in learning and enacting the position are far reaching both before and after acquiring the position.

After appointment, preparation exercises become, by definition, induction experiences. Also, defining and refining one's role and practice as a school leader is not a fixed or final reality. Rather, it is an ongoing process of development and adjustment that

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begins before appointment but is most acutely experienced following the formal appointment to the post. Upon appointment as a school leader, new principals are immediately required to assume the responsibilities of their ascribed role. As such, they must learn to respond to and mesh appropriately with the organizational influences within which they are immersed. This process involves the realization of three interrelated dimensions of perceptions for each new principal: cognitive perceptions of one's role, affective perceptions of one's identity and sense of agency, and behavioural perceptions associated with one's practice.

In efforts to gain insight into the phenomenon of the beginning principalship, I investigated beginning principals' perceptions and experiences in the following areas: preparation and induction experiences, developing relationships and building trust with colleagues, as well as how they enacted their roles, utilized their agency and exercised their emerging leadership practice. This included examining the tasks, routines, agency and challenges associated with new principals' attempts to negotiate leadership and management responsibilities.

Beginnings

My own evolution of experiences with the principalship and my subsequent realizations as to the purpose and nature of the position are a result of a collection of ongoing life experiences including those as a student, employee, researcher and educator. The culmination of these experiences helped me to develop a broad understanding of the principalship in relation to the notions of education and leadership that serve as a foundation from which to direct my interest in exploring the phenomenon of the beginning principalship.

Throughout my schooling, I viewed the principal as an 'entity' larger than life, representing the ultimate in scholastic authority, known to myself and my classmates as the recognized symbol of accountability for maintaining proper order and participation in school. However, the personalities and talents of those occupying the principalship were largely unknown to me. The principal really was "the man in the principal's office" (Wolcott, 1973).

My experiences as a teacher helped me to see varying constructs of school leadership. I viewed some leaders whom I worked with as compassionate, collegial and competent while I found others to be insecure, self-serving and vindictive. I realized that leaders will come and go and that organizations and individuals can survive regardless of the

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quality of authority exercised. However, I learned that good people with leader motivation and skills in school leadership positions can positively contribute to the quality of life for school members and the composite growth and achievement of the organizations for which they lead. To me, good school leadership is important and should always be considered a work in progress and never taken for granted.

During post-graduate studies I was able to work with several classmates who were educational leaders and aspiring principals. Through cooperative learning exercises and small group projects I was able to appreciate the personalities and leadership aptitudes and abilities of many of my colleagues and felt that I could forecast possible successes for them in the principalship. However, for a few of my classmates, I did not feel the same. Some of the best suited and most talented leaders in my classes were not actively pursuing school leadership at the time while others, who were bent on seeking the principalship, were, in my estimation, not nearly as capable or as accommodating as they needed to be for taking on such work.

It was not until my experience as a researcher that I was able to see the classic construct of the principalship as it existed in public school settings. While working as a university teacher I completed nationally funded research that explored principal succession throughout Nova Scotia. I learned that the design and efficacy of the principalship is continually up for debate and, regardless of the person occupying the post, the school leader can't please everyone. These perceptions and insights are perhaps standard fare for any leadership position; however, when interviewing principals, I noticed one striking commonality. Upon introductions and commencing with the interview process with principals, it seemed as though they all had the same look – a distracted and distantly attentive, yet pensive gaze. It's hard to believe that over three years of interviews, all the participants got together to agree on this look. The principals seemed to be in a constant state of busy, especially in the mind. Once they were eased away from worrying about the immediate operations of the school and into talking about their work, it was non-stop.

During the second and third years of research interviews I was able to grasp a definite and discernable difference between experienced principals and those newly appointed to the position. At this time, I began to seriously empathize with the plight of the novice principal. It

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seemed that most veteran administrators were more comfortably resigned to their predicaments, whereas newly appointed school leaders were more ambivalent and much less settled in their roles. This is probably to be expected of new principals. Also, I noticed many aspects of influence and power brokering that seemed to be at play for beginners. New principals indicated that it was important to tread lightly, almost as if they were buying time to survive their first year without messing things up. I was able to see that the newcomers were experiencing pressures to satisfy their superiors and constituents while attempting to placate professional and organizational sources of influence. At this point, I began to seriously consider exploring the beginning principalship in order to figure out how best to help those taking on the post.

Teaching aspiring and novice Canadian and Bhutanese school leaders while in Nova Scotia and teaching neophyte principals in Bhutan enabled me to value the unique contributions brought to class by individual participants regarding their personal histories and the challenges posed by their leadership contexts. I was able to see how individual school leaders were able to connect role conceptions with who they were and how they intended to lead their schools. At this same time, I lived with a number of post-graduate students who were school leaders in their own home countries. At issue in many of our discussions was the purpose and methods of education and educational leadership. Our conversations helped me to understand the connections between beginning leaders' espoused philosophies, values, beliefs and practices of educational leadership.

Experiential Learnings about the Principalship

The learnings and realizations that occurred as a result of my experiences with the principalship, including those with individuals who were principals, offered insights about educational leadership and helped me to develop areas of inquiry regarding the beginning principalship. My own school experiences provided the background from which to question the role of the principal within the school and, in particular, the principal's influence on organizational functioning and school members' performance.

School teaching experiences helped me to configure questions as to how school leaders enact their leadership practice and question why leaders do what they do. My research experiences helped me to see some of the inherent difficulties and complexities

associated with the principalship and how prior leadership and preparation experiences along with socialization processes impacted the thinking and actions of new principals.

My educational experiences as a postgraduate student enabled me to explore leadership and gave me pause to wonder why certain individuals pursued the principalship. What was it about their personhood and skill sets that made them viable candidates for school leadership? In teaching school leaders at home and abroad I was able to identify the rudiments and investigate the differences in school leadership policy and practices in differing contexts. I was also able to appreciate the differences in how individuals defined themselves as new school leaders. Living with school leaders from a number of different countries enabled me to discover subtle and, not so subtle differences in personality, disposition and styles of social interaction among novice school leaders.

Overall, I realized that individual school leaders experience reciprocal influences through different forms and sources of socialization. In addition, my experiences and learnings helped me to see that aspects of role and practice are related areas of interest for exploration and questioning regarding the beginning principalship.

Educational Leadership: Role and Reform

At present, a number of cumulative factors play into the timely examination of the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals. For example, the complexity of the role has increased in response to the changing societal and educational reform dynamic experienced in Canada, in North America (Crow, 2006; Fullan, 2001a; Firestone & Riehl, 2005) and throughout much of the world (Bottery, 2007; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2002, 2006; Stevenson, 2006; Walker & Qian, 2006). In fact, decades of research have revealed the changing nature and methods of educational leadership over the years (Burns, 1978; Day et al., 2000, 2008, 2009; Gronn, 2003; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Mulford, 2003; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999).

Furthermore, educational leadership in North America has experienced a metamorphosis of sorts evolving from traditional, authoritative, managerial persuasions to more fluid, versatile, democratic and distributed constructs. This is in large part due to a change in what can be considered to be educational leadership. It now embraces more organizational content requiring school leaders to manage all operational aspects of the

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school site while, at the same time, expecting them to spearhead instructional processes and guide professional development to build school capacity in order to meet internal goals as well as those imposed by external agents. Such diverse factors have thrown researchers into a quandary in their efforts to study educational leadership and the preparation of educational leaders (Levin, 2006, 38).

This growing complexity regarding the principal's role and associated leadership tasks, combined with the changing societal realm and educational reform dynamic pose serious challenges to even the most experienced educational leaders. Currently, the life world of educational leadership is complex and is fast becoming more demanding amongst escalating work demands, reduced capital funding and diminishing support. In addition, much of the western world's educational policy and correlative assessment strategies focus primarily on the academic results of teaching and learning and have brought about increased accountability for all educational participants. In turn, this has been manifest in a recent, yet noticeable, shift in educational policy for educational leaders (Firestone & Riehl, 2005). It has moved from expecting school principals to be chiefly concerned with being proficient fiscal, organizational and political managers to making them directly accountable for student, staff and school performance (Levin, 2006).

The ever-present reality of mass centralization of educational governance in Canadian and international public education systems (Levin, 1999) provides the context by which principals in many western nations currently attempt to accommodate concerns for increased accountability and the call for increased student performance. A 'new public management', utilizing business management principles and 'public choice theory' reliant on free market thinking, pervades current political agendas and administrative exchange in western democratic education systems (Goldspink, 2007). The dominance of economic rationales for change combined with a climate of criticism of educational institutions and the general absence of additional funding to secure improvement permeates contemporary educational systems (Bottery, 2007). Strategies used to deal with the prevailing educational reform context include the widespread use of decentralization, increased achievement testing through publication of results and more centralized curricula (Levin, 2004).

For the past decade there has been a call for the increased implementation of site-based management schemes with a recent emphasis on the use of strategic (Davies & Davies, 2005) and distributed leadership models (Leithwood et al., 2009; Spillane, 2006) along with the promotion of organizational learning (Mulford, 2003) for school improvement (Fullan, 2001a; Harris, 2002). Unfortunately, there has been a 'decentralized centralism' (Karlsen, 2000) where decentralization acts to delegate responsibilities wedded to greater central surveillance, not as a devolution of power to the periphery (Bottery, 2007). In large part, this been a result of centralized enforcement of inspection and accountability measures associated with what is currently referred to as "standards-based" reform.

This dynamic threatens the traditional view of the role of educational administrators as part of a loosely coupled system. Weick's (1976) theory of 'loose-coupling' in the educational arena is built on constructivist epistemology in that each of the agents which comprise the system make sense of their roles and contributions to the whole in different ways, leading to increased professional autonomy, adaptability, satisfaction, and experimentation (Orton & Weick, 1990). Traditionally, governance structures and administrative leaders have traditionally existed to buffer or protect the technical core (the knowledge and work of teachers) from outside influence and disruption in hopes of maintaining a 'logic of confidence' with the public (Elmore, 2000). However, today's school leaders are faced with having to adapt and revise traditional leadership orientations. While current accountability demands pressure schools and school leaders to become more predictable, more efficient and more rational in their work, the changing nature of schools, students, knowledge and society requires more complex, innovative, dynamic and ambiguous roles for school leaders (Crow, 2004).

In Canada, provincial governments allocate resources, demarcate funds, re-work and revise curricula as well as develop, pilot and introduce new educational programs and directives, all in the hopes of maintaining public confidence. Trustees and school boards attend to regional concerns while continually attempting to increase the range and quality of educational services for their area member constituents. Educators and students alike face the heightened challenge of meeting increased curricular content demands while attending to issues of equity, inclusion, diversity and differentiation of instruction. In the midst of

continually changing and evolving educational landscape are school leaders. Principals are situated at the connective mid-point of policy and practice and are ultimately responsible for leading and facilitating the development of educational participants and programs at the site level.

Canadian schools, although recognized as site based organizations having their own distinct cultures, are far from being self-contained, isolated systems. Rather, they are nested organizations with multiple connections to their internal and external environments, including the organizational site, educational and demographic community, and reform contexts (Hausman, Crow & Sperry, 2000). Schools are complex organizations and, consequently, the contexts within which principals work present multiple and often competing demands for principals' attention (Goldring, Huff, May & Camburn, 2008). This also holds true for principals when dealing with the interests and concerns of all members of the school's learning community:

> Being a principal nowadays means being continually confronted with disconnected demands with expectations of a very different nature linked to different aspects of the daily operation of a school and with conflicting demands of several external constituencies (Vandenberghe, 2003, 4).

In managing relationships with many different groups within and outside the school and dealing with a wide range of resulting issues, "principals need to be able to call on a substantial reservoir of expertise and experience to identify solutions to what are often complex problems" (Bush & Jackson, 2002, 424). Unfortunately, this level of expertise and experience is usually accrued over time as a principal and is not necessarily characteristic of those newly assigned to the post.

In contemporary Canadian schools, the context within which the work of beginning principals unfolds is characterized by a global community, a pluralistic social order, a multi-textured goal set, accountability, new technologies, and a diverse student and teaching cadre (Sackney, Mitchell & Walker, 2005). In essence, the process of sufficiently educating even just one student, within the contexts and parameters of schooling in general, requires the dedication, expertise and input of a multitude of interconnected participant stakeholders. As such, although positioned at the apex of a school's organizational pyramid, new principals are required to lead within a complex web of interpersonal relationships (Murphy, 2002). Accordingly:

Educational leadership is widely recognized as complex and challenging. Educational leaders are expected to develop learning communities, build the professional capacity of teachers, take advice from parents, engage in collaborative and consultative decision making, resolve conflicts, engage in educative instructional leadership, and attend respectfully, immediately, and appropriately to the needs and requests of families with diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Increasingly, educational leaders are faced with tremendous pressure to demonstrate that every child for whom they are responsible is achieving success (Shields, 2004, 109).

Although educational reform is not unique to the 21st century, the type of reform, including a focus on learning for all students with increased visibility and accountability combined with an increased delegation of responsibilities to site management without devolution of power, has created a different and more complex environment in which school leaders play a pivotal role (Crow, 2007). In effect, the current context of educational reform places greater responsibility on principals to positively impact student achievement via direct influence on the teaching and learning process while, at the same time, requiring those principals to perform increased bureaucratic and management tasks that ultimately limit and reduce their ability to be instructional leaders.

Today's principals are faced with having to accommodate a number of reform paradoxes (Day et al., 2000) and, as a result, must endure the daily struggle of having to mitigate the tension between focussing on professional matters related to facilitating teaching and learning processes or concentrating on dealing with a growing administrative workload (Dimmock, 1996). The increased need to attend to expanding technical and policy aspects of the job, including financial, personnel and site responsibilities coupled with pressure to focus on professional matters such as curriculum and instruction, have left principals pulled in different directions (Whitaker, 2003). For principals, the leadership/management dichotomy lives for real as they attempt to develop change processes for school improvement that include distributed leadership mechanisms and professional learning communities for procuring increased levels of organizational learning and student achievement.

Regardless of the face and form of the current incarnation of educational reform, it seems school leaders must always find ways to negotiate the chronic tensions between leadership and management, and between resources and demands (Evans, 1996). This predicament is not new and is likely to endure for those individuals involved in school leadership. What is new however, is the scope and intensity of the job (Evans, 1996; Gronn,

2003). In essence, the volume, rate and complexity of the responsibilities and associated tasks of the principalship have increased. With this type of work intensification, demands on school leaders have become numerically large and exceedingly complex. The constraints they face are extensive and imposing with the result that, in many instances, the opportunities for widespread influence and transformative agency have been minimized (Gronn, 2003). Although principals are being asked to do more, their ability to do so may actually be reduced.

The convergence of these realities is compounded by the development of yet another pervasive reality. Educational leaders are faced with having to acknowledge and embrace the implications of living and learning in an information age. The knowledge explosion combined with exponential growth in communications technology and media savvy has expanded the horizons of the global village. More people have greater access to and are exposed to more knowledge and information than ever before. We live in a knowledge society where learning is paramount. This means that those in the education game must continually work to get better at learning.

It is now incumbent upon school leaders to continually create and modernize suitable organizational structures, as well as revise and facilitate teaching and learning processes in order to prepare those in their charge to meet the challenges of living and competing in a society immersed in the fundamentals of a knowledge-based economy. School leaders in Canada must now work to be 'lead learners' in their school communities (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000) to achieve school improvement goals and to attend to increased accountability measures as demanded by the public and brought about by current educational policy.

Emerging Canadian Educational Policy

Increased Accountability

In recent decades, the Canadian public has become more educated, more individualistic, more discerning and less confident in the efficiency and performance of its public institutions – education included (Ungerleider & Levin, 2007). The Canadian public demands greater levels of accountability and transparency from its regional governments, school districts and schools for the outcomes and results of schooling. Educational jurisdictions and school boards are being pressured to be more explicit about the efficacy and impact of current educational policies and programs on the learning and performance of

students. In turn, the responsibility for fulfilling these expectations is put squarely on the shoulders of those who work in schools.

In combination with the recent impact of globalization, new technologies, and the demands for a well-educated society, the Canadian citizenry and their representative educational jurisdictions have put pressure directly on schools to increase student learning (Sackney, 2007). Schools are constantly being asked to upgrade the breadth and depth of programs and services for students. This includes increasing the quality and suitability of teaching and learning processes to improve student academic performance. It is generally perceived by the tax paying public that higher academic performance leads to an increased ability to compete and excel in society. Ultimately, school leaders are being held to the fire by their constituents and their superiors to ensure that each student is given the best opportunity to learn and perform.

At the same time, however, results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), reveal that Canadian students continue to perform extremely well on achievement tests when compared to their international counterparts, especially in the areas of math, science and reading. In addition, test scores revealed greater equivalency among Canadian students with less of an achievement gap between students with different socio-economic backgrounds (Sackney, 2007).

Recently, there has been increased use of Canadian performance data in many Canadian provinces to inform policy decisions. However, with differing standards of achievement being offered for individual provinces, there remains no uniform standard throughout Canada. Canada does not have federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind (2001) in the United States, which placed a heavy emphasis on 'high stakes testing' and student academic performance to determine funding formulas. Unlike The United States, Canada has never relied on performance-based incentives or punitive measures to coerce change and direct improvement in schools.

Also, Canada has not instituted a government imposed "standards" agenda as in the United Kingdom. In the U.K., there has been a focus on "the introduction and implementation of national strategies for measuring pupil achievement and compliancy of schools to

externally derived standards of performance as illustrated by a national competency framework for principals (DfES, 2004) and external independent school inspection" (Day, 2005, 574). According to Day (2005), this emphasis on "performativity" has forced many U.K. school leaders to choose between being actively compliant, taking on a subversive role, or mediating the implementation of external agendas within broader improvement agendas.

In Canada, although the pressures for greater accountability and increased performance outcomes have risen in the last few years, provincial educational authorities have responded by adopting a nuanced approach for school improvement with increased attention given to building capacity in the school system to achieve better results (Ungerleider & Levin, 2007). This has included governments placing an increased emphasis on developing programs and educational change mechanisms at the practitioner and stakeholder level. It is believed that this will foster greater levels of participation and ownership at the school and community level for developing contextually relevant goals and programs for sustainable growth.

At present, Canadian school leaders are not necessarily being acutely pressured from above to "raise" academic standards and the academic performance of students en masse. Rather, they are being asked by their educational jurisdictions, including their community constituents, to develop and demonstrate continuous and sustainable improvement within their schools for the purpose of "maximizing" achievement outcomes for each student in their charge. How exactly Canadian school leaders go about achieving this is, in large part, shaped by the governance structures that generate and implement policy directives and the educational philosophies that inform and influence the decisions of these governing bodies.

Canadian Educational Governance

Canada is a federation of ten provinces and three territories and employs a decentralized system of schooling that has little, if any federal involvement:

> Under the Constitution, legislative, executive, and judicial powers are shared or distributed between the federal government and the provinces. Section 93 of the Constitution Act grants to the provinces exclusive control over education; in Canada there is no ministry or office of education at the federal level... Provincial and Territorial control over education brings with it the power to delegate authority to local school boards. The power and duties of provinces and territories are, in general, consistent throughout Canada. Their responsibility for education is usually exercised through departments or region-specific ministries of education (Sackney, 2007, 173).

Although the federal government does not have direct responsibility for education, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), comprised of provincial and territorial education ministers throughout Canada, does provide national educational linkages. The CMEC provides a forum for education ministers to come together to discuss matters of common concern, to share information and ideas, to explore ways to cooperate on projects and initiatives and to consult and access national education programs, as well as to represent Canadian education internationally (Sackney, 2007).

Overall, it is the provincial and territorial governments that initially direct the work of school leaders in Canada. Each of these governments appropriates taxation funds, allocates resources and sets educational policy for the school boards in their constituencies. Regional school boards then enforce and support policy measures as well as parse out money and resources to the schools under their charge. School leaders then work within the parameters and expectations given by their school boards to do what they can to satisfy the learning needs of their school community members. Much of how Canadian school leaders go about doing this is grounded in the reform philosophies that underpin government policy and school board initiatives.

Canadian Educational Reform Philosophy

The current consensus in Canada concerning school reform combines the latest thinking and research insights from the genres of effective schooling, school improvement and educational change to serve as a foundation from which to guide regional educational objectives and programming (Sackney, 2007). It is generally believed that reform must be 'system wide and system deep' (Hopkins, 2001) as well as fully embraced at the practitioner level in order to work. Canadian educational research theorists agree that viable school reform must be seen as something markedly different in form and function from the efforts of the past (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2005; Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003). Reform can no longer be reviled nor relinquished by those who are entrusted to enact it. It cannot be seen as something dictated from above or thought of as something that, if ignored, will simply pass in time. Rather, the implementation of reform initiatives, directed at improving student achievement while attending to increased accountability standards, requires today's school leaders to lead for change in context. This means developing a contextually relevant

mechanism for organizational learning that utilizes collaborative processes and incorporates a high degree of personal relevance for all participants (Fullan, 2005).

Learning Communities for School Improvement

In recent years, considerable emphasis has been placed on leadership at the school level to drive and deliver improvement in Canadian schools (Stevenson, 2006). Results of a survey of Canadian provincial governments indicate that most provinces have made the "learning community" the feature mechanism for devising and implementing school reform initiatives (Sackney, 2007). The goal of these initiatives is to improve student learning and performance by fostering programs and projects that reflect the unique needs and circumstances within schools and school districts (Sackney & Walker, 2006). Essentially, in an attempt to individualize educational objectives and align programs and resources for individual schools and their constituent communities, educational jurisdictions have ceded responsibility and participation for devising school improvement plans to the site level:

> As part of the improvement process, it was expected that schools, in consultation with their stakeholder groups, will develop improvement plans based on a variety of student achievement and school effectiveness measures. The improvement plans must be vetted by the district board and copies forwarded to the Ministry. At the end of the school year schools must assess the goal outcomes and report to parents, the school district and the Ministry (Sackney & Walker, 2006, 347).

The policy framework set forth for Canadian schools directly impacts on the life of learning community participants and requires the use of a sophisticated and collaborative leadership skill-set by school leaders.

In Nova Scotia, School Advisory Councils (SACs) are the mechanism for driving change and improvement for each school within the province. School leaders, in consultation with school staff, parents and school association members, are required to devise, implement and follow through on school improvement plans (SIPs). These plans include collectively constructed goals and objectives that address specific educational issues or challenges for individual schools and their learning communities. Once an improvement plan has been developed, an external committee comprised of administrators, teachers and a parent from another educational institution evaluates the plan. Plans are put in place for Years 2 and 3 and the external committee monitors progress and recommends further action (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2003) prior to the school being "accredited".

Leading the school improvement process requires an informed and nuanced approach and presents real challenges even for the most seasoned of school leaders. In efforts to accommodate the current context of educational reform, a new principal's role as an administrative leader and lead learner for his/her learning community continues to be redefined while, at the same time, the actual work of the principalship grows in both capacity and complexity.

The Principalship: Tasks, Knowledge, Skills and Practices

Although the principalship can be considered a multi-dimensional construct which can vary according to the combinations of individuals who take on the post and the contexts in which they are immersed, there are some common features and expectations that reflect the evolving nature of the position. At present, a number of tasks, knowledge, skills and practices can be associated with the contemporary notion of school leadership.

Tasks

The principal is the school's lead administrator and is legally, professionally and morally obligated to be responsible for the processes and outcomes of schooling (Greenfield, 1995). However, a school leader's efforts and accomplishments are sustained largely through the hard work and due diligence of colleagues and associates, often within challenging contexts and with limited means. Nevertheless, it is the principal who is solely responsible and ultimately accountable for the actions and achievements of all school members. In fact, the school's principal is the one individual who is held responsible by educational stakeholders and constituents for solving all school related problems quickly and judiciously (Tooms, 2003). However, principals can expect their leadership work to continue to be increasingly demanding and complex as they have to manage far more than the administrative tasks traditionally associated with leading schools (Normore, 2004).

The work of principals has swelled to include a staggering array of professional tasks and competencies in order to meet the learning needs of all students while at the same time attending to the often conflicting needs and interests of a multitude of educational stakeholders. At any one time, and often at the same time, principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional leaders, assessment experts, budget analysts, facility

managers and special program administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual and policy mandates and initiatives (Davis et al., 2005).

Knowledge

To cope in fulfilling such a mandate requires that principals have sufficient knowledge and utilize essential skills in order to demonstrate proficient leadership at the school and community level. To begin, each school leader must develop a comprehensive understanding of the *systemsworld* and *lifeworld* of school leadership applicable to their specific learning community (Sergiovanni, 2004). S*ystemsworld* refers to the managerial aspects and "instrumentalities" (e.g., policies, processes, procedures) that are used to increase operational effectiveness and efficiency in schools, whereas the *lifeworld*, pertains to the interactive components of the school that are reflected in the culture, the values, and relationships (Nelson, De la Colina & Boone, 2008). The *lifeworld* is about developing human capital and what gives purpose to the organization; the *systemsworld* provides the means to achieve this purpose (10).

Today's new principals must become familiar with three levels of "systems" knowledge as part of leading day-to-day school operations:

General Systems
This might include the legal system and legal responsibilities with respect to pupils, parents, staff, resources and buildings;

Local Authority Systems
The who's who of the education office and the school board; the local authority administrative practice; property maintenance; financial arrangements; proformas for accessing provision and for accountability purposes; due dates for submissions;

School System
Current school procedures and how to implement them; current job descriptions and selection arrangements; school budget issues (Draper & McMichael, 1998, 209).

Most principals tend to acquire basic "systems" knowledge relevant to their particular site context while in post and attempt to harness it for full value over time. However, the challenges principals face in regard to the differences in vision, values and beliefs of staff and stakeholder members – aspects of the "lifeworld" - can be problematic and not easily resolved (Nelson et al., 2008). Therefore, it is fundamentally important for principals to establish structures and processes that actively engage staff in openly communicating and articulating beliefs in the areas of learning, resources, relationships and culture. This can be achieved

through the principal's ongoing use of formal and informal 'strategic conversations' (Davies, 2004) with staff and educational stakeholders to bolster mutual understanding, participation and motivation.

Unfortunately, this can be extremely challenging for neophyte principals as, in many cases, they are not afforded the necessary time to engage in such conversations and activities until they actually take up the post on site only weeks prior the commencement of the school year. After being formally appointed to the position, most newcomers receive only a nominal amount of transition time and communication with previous principals, current school staff and administration before taking on the post.

Skills

For principals new to a school/position, who must work to accommodate individual stakeholder concerns while attending to a big picture reality, there is a need to be both thoughtful and skilful in their leadership focus. This includes utilizing a combination of two distinguishable skill sets: leadership and management. Management is concerned with efficient operations, doing things right and attending to questions of how and when, whereas, leadership involves dealing with people and emotions for purposes of doing the right thing and answering questions of what and why (Bennis, 2003). To establish and sustain processes aimed at maximizing teacher quality and student achievement, it is leadership that is paramount.

The basic concept of leadership involves two essential components: the process of influencing other's behaviour and, in doing so, for the purposes of goal development and goal achievement.

> [It] involves using social influences processes to organize, direct, and motivate the actions of others. It requires persistent task-directed effort, effective task strategies, and the artful application of various conceptual, technical and interpersonal skills (McCormick, 2001, 28).

For educational leaders, the influence process is significant. A principal's influence might best be explained through social influence theory. This theory suggests that credibility – a combination of expertness, trustworthiness and social attractiveness are potent and persuasive elements of influence (Rinehart, Short, Short, & Eckley, 1998). A principal's social attractiveness (perceived similarity to teachers) and trustworthiness (perceived willingness to

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suppress one's own self interest for the benefit of the school), more than expertise, are major determinants of followership and teacher empowerment.

Instead of a mediated entry, new principals are immediately responsible for the full gamut of principal duties (Crow, 2006). This entails utilizing a skill set that helps them to confront the bombardment of never-ending administrative tasks while also learning how to deal with the multitude of challenges and requests set forth on a daily basis by members of their staffs. This requires principals to exhibit time management and organizational skills as well as display considerable 'cognitive flexibility' so that they can be open-minded and listen to the ideas of others while remaining determined and creative in their approach to problem solving (Leithwood, 2005).

Although sociability and interpersonal skills are individual in their use and subjective in their uptake, they are nonetheless valued by experienced school leaders as critical skills for newcomers to have when entering their posts (Daresh & Playko, 1994). Experienced school leaders believe that it is more important for novices to show socialization skills (understanding participants and context, building relationships) and self-awareness skills (self-confidence and awareness of one's use of organizational power and authority) as new school leaders. Conversely however, aspiring school leaders believe that the demonstration of technical skills is most important, including understanding school law and budgeting (Daresh & Playko, 1994). If beginning principals choose to focus on acquiring technical skills at the expense of developing and utilizing social skills as a proxy for exercising their leadership, they may face difficulties when trying to lead their staffs for purposes of positively influencing student achievement.

Practices

Davis et al (2005) point to a growing consensus in research that school leaders positively influence student achievement through two important pathways – the support and development of teachers and the implementation of useful organizational processes. More specifically, core leadership practices essential for improving student achievement and organizational performance include: developing people through active support and modelling; setting directions for the organization through shared goals, communication and monitoring;

and redesigning the organization through collaboration, building a positive culture and modifying organizational structures to facilitate performance (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Though principals are expected to function as the focal point of organizational processes and governance, they continue to exert little "direct" control over the teaching and learning process (Elmore, 2000; Hart, 1994; Martin & Willower, 1981). Competing managerial and political expectations often limit the amount of time even the most committed principal can give to instructional leadership (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). However, principals can influence organizational and instructional outcomes by operating to "directly" improve employee performance by attending to employee's beliefs, values, motivations, skills, knowledge and work conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008).

Principals world-wide indicate that they use a combination of core leadership practices as a means of influencing school participants, programs and processes that include; building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching/learning program (Leithwood et al., 2008). Day et al (2009) further developed these categories and identified "cross-phase consistencies" in school leaders' approaches for improving their schools. According to Day et al (2009), successful principals are attuned to context and attend to a range of human development motivations and needs in choosing from a combination of seven strategies to move their schools forward. The strategies include; defining vision, improving conditions for teaching and learning, redesigning organizational roles, enhancing teaching and learning, enhancing teacher quality, building relationships within the school community and establishing relationships outside the school community (130).

Beginning principals "grow into leadership" and are required to lead while they are learning to lead (Alvy & Robbins, 2005). Gaining the tacit knowledge and ability to lead a school may not be forthcoming and easy to enact for newcomers. As result, novice school leaders point to the importance of people as sources of information and socialization that help them to form important relationships and develop the self-learning required to pace themselves in response to the enormity of the job and to gain much needed self-confidence to survive crisis situations (Crow, 2007).

Socialization and the Beginning Principal

Socialization is the process through which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to perform a social role effectively (Merton, 1968). From the school system's perspective, socialization is viewed as the "mechanisms through which members learn the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs and interpersonal and other skills that facilitate role performance and further group goals" (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978, 422).

Socialization of an individual for a particular role necessarily involves the active participation of the individual in his/her own socialization in that they bring with them a collection of personal experiences, skills and values that interact with formal and informal organizational socialization tactics to build a co-constructed reality (Wentworth, 1980). Crow and Matthews (1998) incorporate these constructivist understandings to further refine the notion of socialization to be "a reciprocal process in which both organization and individual are active participants in professional learning" (19).

Becoming and being a new school leader grows out of a complex process of socialization, including role determination and enactment (Orr, 2006). Prior to appointment, aspiring principals experience two forms of anticipatory socialization (personal and professional) where they learn about the principalship. Anticipatory socialization refers to the learning that occurs as a result of prior experiences that enable a positive orientation towards the technical and moral aspects of the professional role (Greenfield, 1985a; Merton, 1968). This also includes recognizing the importance of moral socialization which refers to "the attitudes, values, and beliefs required for adequate performance in a role" (Greenfield, 1985a, 100). For beginning principals, socialization processes encompass three distinct, yet necessarily interactive sub-types or sources; personal socialization, professional socialization, and organizational socialization (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

Personal Socialization

Personal socialization involves aspects of learning about schooling and leadership through informal means, including previous work and life experiences. It includes all personal experiences and values formation developed in determining who one is, apart from the actual role conception of an educational leader. Sources of personal socialization include friends

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and family who can be potentially powerful sources of support and critical realignment of role conception for a new principal (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

This is significant for beginning principals since "issues of self-development and events in the non-work dimensions of an individual's life may well influence, either positively or negatively, the character of one's organizational behaviour at work" (Greenfield, 1983, 7). Also, it is through personal socialization that new principals consciously and sub-consciously develop a personal understanding of educational processes and, as a result, learn to subscribe to a particular set of educational values and beliefs they can hold as their own.

Professional Socialization

Professional socialization refers to the processes through which one becomes a member of a profession and, over time, develops an identity with that profession (Parkay, Currie & Rhodes, 1992). Through professional socialization, aspiring principals learn to internalize the values, norms and beliefs of the educational leadership/principalship group to which they belong and learn to accept the meanings that the group ascribes to events, other people and ideas (Hart, 1993). Usually, individuals learn specific aspects of the principalship including knowledge, skills and dispositions through targeted instruction and formal training regimes.

For beginning principals, this involves learning aspects of school leadership through directed educational arrangements and/or formal principal preparation programs prior to appointment. For some, university-school based experiences serve to increase role clarity, develop technical expertise and instil leadership skills and professional behaviours (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). For most however, the key professional socializing experiences include "working directly with school administrators in real settings" (486). Professional socialization also includes the leadership learnings one acquires after taking on the post as a result of professional development and induction exercises. During the 'preparation' to 'taking charge' stages of transition involved in professional and organizational socialization, neophyte principals use any and all prior school-based leadership related experiences and examples to work from while initially attempting to make sense of and meet the overwhelming reality and complexity of the job (Earley & Weindling, 2004, Weindling, 1999).

Traditionally, learning to be a school leader is typically an individual endeavour (Crow, 2004). However, a number of socialization methods are potentially at play for both aspiring and novice school leaders including; collective versus individual, serial versus disjunctive, and divestiture versus investiture (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). In efforts to move away from the 'ad hoc' and 'solitary nature' of principal leadership development (Southworth, 1995), recent training and support initiatives have instituted more collective mechanisms for new and/or aspiring leaders where individuals are able to learn with others in groups and cohorts (Crow, 2007).

Serial socialization involves learning from role incumbents and incorporates learning what has been done in the past. This approach tends to emphasize maintaining the status quo. Disjunctive socialization occurs when individuals learn about their leadership role and practice apart from the direct input and direction of current or incumbent school leaders. This is a less structured mechanism that, depending on the individual, can create greater uncertainty and ambiguity regarding role development or may even provide more room for creativity in taking on and enacting the leadership role.

The next two dichotomous methods of socialization include divestiture and investiture and purport to be useful for different means. Divestiture is a method used to erase the potency of previous learning and encourage the acceptance of new learning. This method is used to encourage administrators to distance themselves from teachers in order to create professional separation and authority and to be better able to supervise and monitor subordinates. Investiture, on the other hand, is where an individual's previous learning and identity are valued and used to reinforce new learning (Crow, 2004, 2007).

Both personal and professional socialization continue, to a lesser extent, after a principal is appointed to the position of school leader. Immediately after the announcement of a new principal's placement, organizational influences or site specific elements of socialization processes begin to enter the fray. From this point forward, beginning principals begin to focus their interactions with site participants and deal with their influence and expectations.

Organizational Socialization

Upon taking up the post, novice principals encounter organizational socialization where they learn how to enact specific aspects of the occupational role in a particular setting (Schein, 1968). It is "the process by which one is taught to learn 'the ropes' of a particular organizational role" in a specific work setting (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, 211). For novice principals, this usually entails individual, random and variable learning (Greenfield, 1985b) occurring as a result of informal feedback and suggestions provided by staff, teachers, parents, other principals and selected confidants (Crow, 2007).

Contemporary views of organizational socialization build on Wolcott's (1973) suggestion that new principals' role conceptions and leadership practices are greatly influenced by organizational aspects 'extending beyond' the school site to participants and protocols of the greater school community, including fellow principal colleagues, administrative policy and administrative superiors at the board office and members of government agencies, as well as community and business related entities. Together, educational stakeholders and participants at the board, school site and community level comprise the various organizational sources of influence on a principal's role conception and role enactment.

Although each of the three types of socialization (Personal, Professional and Organizational) can be separated by notions of time, place and intent, they are not mutually exclusive constructs. New school leaders most often experience and respond to socialization influences simultaneously and to varying degrees. Depending on a given situation and surrounding circumstances, beginning principals concomitantly exert their own influence and co-determine the overall imprint and effect of these socialization processes (see Figure 1.2).

Interactive Influences

Socialization comes from oneself, the expectations of others, the norms of the profession, and the interactive dynamics of the specific organization (Leithwood, Steinbach & Begley, 1992). Such influences are facilitated by the degree of clarity and consistency among them and hindered by ambiguity and conflicts in their expectations (Orr, 2006). Problematic for new school leaders is the inherent conflict that may ensue between professional and organizational socialization mechanisms. To some extent, each type of socialization may

want something in contradiction to the other. In light of the pressures of the prevailing environment of reform and criticisms of traditional preparation and support tactics, purveyors of professional socialization may be more inclined to emphasize change, innovation and reform accommodation, while organizational mechanisms are likely to encourage stability, maintenance of the status quo, and tradition (Crow, 2007).

Figure 1.2 – Socialization of Beginning Principals
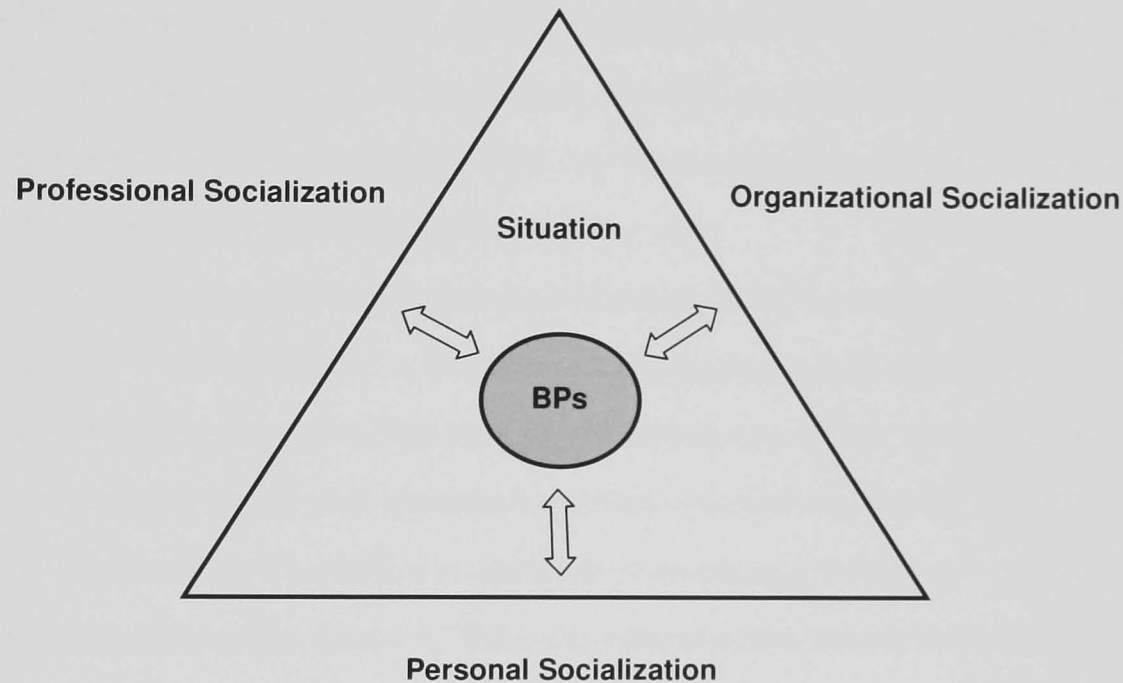
Organizational culture sustains itself and exists as a self-regulating mechanism reinforcing "how things are done", serving to demarcate preferences and boundaries for individual behaviour and group protocol. In a sense, organizational culture protects the current functioning of the group and exists as a culmination of historical reference, future design, present circumstance and participant influences. It is through this process by which group culture is passed on to new members.

New principals face an interesting paradox – they must attempt to fit into and become an accepted member of a group for which their job necessarily involves bringing about some form of change to the dynamics and functioning of that group. Newcomers must learn respected attitudes, values, and beliefs in the school context in order to gain the acceptance (Greenfield, 1985a). Research indicates that early positive or negative responses by superiors or influential teachers and parents trigger similar responses from others over time

(Hart, 1994, Ogawa, 1995). For beginning principals, this highlights the sensitive nature of the organizational context they must negotiate.

A principal succession event is the context specific phenomenon that provides the organizational back drop from which many beginning principals are professionally and organizationally socialized. For the organization, it is an opportunity for a re-examination of a school's culture and reveals the potential vulnerability of all constituents with regards to the dynamics of administrative protocols and working relationships. For the new principal, it highlights the critical importance of understanding the influences and expectations of the new leadership context and that their influence on a new or prevailing culture and their assimilation into that culture occur concurrently (Crow & Mathews, 1998).

A principal's first year in the position is a crucial period in his/her socialization in which the skills, values, and dispositions of the profession role are internalized and actively exhibited within a specific context with meaning and consequence (Aiken, 2002; Normore, 2004). It is during this time when newcomers are most vulnerable to self doubt, reliant on external sources of support, sensitive to contextual influences, and more acutely attentive to direction and feedback from superiors. This early phase of school leadership also marks the beginning of building of relationships and developing trust with learning community members while also negotiating issues related to power.

New school leaders experience relatively short, intense periods of informal socialization leading to feelings of workplace loneliness and high levels of stress and anxiety attached to a perceived lack of skills to manage the demands of the job and complete assigned tasks within necessary time constraints (Duke et al., 1984). Many, in fact, experience isolation, frustration and some form of culture shock in the transition to their new leadership role (Daresh & Male, 2000). At the same time, new school leaders must face a number of problematic organizational challenges including; catering to the legacy of previous incumbents, overcoming established school cultures and ineffective communication, coping with poorly performing staff and countering a poor public image of the school (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

As a result, for many neophyte principals, operation at the earlier stages is hallmarked by a focus on defensive strategies aimed at establishing and maintaining a sense of control in

the role. In time, this orientation moves toward the use of personal power and away from the use of positional power; and a tendency to move toward openness and away from a need to restrict one's actions and the actions of others, as is common with early stage administrators (Parkay & Hall, 1992).

In all, an educational leader's socialization can be viewed as a "constantly evolving phenomenon; a continuous learning of oneself, of others and of the organization" (Gorius, 1999, 2). The values, personal visions and operational behaviours a beginning principal exhibits in any particular situation is a product of the totality of his/her personal character, dispositions and socialization experiences and is a result of the continuous concomitant interplay of personal, professional, and organizational sources of reciprocal influence.

Summary

Examining the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals for the purpose of investigating their preparation, induction, roles and practices necessitates understanding the context and expectations in which the leadership phenomenon is situated. School purposes have been contextualized with the overarching goal to achieve greater levels of organizational efficiency and accountability. As part of this trend, educational reform initiatives devised by government authorities have devolved responsibility to school boards and schools. As a result, new principals are entering educational reform contexts that are continually redefining and expanding their roles.

At present, and to varying degrees, educational leaders are expected to "leverage accountability and revolutionary technology, devise performance-based evaluation systems, reengineer outdated management structures, recruit and cultivate non-traditional staff, drive decisions with data, build professional cultures and ensure that every child is served" (Hess, 2003, 1). To accomplish these tasks, new school leaders are required to acquire "systems" knowledge and utilize a number of important leadership and management skills. In negotiating aspects of their leadership contexts, newcomers face a number of commonly experienced issues (Hobson et al., 2003). These challenges can be placed within the areas of the school's "strategic architecture" (Davies, 2004).

- Learning: Implementing government-based reform initiatives; implementing new curricula or school improvement projects, dealing with a standards-based achievement agenda.

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- Resources: Dealing with multiple tasks, managing time and priorities, managing the school budget; resolving problems with school buildings/sites.

- Relationships: Dealing with feelings of professional isolation and workplace loneliness; dealing with ineffective staff and communications.

- Culture: Dealing with the legacy, practice and style of the previous school leader; dealing with an ineffective senior leadership team, dealing with the social well-being agenda.

The next chapter outlines the process by which this study has been accomplished. Chapter Two develops the problem statement, research questions and definitions of terms used in the research study. Also, there is an examination of the position, phase and process of personal adjustment as experienced by beginning principals, including an exploration of the considerations and dynamics associated with new leaders' construction of their roles, identities and practices. Aspects and realities of researching the beginning principalship, including a description of recent perceptions and experiences, are investigated. Finally, the significance of the study is briefly discussed. This next chapter provides a transition that links the discussion of the beginning principalship to the research methods presented in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two

The Office Novice:

Opening the Door to the Principalship

Well begun is half done.

— Aristotle

Preamble

Much has been written highlighting the pivotal role of the school leader as a factor in the development of effective schools (Bryk & Schnieder, 2002; Day et al., 2001, 2008; Hargreaves et al., 1998; Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990, 2000a; Sammons, 1999). In fact, the importance of the school leader has been corroborated by findings of school effectiveness research for the last few decades (Huber, 2004). The reality that principals have an indirect, yet very powerful, effect on student achievement by way of establishing and supporting positive teaching and learning processes in their schools is well documented in educational research (Bell et al., 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Day et al., 2009; Fullan, 2001a; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006; Rutter et al., 1979; Waters, Marzano & McMulty, 2003).

School leadership has also been linked to the successful implementation and follow through of school improvement initiatives (Harris et al., 2003; Hopkins, 2001; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999; West et al., 2000). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that the quality of principal leadership positively enhances teaching and learning (Harris, 2005) and continues to prevail as a prominent source of positive influence towards school and student success. Basically, the principalship matters.

If principals are as important to school success and student performance as research indicates, and if new principals are required to do the same job as experienced principals, the question remains as to whether they feel they are as prepared, supported and as skilled as they need to be in order to proficiently lead the schools in their charge. This query involved ascertaining and examining the self-reported perceptions and experiences of novice school leaders (namely those who have just recently assumed the position and including those who have experienced approximately one year at the helm). This research study attempted to

gain further insight into how beginning principals understood their preparation and induction experiences and developed their roles and enacted their leadership practices.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Since so much has been written about the principalship and so little, until recently, has singularly considered the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals, there is ample room to approach the subject of the beginning principalship. Given the current milieu of educational reform and the associated leadership challenges, it is prudent to investigate our newest and perhaps our most idealistic leaders. It is at this time, during the nascent stages of their leadership life, that newcomers are arguably the most vulnerable as they are subject to a multivariate of socialization influences and constructs for the first time in such a capacity. Examining the content, sources, methods and outcomes of socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) experienced by beginning principals will help to determine if possible connections exist between the roles, agency and practices of new school leaders.

The early-career phase of school leadership demarcates new principals' development and utilization of core leadership practices in response to the functions and conditions of specific leadership contexts. New school leaders must diagnose the features, participants and needs of their learning communities and determine how best to interact with their colleagues and context. Neophyte principals must also make leadership connections and are faced with inaugural attempts at developing relationships and building trust with learning community members. It is at this juncture that new principals are faced with coalescing their leadership actions, values and beliefs, as well as confronting ethical dilemmas - a defining feature of the principalship (Begley, 2004).

This study provided an opportunity to gain clarity with respect to the inner thoughts and perceptions of beginning school leaders regarding their preparation and induction experiences and paid heed to how novice school leaders perceived and experienced aspects of their socialization as part of the dynamic and interactive processes involved in their role enactment and leadership practice. For example, how did neophyte principals cope and survive? What tasks and routines did they take on in their attempts to negotiate the leadership/management dichotomy of school leadership? What were their major challenges and in what areas did they exercise their agency to affect change? Also, how did they begin

to create change and how did they themselves change (or not) during this process? The answers to these questions informed this study and assisted in determining the extent to which there existed a relationship between the roles, agency and practices of novice principals' early-career leadership.

The general research statement for this study inquired into the preparation, induction, roles, agency and practices of early-career principals, specifically newly appointed principals and one-year-experienced principals. Major questions that were explored were how beginning principals have learned to become school leaders, including how they enacted their leadership roles and forged trusting relationships, as well as what specific leadership practices were employed to negotiate their leadership contexts. In order to develop the objectives of this research study, four research questions were examined:

1. What is the relationship between the roles, agency and practices of early-career principals? This entails describing the perceptions of both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals regarding their understanding and enactment of their leadership roles, agency and practice.

2. How do beginning principals make connections and enact their leadership with school members? This entails describing how newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals develop relationships and build trust with their staffs.

3. To what extent are beginning principals prepared for their role? This entails describing the perceptions of newly appointed principals and one-year-experienced principals pertaining to their preparation experiences.

4. To what extent are beginning principals supported in their role? This entails describing the perceptions of both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals pertaining to their induction experiences.

The research questions targeted the perceptions and experiences of newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals to identify and clarify participants' understanding, development and enactment of their emergent leadership (see figure 2.1). By investigating leadership and management roles and practices of early career principals including detailing the tasks, routines, use of agency and areas of challenge for participants, an understanding of the relationship between the roles, agency and practices of neophyte principals was forwarded (RQ1). Part of this endeavour also involved exploring how beginning principals transitioned to their new roles and made connections with their staffs including how they developed relationships and built trust with school members (RQ2). This included determining the extent to which these constructs and processes were informed by their

preparation and how they were influenced by their leadership contexts and induction experiences (RQ3, RQ4).

Figure 2.1 – Configuration of Research Questions

Developing Relationships
Building Trust

RQ #2
Connections

RQ #1
**Roles, Agency
& Practices**

RQ #3
Preparation

RQ #4
Induction/Support

Leadership/Management
Roles/Practices/Tasks/Routines
Challenges/Agency

Worthwhile Experiences
Suggested Improvements

Worthwhile Experiences
Suggested Improvements
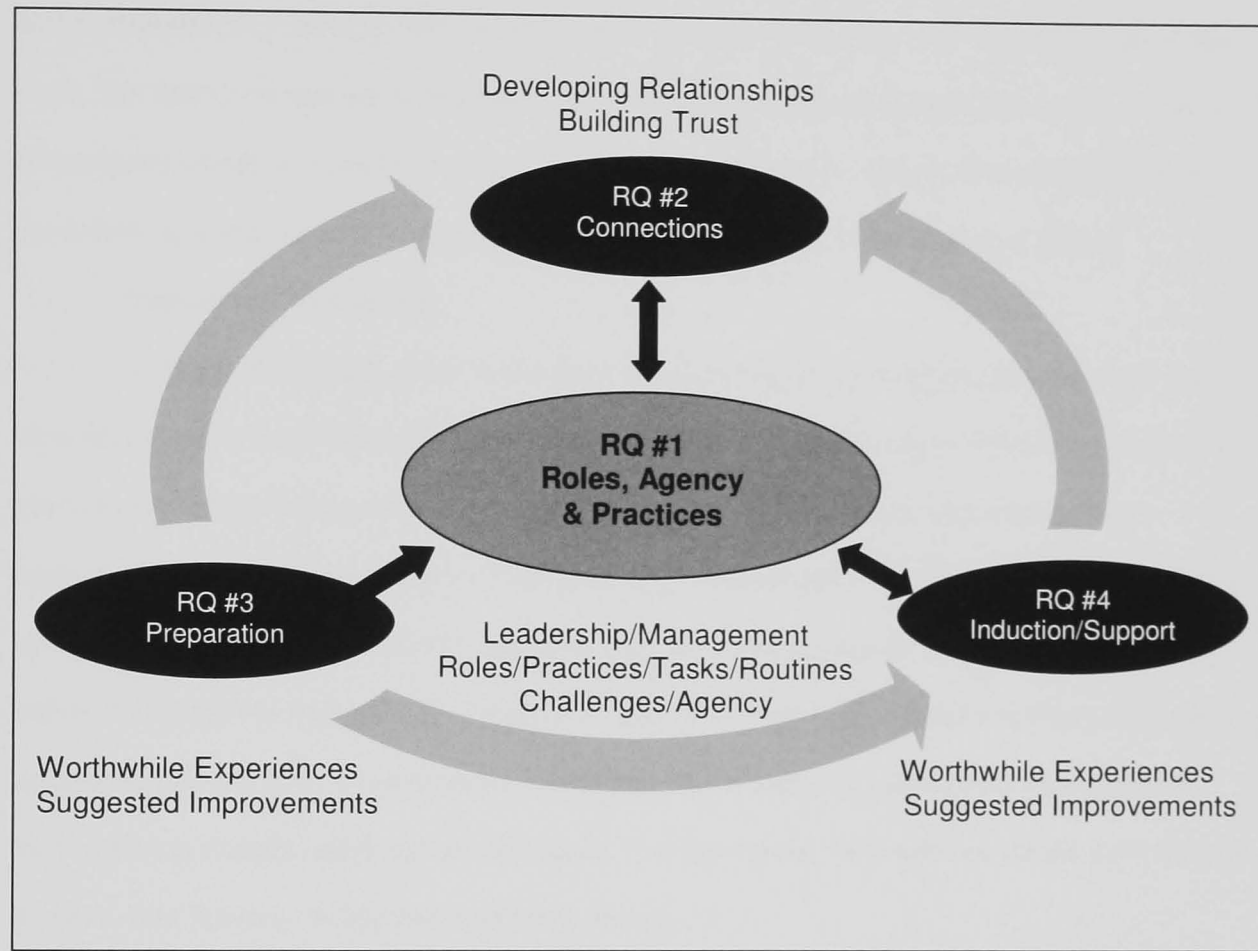
A further objective of this project was to compare and contrast the perceptions and experiences of the two groups identified for the purposes of this study; newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals. The sixteen beginning principals who participated in this study included eight early-career principals from two different school boards. Within the eight principals from each school board, four were newly appointed principals and four were one-year-experienced principals totalling eight newly appointed and eight one-year-experienced principals. In addition, this investigation was conducted with an eye for discerning similarities and differences between participants within each group. It was important to know what new school leaders thought and experienced as part of their initial foray into school leadership. In essence, this research was an attempt to investigate and explicate how early-career principals had come to understand the nature, knowledge and skills of their role as well as how they exercised their agency and enacted their emerging leadership practice.

Definition of Terms

Principal

According to *Collin's English Dictionary*, the term *principal* refers to a person who is first in importance or directs some event, action, or organization etc. For the purposes of this study, the term *principal* will denote the individual who is officially recognized as the school's educational leader and lead authority. The term *principal* will be used interchangeably with the following terms; school leader, headteacher, and the school's educational leader.

Beginning Principal/s

To *begin* something refers to the start of something or to bring into being for the first time according to the *Collin's English Dictionary*. Likewise, *beginning* is defined as the time or place when something starts or a first or early part or stage. A *beginner* is defined as a person who has just started to do something. *Beginning principals* will be referred to as those individuals who have been officially appointed to the principalship of a school with a time frame of experience that includes those who have been newly appointed and those who have approximately one year of experience. The term *beginning principals* will be synonymous with novice principals, early-career principals, new principals, neophyte principals, new school leaders, new leaders, neophytes and newcomers.

Newly Appointed Principals

The term *newly appointed principal/s* refers to those individuals who have been recently appointed to the position of principal and recognized as such in an official capacity. At the time of being interviewed, principals demarcated as being *newly appointed* were in their first weeks of their first school year (September – October).

One-Year-Experienced Principals

The term one-year-experienced principal/s refers to those individuals who have been officially recognized as holding office as a school's principal for approximately one year. At the time of being interviewed these principals were in their first weeks of their second school year (September – October).

Socialization

According to *Collin's English Dictionary*, the term *socialization* refers to the modification of an individual's behaviour to conform with the demands of social life.

Embedded in the research literature are a number of pertinent definitions and references to the *socialization* of school leaders. Merton (1968) refers to *socialization* as the process through which an individual acquires the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to perform a social role. Supporting this definition, Hart (1993) defines *socialization* as the process of adapting or fitting into a new social environment that occurs in a school setting with or without planning, depending on the nature of social groups. With specific reference to beginning principals, the term *socialization* includes the personal, professional and organizational processes of reciprocal influence and mutual determination (Matthews & Crow, 2003) which modify individual principals' behaviour to conform with the demands of life as school leaders.

Role/s

Collin's English Dictionary defines *role* or *roles* as the part or parts played by a person in a particular social setting, influenced by his/her expectations of what is appropriate. *Roles* are characteristic, systematic patterns of behaviour and interactions among participants of a particular social group (Hart, 1993). Under discussion here is a psychological concept and not merely job titles or job descriptions. Ergo:

> Role is a psychological concept dealing with behaviour enactment arising from interaction with other human beings. The various offices or positions in an organization carry with them certain expectations of behaviour held both by onlookers and by the person occupying the role. These expectations generally define the role, with some additional expectations that the individual will exhibit some idiosyncratic personality in role behaviour (Owens, 2004, 126).

In this study, *role/s* for beginning principals will be regarded as those psychologically determined constructs of behaviour for principal that are individually realized yet defined by norms structured by educational institutions and organizations of society.

Identity

According to *Collin's English Dictionary*, the term *identity* refers to the individual characteristics by which a person or thing is recognized; the identification of oneself. *Identity* is "the way we make sense of ourselves to ourselves and" how we make sense of "the image of ourselves that we present to others" (Day & Kington, 2008, 9). For purposes of this study, *identities* will be regarded as sources of meaning for individuals about themselves

constructed by themselves through a process of interaction and negotiation occurring as a result of the interplay of structure and agency.

Agency

According to *Collin's English Dictionary*, the term *agency* is defined as action, power, or operation; intercession or mediation. More specifically, *human agency* can be defined as the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments which, through the interplay of habit, imagination and judgement, that reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, 970).

Agency is intrinsically social and relational and experienced externally as a dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organized contexts of action (973). *Social agency* includes the interplay of structure, actors and actions resulting in individuals utilizing agentic orientations and exhibiting subsequent behaviors in a given context (1003). It supersedes the split between "rational choice" and "norm-based perspectives" of collective action. It is a "double constitution of agency and structure" where "temporal-relational constructs support particular agentic orientations, which in turn constitute different structuring relationships of actors toward their environments. It is the constitution of such orientations within particular structural contexts that gives form to effort and allows actors to assume greater or lesser degrees of transformative leverage in relation to the structuring contexts of action" (1004). In this study, *agency* will be understood to have an interactive and co-constructive capacity but will simply be referred to as "one's ability/resolve to pursue the goals that one values" (Archer, 1996; Day & Kington, 2008).

Practice

Collin's English Dictionary defines *practice* as the act of doing something; the exercise of one's profession. For the purposes of this study, beginning principals' *practice* will be regarded as actions taken by principals identified as being enacted for a specific purpose or design related to school leadership.

Living the "Thin Edge of the Wedge" of School Leadership

The early professional life experiences and challenges of novice principals have been characterized by a number of suitable metaphors and descriptors in contemporary research literature. Beginning principals have been placed in the "hot seat" (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006), answering the "hard questions" (Quong, 2006) having to "balance atop the greasy pole" (Walker & Qian, 2006), while operating as "L-plate" newbies (Wildy & Clarke, 2008). Also, neophyte principals must tackle their "inner worlds and outer limits" (Cheung & Walker, 2006) and negotiate the "lifeworld and systemsworld" of educational leadership (Nelson et al., 2008) as they embark on and navigate the initial phases of their individual leadership journeys. Each of these interpretations as expressed in recent research pays heed to a particular lived reality of the beginning principalship.

I suggest the examination of yet another metaphoric construction to describe the neophyte life of a school leader. The phrase "thin edge of the wedge" amalgamates the aforementioned research descriptions noted above and aptly depicts the nature of reality for new school leaders. The phrase alludes to the narrow part of the wedge inserted into a log for splitting wood (circa mid-1800s) and signifies a change that begins a major development. This metaphor symbolizes the current condition of school leadership today. The current influx of novice principals marks the beginning of a trend of increasing numbers of first time principals who will be at the helm in upcoming years.

More specifically however, the phrase refers to a difficult start to a process that will inevitably lead to something more significant. Research bears this out for those who have entered school leadership. Weindling and Dimmock (2006) point to the conclusions of several research studies regarding new head teachers in England over a twenty-year time frame and assert that "beginning a headship or principalship for the first time is an exciting, exhilarating, complex and difficult experience" (326).

Research theorists add that this challenging initial stage of development for principals is one of a number of transitions that an educational leader will experience on his/her way to something more stable and autonomous by way of reshaping, refining and consolidating their leadership practice (Crow, 2007; Day & Bakioglu, 1996; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Gabarro,

1987; Hart, 1993; Parkay et al., 1992; Ribbons, 1997; Weindling, 1999; Weindling & Earley, 1987).

Expressing that beginning principals are "living the thin edge of the wedge of school leadership" pays tribute to the *position, phase* and *processes* involved in the beginning principalship. The phrase links the neophyte's *position* to "performance" mandates and expectations, *phase* to "professional" status and experience, and *processes* to "personal" adjustments and influences involved in the beginning principalship.

Position and Performance

The phrase "living the thin edge of the wedge" of school leadership is representative of the *position* of the principalship in general. New principals are unique individuals possessing their own personal and professional histories and experiences, values, competencies and qualities, and, as such, enter the position at different points of socialization and development and with varying perspectives (Day & Bakioglu, 1996; Parkay et al., 1992). However, as a school's new leader, they are positioned as the "point-person" (the thin edge of the wedge) for spearheading and supporting the development and maintenance of structures and processes designed to promote organizational learning and continuous school improvement. At the same time, this newly assumed mantle of authority positions novice principals to act as potential conduits for higher educational authorities where they may be used as the thin edge of the wedge for implementing and pushing through the latest educational initiatives brought down from above.

With regards to action and accountability, new principals soon realize that the buck stops with them and that colleagues and stakeholders view them as being the touchstone of authority holding the wisdom, power and efficacy needed for solving problems as they arise. New school leaders are precariously perched atop a pedestal of responsibility, expectations and accessibility by those around them including school members and learning community constituents. From a performance standpoint, the actual *position* of being a school leader necessitates performing as the "thin edge of the wedge" in order to foment and facilitate the achievement of organizational objectives, as well as act as the point of authority and an accountability marker for the school.

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Phase of Professional Experience

From a professional standpoint, the phrase also reflects the initial *phase* of professional experience and situational learning for the novice principal. From a visual-structural sense, the "thin edge" is the start of the wedge which expands and becomes more substantial. This reference is symbolic of the starting place and, ultimately, the growth potential for beginning principals. For those who endeavour to take on the principalship, they soon realize that no amount of formal preparation can fully prepare them for what they initially experience. Many new school leaders experience surprise and even shock after taking on the post (Daresh & Male, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 1998, 2000).

It seems the skill-sets and energy previously needed to access the principalship must now be quickly transformed to negotiate the demands of the position – a spot requiring new knowledge, skills and understandings (Walker & Qian, 2006). New principals must immediately acquaint themselves with both technical and cultural aspects of the job (Greenfield, 1985a). This includes becoming skilled at utilizing specific managerial and administrative skills and learning about particular operational functions and protocol such as budgeting, finances and resource allocation as well as carefully determining where to go for crucial information and who to trust with it. In addition to learning three key areas of content including; skills to perform the job, strategies to adjust to the work environment, and the internalization of organizational and professional values (Feldman, 1976), new principals are required to proficiently demonstrate what they bring to the fore in terms of skills, strategies and values.

According to Weindling and Earley (1987) beginning principals traverse two stages of transition during their first year in the position; entry and encounter (first months) and taking hold (three to twelve months). During this time, newcomers engage in "sense-making" as they attempt to develop a cognitive map of the complexities of the situation, the people, the problems and the school culture (Weindling, 1999, 98). As they take hold of their new found authority and realize their associated expectations and responsibilities, while at the same time learning to adjust to the complex demands of their work environment, new principals begin to challenge "taken for granted" assumptions, prioritize their goals and concerns and implement minor organizational changes (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

Overall, upon their appointment to the position, novice principals begin anew as part of a process in developing their roles and enacting their practice as school leaders. The tacit knowledge, skills and confidence levels of novice principals begin at the "thin edge of the wedge" and have an opportunity to expand over time with experience and the proper supports in place.

Processes of Personal Adjustment

Perhaps most importantly, the phrase highlights the *processes* experienced by those newly inducted into the principalship. Along with the feelings of idealism and uncertainty, the process of "adjustment" is also characteristic of the "initiation" phase of the principalship (Day, 2003a). Although beginning school leaders bring with them a wide-ranging assortment of educational experience, personal perspectives, knowledge and skills, as well as varying degrees of leadership sense and ability, they must learn the landscape in order to be able to mesh with the school's culture and respond appropriately to participants and situations.

Through adjustment processes, new school leaders come to understand and internalize the values, norms, and beliefs of others in the same school and begin to see things the way others see them (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). This "situational adjustment" (Becker, 1964) is a process whereby beginning school leaders take on characteristics required by the variety of new situations they initially encounter. To illustrate, for most beginning principals, this means becoming an authority figure while maintaining sensitivity to the existing contextual nuances (Day et al., 2009). Adjustment processes enable new leaders to survive and learn the requirements needed to continue on and succeed in situations as they move through them (Greenfield, 1977).

New principals are faced with having to learn and enact a new role as well as fit into an organization as leader while being charged with effecting purposeful and positive change within it. The initial process of adjustment necessitates heightened awareness, flexibility and adaptation on behalf of beginning principals, both in terms of performing the duties required of being a particular school's new leader and in regard to being new to the position itself. This process of adjustment operates in response to previous and ongoing forms of socialization and sets in motion the transformation and development of beginning principals' leadership roles, identities and practices.

Roles of the Beginning Principal

Roles are characteristic, systematic patterns of behaviour and interactions among participants of a particular social group (Hart, 1993). For beginning principals, the development of their role as educational leaders inherently involves bringing their own values, beliefs and attitudes regarding their conceptualization of the principalship (Greenfield. 1985a) and strongly affects the way they approach leadership transition (Hart, 1991, 1993). For new principals, their "role learning" is necessarily set within the confines of a principal succession event and occurs as a result of the interrelationship of the individual and the group (Monane, 1967).

Although it may vary from school to school, for a social position such as the principalship, there are a common set of expectations for behaviour that characterize and define the role for constituents and provides the basis for which principals are identifiably recognized and ultimately accepted on the expectation that they fulfil established functions for the group. Whether it is part of the organizational dynamics of schooling in general or the internal functioning of a specific school site, both the explicit social exchange and subtle reinforcement involved in the interaction between the principal and others ultimately affect the creation of the principal's role (Hart & Bredeson, 1996).

For the neophyte, being and becoming a principal is a transformative process (Crow & Glascock, 1995; Matthews & Crow, 2003). This process can be marked by growth and development (Parkay et al., 1992) or in some cases to the contrary, characterized by an austere sense of realization and personal resignation. Moving into the principalship requires being socialized into a new community of practice and the assumption of a new role identity (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). For those entering the principalship they must relinquish the comfort and confidence of a known role and experience the discomfort and uncertainty of a new role. This requires new school leaders to experience a modification of self-esteem as a novice and learn the new behaviours of an expert (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Not surprisingly, new principals have problems with role clarification and tend to question who they are and what they should be doing (Daresh, 1988; Quong, 2006). Beginning principals occasionally struggle to make sense of their newfound authority and often can't believe how their constituents and colleagues more readily embrace the leap of

faith in trusting them in their new roles than do the new principals themselves (Daresh & Playko, 1994). To cope, new principals adopt leadership roles that reflect understandings realized as a result of the interactive processes between their perceptions of the function of the role as a result of their own histories and understandings and the changing realities of the context within which they work. The role new school leaders choose is a multi-dimensional product that combines inner and outer worlds, cognitive and affective, personal and professional, private and social lives, as well as the school and the policy environments (Cheung & Walker, 2006).

This individuation begins the process of moving from "role-taking", where new principals assume the role and attend to responsibilities in line with expectations prescribed by educational authorities, to "role-making", where new principals create roles that incorporate their own personal leadership philosophies and styles to meet the dynamic and fluid nature of the context in which they lead (Hart, 1991, 1993). Somewhat problematic for beginning principals in this regard however, is having to deal with the lingering legacy of the previous principal. Many new principals must work in the 'shadow' of their predecessors (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006) and deal with the 'ghost/s of principals past' (Rooney, 2000). As a result, new school leaders are often forced to carefully consider the principal role preferences and prescriptions of their colleagues and thoughtfully adjust to the possible limitations and expectations placed on them as the school's new leader.

Beginning principals are entering work worlds that are increasingly complex and pose challenging socialization contexts in which to lead. Both role expectations and constantly shifting forms of socialization contribute to beginning principals' construction of a professional identity.

A Beginning Principal's Professional Identity

Although the formation of a new principal's professional identity is closely connected with enacting a specific leadership role, it is uniquely manifested by individual school leaders and should not be confused with role. Roles are defined by norms structured by the institutions and organizations of society; whereas identities are sources of meaning for individuals constructed by themselves through the process of individuation (Castells, 1997).

At first glance, identity is the self-reflective answer to the question "Who am I?" However, an individual never comes to see oneself directly in answering this question. Rather, individuals constantly inspect themselves through the reactions of others to one's behaviour (Mead, 1934). Presumably, the attitudes of others towards one's self are appraised in order to discover the nature of one's self and to obtain social approval for one's identity as expressed or communicated to others (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007). This implies that, during identity negotiation, "individuals remain most sensitive to social feedback and invest considerable cognitive resources in thinking about who they are and who others think they are" (118). Thus, identity is not produced by an individual alone but is constructed through one's interaction with others and is subject to a negotiation process (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007). This negotiation process occurs as a result of the interplay between one's identification with a community of practice and one's ability to negotiate meaning within that community (Wenger, 1998).

As individuals, our "identity formation is an ongoing process that involves the interpretation of our experiences as we live through them" (Cooper & Olsen, 1996, 80). This is because, as individuals, we "create our world while being shaped by it" (83). Overall, identity is "the way we make sense of ourselves to ourselves" and how we make sense of "the image of ourselves that we present to others" (Day & Kington, 2008, 9). Our identities are a product of both structure and agency, and of the interplay between them. Thus, the external influences that one experiences (structure) and one's ability/resolve to pursue the goals that one values (agency) are perceived to be in dynamic tension (Archer, 1996; Day & Kington, 2008). As a result, our identities are always in a constant state of flux; shifting and changing over time (Stevenson, 2006). Essentially, our identities are constantly being invented and reinvented as our relationships and contexts change (Gergen, 1991). For educators and educational leaders, "identity is a composite consisting of interactions between personal, professional and situational factors made up of sub- or competing identities" (Day & Kington, 2008, 11).

Professional identity is derived from a person's self-perception, self image, and self-efficacy in relation to their work and career (Goodson & Walker, 1991; Stevenson, 2006). Professional identities may be dialogic and multiple in that more than one identity may exist

for different roles and situations (Holland & Lave, 2001). This can be problematic for school leaders as they may experience significant cognitive and emotional tension between their self-images and their ascribed social roles (Stevenson, 2006).

For most aspiring principals, becoming a new principal requires an occupational transition from being a teacher-leader in the classroom or being an administrative-leader in the hallways to being an organizational and educational leader for an entire school. This means taking on a more involved and more pronounced leader/manager identity. However, there is a general propensity for people to have conservative, stabilizing tendencies in self-perception and to "filter information in order to maintain their self views" (London, 2002, 94). For newcomers, this can be problematic, as previously established identity schemas used to regulate behaviour, guide attention and interpretation are resistant to change even in the face of disconfirming evidence or divergent role expectations (George & Jones, 2001). In effect, although beginning school leaders have accrued previously established work identities, they are required to forge new professional identities once they are in the post.

For new leaders, moulding a new professional identity requires the formation of a new sense of status, image and self-worth in the role and in the career; it means establishing values, priorities and what one stands for (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). For newcomers, this entails fine tuning their moral compasses for school leadership purposes and discerning what they are willing to "go to the mat" for (Tooms, 2003).

Apart from experiencing a distinct and decisive role transition to school leadership, beginning principals must also face a number of site-based conditions and challenges for the first time as they forge their professional identities. Unfortunately, because of a recent increase in principal succession events throughout many Canadian educational jurisdictions, school-based professionals and community stakeholders often perceive new school leaders to be more focused on their own leadership career development than committed to developing and supporting the programs and participants of the schools they are assigned to. Hence, many first time principals find themselves entering school environments that expect them to operate with a career-bound/peripheral mindset and an outbound trajectory regardless of their intent (Hargreaves, 2005).

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A school's culture, organizational structures and processes, and personnel all serve as fodder for a new leader's identity formation. For new principals, professional identities are constructed out of directly experienced successes and failures, as well as being formed in response to role expectations, and from learning by observation and imitation (Draper & McMichael, 1998). Through adapting, changing and often rejecting the status quo, new principals are socialized into the role and, as a result, acquire their own distinctive professional identities (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

Beginning school leaders do not enter their leadership positions devoid of purpose and expectations. Nor do they take on the leadership position without being afforded the power to enact their authority to lead. To date, most schools still adhere to hierarchical schemes of power distribution where leader-follower relations are formally prescribed and readily identifiable as pre-structured constructs of organizational design (Weick, 1995). Consequently, beginning principals are faced with having to deal with the complexities of managing the leader-follower identity dynamic.

New school leaders bring with them a number of identity resources, including competencies and assets that help them propose or defend a particular identity proposal offered to followers for validation. These identity resources may include social and cultural capital, perceived or real leadership and management knowledge and ability, and valued experience, as well as the support of superiors and constituents (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007). As a school's new leader, beginning principals must continually communicate believable and acceptable identity proposals to their superiors and their subordinates. Issues arise for new principals when discrepancies occur between leader-follower expectations, especially when identity proposals offered by new leaders run counter to well-established interaction styles. This can result in the leader's identity being rejected as unbelievable or inauthentic (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007).

Overall, although as individuals we can experience stable and balanced personal and professional identities, identity formation itself is a fluid and dynamic process of negotiation (or negation) that we must "constantly renegotiate through the course of our lives" (Wenger, 1998, 154). For neophyte principals, this process entails constantly figuring and reconfiguring their workplace identities as they establish themselves as new leaders. A corollary to how

beginning principals formulate their professional identities is how they enact their leadership practice.

A Beginning Principal's Leadership Practice

In any activity-based venture, including leadership enterprise, both persona and structure are ever-present and interactive. Influence between participants is co-determinate, relationship based, power sensitive and reciprocal in nature. Thus, a beginning principal's leadership practice is embedded in context. School leaders face an ever-shifting array of pressures and tensions from both external and internal sources from the day they begin. They must cope with demands associated with their personal expectations, psychological states, ideological inclinations and value systems, and then balance these with the external pressures for reform and the unique context of their own schools (Cheung & Walker, 2006).

Recognizing that leadership is grounded in both time and place (Jinkins & Jinkins, 1998), the most vexing problem for new principals is knowing when to act and being able to discern if they are doing too much or too little. Beginning principals must use a combination of intuition and perceived level of influence along with their own understandings of the context to determine when to intervene and how to take action in a particular situation (Quong, 2006).

The nature of principals' work is often unplanned, spontaneous and responsive to managerial issues addressing immediately pressing priorities (Mintzberg, 1994; Pitner, 1982). This has often been characterized by many in the profession as constantly "putting out fires." Typically, a principal's day consists of an array of short, fragmented activities conducted through brief personal interactions and verbal exchanges with school members (Goldring et al., 2008; Peterson, 1977). In order for newcomers to lead with confidence, these situational interactions and instances require the summoning of sufficient self-efficacy - the judgement of one's capabilities to structure a particular course of action in order to produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

This can initially be somewhat problematic for the novice principal. Both the role and many of the situations they encounter are new. Taking action necessitates analyzing the nature and needs of the specific task along with assessing one's own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the requirements of the task (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). In time, novice principals can accrue enough understanding of themselves and their particular

school environments to devise competency based strategies including utilizing "creative insubordination" (Morris et al., 1981) or "workarounds" (Gronn, 2003) as part of their leadership repertoires. This means, with increased tacit knowledge and skills acquired through experience, beginning principals may be able to work the realities of their schools and school systems to their advantage for the facilitation and attainment of organizational goals.

New principals enter a school's culture either as new members or as previous members entering new roles. Either way, they must contend with the organization in its entirety and do their jobs as the school's educational and administrative leader while carefully attending to organizational culture. A beginning principal's leadership practice must take into consideration the context within which that practice is exercised. Upon entering a new position of leadership within the same school or during the entry period to a new school setting, principals try to exert their leadership and function in ways consistent with their personal intentions. Simultaneously, however, they experience pressures from subordinates, superiors, parents and the community at large to act in a way consistent with their expectations (Crow, 1992; Osterman, Crow & Rosen, 1997).

Each of these learning community members hold site specific expectations for a principal's behaviour (Talbot & Crow, 1998). Often, new school leaders are given the clear message 'not to make waves' (Rooney, 2000). Beginning principals may also be frustrated with the apathetic and even resistant cultural environment which can sometimes await them. In some instances, informal power groups within the school or surrounding community exert their influence to maintain the current mode of operations or move things in a direction favourable to the interests of their particular group (Northfield, Macmillan & Meyer, 2010).

Note that the contributions of colleagues in co-authored publications used in this study to highlight and/or reference aspects of school leadership, important for situating the investigation of beginning principals, were co-constructed as a result of shared participation in previous collaborative research projects. The creation and conceptual development of the "criteria for trust" referred to in the citation listed as Northfield, Macmillan and Meyer (2008) is the sole design and construction of the researcher in this current study. In addition, although a variety of meanings and applications of trust in educational leadership have been advanced through the work of numerous research authors (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, Hoy & Tschannen-

Moran, 1999; Macmillan et al., 2004; Northfield et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran, 2004), the notion of "Three Dimensional Trust" or "3D Trust" is an original research claim emanating from the findings of this research study.

The demographic reality of accelerated rates of principal turnover due to increased retirements and a shortage of readily available and suitable replacements has created a resilient yet resistant cultural context within which beginning principals must lead. Many school staffs have learned to inoculate themselves from the effects of rapid principal turnover by learning to resist and ignore their leader's efforts (Northfield, 2008). Also, the recent standardized agenda has forced more principals to use "instrumental" and managerial tactics to achieve short-term shifts that comply with standardized reforms, resulting in the role of the principal being seen as a mere functionary or anonymous manager rather than as a distinctive leader (Fink & Brayman, 2006). This has contributed to an "emerging model of leadership that is reactive, compliant, and managerial" and one which "deters potential leaders from becoming principals who can inspire learning communities that promote higher learning for all students" (Hargreaves, 2005, 172).

Inexperienced and unprepared principals are condemned to ensuring that teachers comply with outside mandates as best they can, rather than working with their colleagues to achieve shared, internally developed improvement goals for their schools. In an environment of runaway reform demands and ever-increasing rates of principal turnover, new principals are being denied the time to engage in an entry process that would help them to engender trust with their staffs and gain insight into the cultures and micro-politics of their schools (Northfield, Macmillan & Meyer, 2011).

To cope with various forms of resistance to their leadership such as systemic, structural and relationship-based elements, new principals can profit when they are able to utilize various forms of positive influence and support such as networking, mentoring and targeted professional development to support their practice (Quong, 2006). In effect, a beginning principal's leadership practice arises from the complex interplay of a number of factors including place, people, system and self (Wildy & Clarke, 2008). More specifically, the way new principals choose to enact their particular brand of leadership is a result of attending to their own personal ideologies, constructing and maintaining relationships with learning

community members and stakeholders, working in response to the realities of school community contexts and attending to the associated demands of the school situations they face (Day et al., 2001).

Novice school leaders undergo significant socialization influences and developmental processes and must make individual adjustments in order to cope and survive the exigent reality of the beginning principalship. As part of gaining insight into the adjustments made by those "living the thin edge of the wedge" of school leadership, it is necessary to investigate the perceptions and experiences of new school leaders.

Beginning Principals: Perceptions and Experiences

Recent research indicates that beginning principals can have positive initial experiences in their post. As part of the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP), Cowie and Crawford (2007, 2008) note that effective preparation and induction experiences can facilitate increased levels of confidence and efficacy for beginning principals and can result in positive early-career experiences. On the contrary, researchers also suggest that new principals can face traumatic first-year experiences (Crow, 2007) and lead professional lives filled with anxiety, frustration, surprise and self-doubt (Davis, 1998; Duke et al., 1984; Parkay et al., 1992; Walker et al., 2003; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006; Weindling & Earley, 1987).

Sackney and Walker (2006) draw upon research investigating Canadian beginning principals to suggest that school leaders have a difficult task in the early years of their career where they must bear the responsibility for leading learning community frameworks necessary to survive in the complex school environment, often without viable support systems in place. As a result, "loneliness and isolation" and frustration can persist for beginning principals even in contemporary times where principals are required to interface with more people more often (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

The satisfaction, frustration, ease and difficulty of the job can vary according to whom one asks. However, new principals are not likely to readily voice their opinions one way or the other, in large part due to the fact that the feelings of excitement or frustration associated with the challenge of taking on a new position are somewhat expected and so are not usually voiced to superiors, colleagues or subordinates. Newcomers are likely to be more sensitive

to the perceptions and criticisms of their learning community constituents, particularly those of their immediate supervisors, administrative superiors, influential colleagues and school staff. In short, as a school's new leader, beginning principals are subject to the scrutiny and judgements of participants involved in a succession event and, as a result, receive varying degrees of acceptance, support or resistance in their efforts to lead (Northfield, et al., 2011).

A change in a school's leadership elicits natural questions, concerns and expectations around the new leader's ability to proficiently lead the school. This includes related queries originating from the new leaders themselves. Interestingly, beginning school leaders' perceptions about their experiences and actions, be they positive or negative, are likely to be kept to themselves and regarded as confidential by necessity.

As the school's legitimate authority, principals are often privy to the personal information and perceptions of school and community constituents. As an entrusted professional, principals are expected to abide by a professional code of ethics that is predicated on respecting the rights and privacy of educational participants. This means establishing and maintaining a safe, secure and predictable teaching and learning environment for all learning community members. Therefore, school leaders are required to maintain confidentiality when it comes to the many professional dealings and personal opinions of staff and community members. This includes safely storing and securing their own perceptions about their professional experiences and personal interactions with colleagues, parents, students, stakeholders and superiors. As a result, many, if not all, of their own experiences and personal perceptions are not shared with others in any systematic fashion and, for the most part, remain devoid of open and thoughtful analysis.

For beginning principals, the prevailing power dynamic and associated sense of vulnerability can often result in the safe-guarding of personal perceptions. Disclosure of any sort (personal, professional, or otherwise) can give way to silent contemplation and active compliance due to fear of possible reprisal and negative judgement by superiors and colleagues. Even the accumulation of day to day experiences resulting in an overwhelming majority of positive thoughts and outcomes can rest in silence so as not to be seen as self-serving or above the interests and concerns of those they lead (Northfield, Macmillan, & Meyer, 2006a).

Essentially, with the exception of the professional dialogue and verbal exchanges that may take place within some forms of mentoring arrangements or opinions solicited as part of summative feedback mechanisms during professional development exercises, school leaders, usually, do not talk openly about their perceptions or experiences in any overt capacity, especially if they are not directly related to strategizing or solving problems for the school and its members. Whether this is a necessary and purposeful dissuasion as a result of political forces at play or a seemingly self-imposed reality, school leaders, especially beginning principals, are inherently quieted creatures when it comes to matters of personal perceptions (Northfield, Macmillan, Meyer, 2006b).

Principals, like teachers, carry with them extraordinary insights about their work that are seldom explicit for them, let alone accessible to others (Barth, 1990). Hence, pointed research inquiring into the perceptions of beginning school leaders' early-career experiences is an opportunity to gain important information and insights regarding developmental aspects of their emergent educational leadership. While reflective analysis of beginning principals' perceptions of professional experiences and learning cannot be generalized, it can provide important insights into how they see the world of education and can help build an understanding of what constitutes important knowledge in the area of early-career school leadership.

Researching the Beginning Principalship

The early years of the principalship as a focus of study have been relatively neglected (Stevenson, 2006). Recently, however, more has been written about the beginning principalship, particularly amidst escalating concerns around providing adequate preparation and support for a growing number of first-time principals.

Research has been conducted as part of the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) which has attempted to address the dearth of substantive research connecting the beginning principalship and principal preparation. Researchers from ten countries, including Canada (Webber & Sherman, 2008) have published work highlighting both similar and varied structural aspects and effects of principal preparation programs world-wide. Also, researchers from a variety of international contexts examined a number of interconnected areas and aspects of the beginning principalship in a special issue of the

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Journal of Educational Administration (2006) Volume 44, Issue 4. Topics included contextual challenges and survival strategies (Walker & Qian, 2006), problems and situational leadership (Quong, 2006), building capacity and learning communities (Sackney & Walker, 2006), role complexity and socialization processes (Crow, 2006), personal and external factors (Cheung & Walker, 2006), pressures and tensions influencing socialization and development (Stevenson, 2006), preparation and induction (Bush & Oduro, 2006), as well as changing and continuing challenges to practice (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

A nominal amount of earlier research also identified various aspects of the beginning principalship, including characteristics of the role (Daresh, 1986a), development processes (Sussman, 1986), challenges, problems and professional concerns (Alvy & Coladarci, 1985; Daresh & Playko, 1994; Hobson et al., 2003; Parkay & Hall, 1992; Parkay, Rhodes, Currie & Rao, 1989), transitioning to the role (Duke et al., 1984), socialization experiences (Leithwood et al., 1992) and support mechanisms (Daresh, 1986b, 2001).

Contemporary Canadian research literature pertaining to the beginning principalship highlights perceptions concerning early professional experiences, including how newcomers learn their roles and how they continue to acquire needed knowledge and skills post appointment (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Sackney, Walker & Gorius, 2003; Walker & Sackney, 2001a, b). These investigations found that Canadian principals were not prepared for the pace of the job and were overwhelmed by the number of tasks to be accomplished and the time required to complete each task. Also, new principals were generally socialized to perpetuate existing administrative subcultures rather than to engender and sustain innovative orientations. In addition, novice principals indicated that they were expected to learn and survive on their own and that reaching out for support was generally self-perceived as a sign of weakness.

In a study similar in form to my own, Walker et al (2003) reported on findings related to the International Beginning Principals Study (IBPS) which examined factors perceived by first-year principals to both complicate, and account for, first year success in rural jurisdictions. Responses from close to fifty respondents highlighted "unanticipated" experiences related to the overwhelming nature of the role, the amount of work and time required, administrative tasks, staff and parent issues, frustration with staff supervision, and a

sense of unpreparedness due to a lack of preparation and support in the role. These findings present a rather troubling state of affairs for new Canadian principals especially given the increasingly complex and demanding job they are asked to perform.

Very few studies have been undertaken to explore the perceptions and experiences of early-career principals for the purposes of examining the relationship between their roles, agency and practices as influenced by their preparation and induction experiences. In most cases, informative work involving the investigation of perceptions and experiences of early-career school leaders has been conducted as part of larger studies investigating principal leadership in general, including situating perceptions and experiences based on phases of development or types of socialization experiences or as part of examining leadership problems and practices of principals in general (Day & Bakioglu, 1996; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Hart, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1999; Weindling & Earley, 1987).

The troubling scenario for beginning principals expressed in Canadian research literature combined with the embedded nature of a significant amount of new principal research, underscores the importance of this study. It is imperative that the perceptions and experiences of early-career principals are examined in order to understand how preparation and induction experiences serve to help neophyte principals understand and enact the leadership roles and implement their emerging leadership practice. Essentially, the more we are able to learn from the work and experiences of novice principals about how to meet the challenges of beginning leadership, the better we can support new principals in leading tomorrow's schools (Parkay & Hall, 1992).

Research into the beginning principalship at this time must recognize that those who now assume the role of principal enter the fray having to mitigate the pressures and expectations associated with a perfomativity culture:

> At the heart of the problem is an expectations deficit that is never likely to disappear. We shall always want schools to deliver more than is realistic for them to do so. Political expediencies, fuelled by media hype, make this almost inevitable. This deficit is likely to worsen therefore as structural pressures push societal expectations inexorably upwards, whilst economic and other constraints ensure that resources sufficient for the task are rarely available. At the same time, trust in those professionals charged with delivery appears to be ebbing away. It is into this high expectation/low trust vortex that we expect new principals to step (Stevenson, 2006, 413).

With the intensification of the physical and emotional pressures on school principals, there is little doubt as to why there is a current "crisis of supply" of willing candidates for the principalship. However, for those who dare to enter the principalship, it is worth investigating how they take on their roles and what they do during the early phase of their leadership. Also, it is important to discern how beginning principals work as quickly as they must but as slowly as they need in order to build relationships and develop and maintain trust in an educational environment rife with scepticism (Northfield et al., 2008).

A major concern of this study is related to the fact that beginning school leaders are required to perform the same job as those more experienced in the position. From day one, new principals are immediately responsible for the full array of leadership responsibilities and administrative duties associated with the position (Crow, 2006). They are expected to hold expert knowledge and skills even though much of what they need to know and learn is something they gain while on the job. Could this be asking too much from early-career school leaders? Or, could this cause undue hardship for those entering their inaugural postings? Usually, beginners in any venture are seen as less knowledgeable, less skilled and less efficient at what they do, largely as a result of limited or no experience in the actual position. New school leaders face their first moments of having to answer difficult questions and confront challenging issues and circumstances without the benefit of experience, the networks of support and the reservoirs of loyalty that more established principals can draw on (Stevenson, 2006).

This leads to questions about whether or not neophyte school leaders consider themselves to be adequately prepared and supported for the overwhelming responsibilities of the position. Each leadership situation is a unique construction of an individual school leader's attributes and proclivities combined with the talents, expectations and site-based nuances within a particular school and learning community context. Therefore, what exactly do new school leaders consider to be important in preparing and supporting them in their roles and what are the professional and contextual challenges they face and must respond to in order to enact their leadership roles and invoke their particular brand of leadership?

Significance of Study

In light of relentless societal change and complex school reform contexts there is a need for a continual rethinking of how we "do" leadership in our schools. It is imperative to understand how our school leaders learn to lead and continue to learn to lead as they attempt to fulfil the mandate of sufficiently educating and preparing our youth for the world in which we live. Sound reasons persist for the exploration of understanding the beginning principalship:

> Given what is known about the impact of principal leadership in schools and its place in improving the learning and life of students, it is important that we understand where beginning principals are coming from (in terms of motivation and preparation), what they are expected to do and what they actually do..., the problems they face, how to support them (professionally and psychologically) and how to turn them towards ongoing learning and improvement (Walker & Qian, 2006, 298).

This study was undertaken in response for calls to conduct more research into the accession and incumbency stages of the principalship in a variety of international contexts (Cheung & Walker, 2006; Ribbons, 1999).

Given that it represents a first attempt to do this, specifically within Nova Scotia, the findings will contribute to the knowledge base of the phenomenon of the beginning principalship itself locally, nationally and internationally. This study aimed to add to the burgeoning international research base as it is important to build and develop an increasingly robust and sophisticated understanding of specific issues related to early-career principalship on a world-wide basis. I looked to investigate the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals in Nova Scotia in order to shed light on how new principals could be helped to perform their duties within the current Canadian reform environment. In addition, the research findings and illuminations from this study could help others in similar circumstances including neophyte principals and educational jurisdictions facing similar challenges to support new school leaders.

In Canada, provincial centralization has brought about a number of initiatives, including multi-million dollar cutbacks. In Nova Scotia, cutbacks and initiatives have included the amalgamation of school boards from twenty-one to seven, the consolidation of schools and the replacement of deteriorating physical plants (MacKinnon, 2001; Macmillan & Meyer, 2002). The issue of preparing and inducting new principals is especially pertinent since rates of principal retirements continue to rise each year while decreasing numbers of viable

candidates are applying for school leadership positions (Mulford, 2003; Fink & Brayman, 2006).

The roles for school leaders have changed dramatically during the past decade. Numerous reforms such as higher standards, greater accountability, increased parental demands and site-based management have led to increased paperwork and an enhanced management role while salaries and benefits have not kept pace with increasing responsibilities (Whitaker, 2003). Also, the disenchantment of existing leaders with the standards/standardization agenda and demographic changes caused as a result of the baby boom generation moving on have produced an increasingly rapid turnover of school leaders. For principals, job demands are expanding, the average number of hours worked in a week is rising, and accountability is intensifying (Petzko et al., 2002). This has led to fewer numbers of qualified candidates applying for or remaining in positions of administrative leadership. As a result, there has been insufficient pool of capable, qualified, and prepared replacements to carry on (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Gronn (2003) notes that disengagement from educational administrative positions may involve a relationship between two phenomena: the erosion of traditional workplace identities and the intensification of leadership work.

The reasons for a shrinking pool of principal candidates are interrelated and confounding. Trends indicate that filling open principalships will become more difficult in the next decade as retirement rates of experienced principals increase, high percentage of current principals move to non-administrative positions and the numbers of qualified applicants choosing to become school leaders decrease (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The challenges associated with the increasing rate and number of administrative retirements, coupled with reduced numbers of candidates applying for the principalship, seems to be a pervasive phenomenon experienced by educational jurisdictions of the western world, including Canada and the province of Nova Scotia (Gronn, 2003; Hickcox, 2002, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2002; Newton, 2001; Province of Nova Scotia, 2001; Young, Peterson & Short, 2002).

The restructuring efforts associated with mass centralization and the inevitability of increased administrative retirements provides the backdrop for an ever-increasing rate of first-time principals leading schools. Educational jurisdictions face dwindling numbers of qualified

applicants available for taking on administrative posts, especially the principalship. As a result, school boards have been forced to devise programs designed to attract and train aspirants in order to fortify pools of worthy administrative candidates. In addition, school boards have also been required to respond to the specific learning needs of an increased number of early-career principals by implementing system-wide support mechanisms through formal and informal induction measures. The combination of these realities provides the impetus for this timely research designed to investigate the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals in Nova Scotia and to examine how new school leaders learn their jobs, enact their roles and invoke their leadership while negotiating socialization influences.

It is also vital for the continuing welfare of society, its social and educational institutions notwithstanding, to examine how new leadership for any worthy pursuit is developed and enacted. In light of ongoing leadership scandals in business and politics, there has been an erosion of public confidence in the competence and fidelity of those holding leadership positions. According to Collinson and Grint (2005), we have seen a resurgence of 'policy' interest in leadership practice and development:

> Reinforcing the view that 'effective leadership' is vital for organizational performance, a plethora of guides, reports, and consultation papers have recently been published in many different sectors and societies extolling the need for excellence in management and leadership (5).

Essentially, people believe leadership is important and when it is absent they see it as chances missed, directions not taken and opportunities lost.

In the world of education, there has been renewed interest in school leadership in North America and commonwealth countries fuelled chiefly by a widespread belief in the potential of headteachers or principals to deliver improved educational outcomes (Harris, 2005). Therefore, it was worthwhile to explore the perceptions of beginning principals regarding their preparation and induction experiences and to examine aspects of their socialization into the role, deal with challenges to their agency and the enactment of their emerging leadership practice. Understanding these aspects of beginning school leadership will enable the education community to better prepare, support and fortify its leaders for the purposes of achieving important educational outcomes.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to "open the door of the principalship" for the purposes of examining the perceptions and experiences of beginning school leaders. This has involved the identification and explanation of the important realities and processes integral to educational leadership and the phenomenon of the beginning principalship. Of note are the facts that, until recently, few studies have focused on the beginning principalship and those that have tended to dwell on the challenges and problems confronting new school leaders. This chapter has identified the purpose and significance of the study, as well as the major research questions to be examined. The following chapter outlines the research methodology used to substantiate the research endeavour as an interpretive, phenomenological study.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

All these questions, which refer us to a pure and not accessory (or impure) reflection, can find their reply only on the ethical plane.

– Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

Examining the details of beginning principals' experiences and perceptions required an appropriate methodology and corresponding methods for data collection. This chapter begins by outlining the research methodology and theoretical underpinnings of this endeavour including discussing why a qualitative methodology was chosen and how the investigation is a phenomenological study rooted in an interpretive approach. Theoretical aspects related to ontological and epistemological considerations of the construction of reality and the nature and relational framing of knowledge are explicated from which the case for utilizing interpretive hermeneutics is forwarded and elements relevant to researcher bias are disclosed.

The research design used in this study is explained highlighting why the selection of participants was purposive, non-random and in keeping with the qualitative paradigm. Procedural elements were noted regarding the issuance of letters to appropriate parties including; information and permission to conduct research, notices of invitation and consent forms. Next, data collection methods are recalled which includes an explanation of the use of semi-structured interviews along with a description of the specifics related to interview protocols and interview schedules. Finally, there is a discussion of the limitations of the study and ethical concerns as well as an initial foray into aspects related to data analysis.

Qualitative Methodology

My choosing a suitable research methodology was predicated on the selection of appropriate research questions posed in Chapter Two. Based on the characteristics and organizational framework of my investigation, I chose a qualitative methodology to reflect the nature of my research questions. I did not feel that a positivist framework, described by Creswell (1998) as treating the world of natural phenomena as real, hard and external to the individual, reflected the nature and purpose of my research. Instead, I have opted to seek an empathetic neutrality innate in qualitative research. Johnson and Christensen (2000)

describe this empathetic neutrality as "passion in understanding the world in all its complexity – not proving something, not advocating, not advancing personal agendas, but understanding" (313). Merriam (1998) offers the philosophical assumption that individuals, interacting within their social worlds, construct reality. I believed this statement to be of particular importance to me as I embarked on discussions with beginning principals utilizing qualitative inquiry seeking to understand how they co-constructed their emergent leadership reality.

Inherent in the qualitative approach to research is "unpredictability" and "messiness" that reflects the conditions under which stories of practice are derived (Cole & Knowles, 2001). By utilizing a qualitative methodology, I looked to seek a way to capture the complex, messy, and multiple dimensions of learning and knowing in education (Lyons, 1998). Qualitative research is a means of eliciting tacit knowledge, defined by Cooper (1995) as "knowledge gained through experience that is difficult to explain but communicated and understood through the narrative modes" (122). The nature of the inquiry suggested that qualitative approaches would be helpful because I was curious about both *how* beginning principals were prepared and supported for their role and *what* the experience were like for them. This also held true for the exploration of the conceptualization of their roles and the enactment of their leadership practices.

For a number of reasons, an interpretive approach rooted in a qualitative paradigm was most appropriate for my particular research focus. It was through this approach to research that I was able to come to new understandings as a researcher. By re-examining the origins of participants' perceptions and actions, as well as my own, I was able to more fully identify future possibilities of practice.

An Interpretive Approach

Research endeavours consist of a "knowledge-constitutive interest" (Habermas, 1971). Such knowledge-constitutive interests often represent an epistemological dichotomy, how knowledge is represented, with technical/instrumental reasoning found in the positivist/empiricist tradition on one side, opposed by the hermeneutic/interpretive tradition of social research on the other (Usher, 1996). I felt the use of an interpretive tradition depicting

individuals as diverse, contradictory, and dynamic – multiple rather than unitary, decentred rather than centred (Usher, 1996) – was most appropriate for my study.

I examined the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals, all the while realizing that arriving at these interpretive insights would be a relational process rather than a rule-bound one (Cole & Knowles, 2000). There is a foregrounding of uncertainty, heterogeneity and difference in an interpretive tradition which I feel harmonizes with the exploration of the structure in human experience brought forth through a phenomenological approach (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Of concern to me was the notion that this interpretive tradition provided "an open door to the idea that there are no real objective arguments to take seriously" (Cooper, 1998, 39). Such a position, with its inherent conception of free plurality, creation of values and inventions of theories and perspectives can be seen as not being truly answerable to something or fit within an order of things and, as such, could be viewed as contempt for identity (Cooper, 1998). Similarly, Feyerabend (1993) describes the interpretivist approach, and qualitative research in general as having an "anything goes" philosophy.

Contrary to Feyerabend's notion of qualitative research and by extension, the interpretivist approach as anarchy, interpretivist research generates working hypotheses that are connected not to *a priori* theory but to a context specific, often emergent inquiry problem, which may or may not be informed by existing knowledge (Guba, 1990, 236):

> The evidence generated by interpretive research is much more likely to be of an evocative rather than a comprehensive kind, to be sustained, rejected, or refined through future studies. The conclusions of one study merely provide a starting point in a continuing cycle of inquiry, which may over time serve to generate persuasive patterns of data from which further conclusions can be drawn (Morgan, 1983, 398).

The purpose of interpretive research is to look for "understanding" or *verstehen* (Dilthey, 1883) of lived experience within a particular context. The interpretivist search for meaning and understanding follows the overall humanistic commitment of qualitative inquiry to study the world always from the perspective of the interacting individual (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994).

The knowledge garnered as a result of interpretive inquiry is normative and embedded within a pluralistic world of practice, and is therefore concerned with describing and understanding the constitutive meaning of existing forms of co-constructed social and political reality (Bernstein, 1976). And so, given its value relativity, the common goals of interpretivist

inquiry are to enrich human discourse, "to bring us in touch with the lives of strangers...to converse with them" (Geertz, 1973, 16). Interpretivist knowledge represents "emic" knowledge or insider understanding of perspectives and meanings of those in the setting being studied, and it encompasses both propositional and tacit information (Schwandt, 1994). The understanding communicated in interpretivist knowledge comes not only from its words but also from the broadly shared contexts of natural experience within which it is embedded (Guba, 1990, 235).

The interpretivist approach necessarily entails the accumulation of exemplars that may or may not add to our knowledge base of descriptive information about how our world works. Through interpretive research we may be able to accumulate information about the ideas that motivate people and information about the activities they carried out because of what motivated them (Weber as cited in Guba, 1990, 253). Since the purpose of my research study was to gain insights into the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals, I endeavoured to accumulate participants' expressed accounts of their preparation and induction and how they formulated aspects of their roles and practices. The ideas, motivations and activities perceived and experienced by these individuals are part of the complex social phenomenon known as the early-career principalship and are therefore best suited to a phenomenological methodology within the interpretivist approach.

A Phenomenological Study

A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this research because phenomenology studies social acts (Swingewood, 1991) and describes how ordinary members of society, in this case beginning principals, constitute the world of everyday life, developing meaning out of social interactions. For beginning principals, the 'everyday life of leadership' is all about social interaction. It is about building relationships and organizational capacity through enhanced connectivity (O'Connor & Quinn, 2004). A beginning principal's actions and interactions necessarily involve both sense-making and intentionality. Sense-making, or meaning-making, is an operation of intentionality (Schutz, 1967) which, in turn, is a basic phenomenological principle or theme:

Phenomenology is guided by the basic principle of intentionality, that is, experiences directed towards things in the world: Humans live (exist) in relation to a world, other persons, and objects; that is, as humans we exist and are constructed by our relations with others (Olivares, Peterson & Hess, 2007, 78).

Hence, it made sense for me to use phenomenology as an approach to better understand those experiencing the beginning principalship. Through a process of conversation-like interviews with the participants, I attempted to examine the details of what Malinowski (1961) calls the "imponderabilia of actual life" (14).

A phenomenological perspective allowed me to delve into a more complete account of the participants' experiences. The spoken word of interviewed participants provided the data useful for describing their perceptions and opinions more adequately and more deeply than scales and checklists. The descriptions obtained through individual interviews allowed for participants' expressed accounts of the phenomenon of early-career principalship including their perceptions of their preparation and induction experiences as well as the formulation and enactment of their leadership roles and practices. I was interested in seeing how new principals perceived their worlds as affected by early-career influences and experiences and how I, in turn, could interpret their perceptions.

This study explored the individual nature of experiences for beginning principals while at the same time recognizing that a commonality of experience may exist amongst the constituents - their individual and collective lived reality (Eichelberger, 1989). Phenomenology comes with the conviction that the nature of human experiences can be understood through a search for commonalities, involving a development of categories of experiences that have influenced those researched (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is evident when one asks certain types of questions over others, makes sense and analyzes findings in one way rather than another, and chooses a particular type of text to present research findings (Usher, 1996). The adoption of a framework grounded in the rudiments of a particular paradigm will have broad implications for how I, as the researcher, understand, view and describe the world around me (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Attempts have been made to construct meaning through the methodology and methods chosen for the interpretive phenomenological study that comprise this research

project. The research is informed and guided by the researcher's paradigm or worldview, comprised of a set of non-verifiable beliefs that are:

1. **Ontological** (the nature of reality, or being, or existence):

The questions to consider are: What are the characteristics of existence? Or, what are the universal characteristics of things that exist? And, what is the nature of reality? Realities exist as a result of our experiences and the tools we use to live, including our language and culture, which act as filters that shape and help define the reality that we construct (Every, 1998). Essentially, reality is relative and, although it is individually perceived, reality is interactively constructed.

Humans are social animals and construct their views of reality in groups. Thus, reality is embedded within a particular social construct and is derived from human interaction aimed at meaning-making and is comprised of intersubjective meanings that "exist only by social agreement or consensus among participants within a [given] context" (Eisenhart, 1988, 103). Each individual constructs his or her own version of reality but is influenced in determining this construction by the culture and context within which he or she resides.

The researcher subscribes to a constructivist view that reality is socially and experientially constructed and may have multiple intangible mental constructions and meanings that are local and specific in nature depending on the individuals or groups that subscribe to these constructions (Guba, 1990). Essentially, the researcher believes that reality is socially constructed and understood in context and that multiple realities co-exist. This 'relativist' frame of reality is represented in this research through the qualitative paradigm.

2. **Epistemological** (the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known):

The questions to consider are: What can we know about reality? And, how can we know it? Knowledge is woven of concepts derived from the mere contents of perception, representation, and thought (Dilthey, 1883). The "knower and the known are interactive and inseparable" and, as a result, any kind of social inquiry is "value-bound" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 37). The knower is always influenced by her or his situation and, thus, all knowledge is "situated" (Harding, 1998). We are always situated in a particular "horizon" of understanding

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that is based on a combination of cultural and personal presuppositions (Christopher, Richardson & Christopher, 2003). For individuals, knowledge is understood and realized through the process of 'subjective interactionism' (Guba, 1990). This means that, ultimately, knowledge is the constantly reconsidered consequence of human activity.

Humans are finite, historical beings and necessarily seek to understand the world from their own standpoints in time and place and, as a result, cannot stand above the relativity of history in order to procure 'objectivity valid knowledge' (Gadamer, 1975). Knowledge is accrued and continually reframed as a result of our continuing experiences and is viewed in terms of our individual perceptions and judgements at a specific point in time and within a given context. In deed, knowledge is a human construction, never certifiable as ultimately true but problematic and ever-changing (Guba, 1990, 26).

This researcher believes the understanding and attainment of knowledge is entirely subjective and due to our inescapable historicity. Furthermore, I subscribe to the view that knowledge is subjectively created and understood. In terms of the research described in this study, as the researcher, I have chosen to represent my 'subjective' epistemology through the interpretive approach to qualitative research.

3. *Methodological* (how the inquirer goes about finding out what can be known):

There is no independently existing reality of meanings that is susceptible to objective depiction, and there is no epistemological sense to be made of the dichotomy between meaning and significance (Guba, 1990, 175). In effect, knowledge is the result of a dialogical process between the self-understanding person and that which is encountered – whether it is a text, a work of art, or the meaningful expression of another person (Guba, 1990, 176). For both the researcher and the participants there is no such thing as the "right" interpretation. Interpretations can only be referenced to the interpreter in the sense that they result from a dialogue between the interpreter and that which is interpreted (Guba, 1990, 177).

Since the researcher adheres to the interpretive approach and believes that there are no universals that humans can know without doubt, "there is no particular right or correct path to knowledge [and] no special method that automatically leads to intellectual progress" (Smith, 1993, 120). From a constructivist viewpoint, the efficacy of a particular research

methodology is determined by how it is able to 'reconstruct', understand and describe the world for participants at the point where it exists in the minds of its constructors (Guba, 1990).

Our epistemology is subjective in that our ability to distinguish facts from values is non-existent (Gadamer, 1975). The knower and that which can be known are inseparable (Guba, 1990). Knowledge is an interpretation that is always situated in a living tradition. From this perspective, any attempt to have objective, value-free, ahistorical knowledge is both unachievable and misguided (Christopher et al., 2003, 12). What we are able to know and represent as such is really our own "best accounts" of the historically situated dialogue in which we are necessarily immersed (Taylor, 1989).

Because of the researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs and in consideration of the topic of inquiry, the most suitable research methodology for this research endeavour will contain methods and protocols associated with an interpretive phenomenological study.

Interpretive Hermeneutics

The methodology appropriate for the constructivist paradigm, as represented by the interpretivist approach to qualitative research, shared elements of the hermeneutic and dialogic. Hermeneutics entails the understanding of human action in context. Philosophic hermeneutics involves the 'interpretation of meaning' in understanding human action in context and is achieved through an ongoing dialogic process. Through what can be referred to as the "hermeneutic cycle" or "hermeneutic circle" individuals develop and interpret meaning by going back and forth between the topic of study, the context, and their own understanding (Willis, 2007). It is also a process or method of attempting to understand or make sense of the meanings, interpretations, and commitments of others, especially when they differ from our own.

The social ontology of hermeneutics suggests that an individual's existence and sense of reality is a continual happening or becoming and a continual refinement of "being in the world" (Heidegger, 1962). Accordingly, our realities are self-constituted and situated in a "web of significance" (Geertz, 1973) and "inescapable frameworks" (Taylor, 1985) as influenced by our culture, which necessarily precedes us. As humans we have been immersed in a world of meanings before we are able to be conscious of such. Therefore, our

lived experience reconstitutes and reconfigures these implied meanings to that which makes sense to us at any given moment. Overall, our understanding of reality is relative and dependent on our interpretations of our experiences in context and is influenced by our historically pre-shaped understandings (Gadamer, 1975).

From a hermeneutic standpoint, individual constructions will be elicited and refined utilizing the interpretive philosophic persuasion, and as such, be compared and contrasted dialogically, with the aim of generating one or more constructions on which there is substantial consensus (Guba, 1990). The fundamental premise of hermeneutic dialogue is that genuine understanding relies on a "fusion of horizons" (Christopher, et al., 2003). For purposes of this research study, this will include the fusion of participants' interpretive meanings as experienced in context as part of the phenomenon of the beginning principalship with my own accumulated understandings of the phenomenon.

The Researcher's Bias

In utilizing a phenomenological methodology for my study, it was necessary to continually attempt to bracket or set aside all prejudgments throughout the inquiry process. It was important to actively avoid relying on my own "intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience" (Creswell, 1998, 52). Creswell (1998) describes this as the concept of 'epoche,' where the researcher brackets his or her own preconceptions about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of informants.

As an interviewer, I realize that I become a co-constructor of the lived experience and thus affect the claim relating to absolute validity. A reflexive approach to my research, described by Cole and Knowles (2000) as considering general theories within the contexts of my own theories, is necessary in scrutinizing my own agendae as a researcher. This means that a researcher must be prepared to confront and question his or her own assumptions. This may entail a "willing suspension of disbelief" in order to gain a valid understanding of perceptions and experiences as represented through the ontological and epistemological contexts of the participants in the study.

It is a critical foregrounding of my role in interpreting and constructing knowledge, ultimately affecting how I, as a researcher, communicate others' accounts. This implies that the researcher must recognize his or her own assumptions and biases and lay them aside

insofar as possible in order to communicate the accounts of the participants as accurately as possible. In short, while accepting the realities of my own experience, I have attempted to separate my experiences as well as possible from those of the interviewed participants.

Research Design

While phenomenological studies generally do not claim any one particular method for data collection or data analysis (Willis, 2007), the research design for this project is compatible with the interpretive nature of this study and remains consistent with interpretive inquiry and in keeping with the intent of this study as a qualitative phenomenological study. The research questions lend themselves to the generation of data that is more suitably analyzed and interpreted qualitatively, rather than by quantitative methods.

Sixteen beginning principals were chosen to participate in this research, including eight principals from two different school boards. Of the eight early-career principals interviewed from each school board four were newly appointed principals and four were one-year-experienced principals. The decision to choose each of the respective school boards for this research study was an informed choice based on the researcher's experiences and findings gained from previous research conducted throughout the province of Nova Scotia over a three year period. The two school boards selected for this research study are regarded by the researcher as two of the more progressive school boards within the province with regard to leadership development and support.

It was important to the researcher to explore the perceptions and experiences of early-career principals who were participating in responsive, proactive and forward-thinking programs for leadership development and support for neophyte school leaders. This is because I believe there were a greater number of preparation and induction experiences for participants to draw upon when discussing their perceptions. Also, because of this mode of selection, I believe that a greater number of significant socialization influences would be at play that could possibly impact the role enactment and emerging practice of participants. This was therefore, a purposive selection.

As the intent of the study was to capture the essence of the beginning principalship and investigate how newcomers experience and negotiate the nuances of school leadership, participants for this study were chosen from two groups of early-career school leaders. Both

"newly appointed" and "one-year-experienced" principals were chosen to participate because of their limited experience in the position. At this juncture, a combination of personal, professional and organizational socialization forces are in play and already being acutely experienced by neophyte school leaders (Crow, 2007; Hart, 1991; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Ribbons, 1999).

Newly appointed principals have had only a few months on the job since their original appointment and have been involved with transitioning to their new role, and in most cases transitioning to their new school site, whereas, one-year-experienced principals have entered their second season as team leader and are experiencing their second start of the school year. To varying degrees, both groups of participants are experiencing an increase of organizational socialization influences as they rely on their previous personal and professional socialization to help them configure their current leadership practices. It is also within this time frame that, for the first time as a school's principal, early-career school leaders are establishing and formulating and enacting their leadership roles and practices.

As part of commencing with the research study, a letter of information and request for permission to conduct research was developed and sent to the superintendents of the two school boards (Appendix A). Shortly thereafter, formal permission was granted by each of the superintendents to commence the research study. From this point, I worked with the leadership coordinators from the two selected school boards to find interested research participants. In each of the two school boards, it was the leadership coordinators who were most familiar with and professionally responsible for the development and support of early-career principals. Therefore, leadership coordinators were contacted by email and by telephone to discuss the purpose, nature and requirements of the study. On behalf of the researcher, each leadership coordinator forwarded to their respective pools of early-career principals (newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals) a Notice of Invitation to Participate in Research (Appendix B) by email outlining the nature and participation requirements of the research inquiry. As was noted in the communication, participation was completely voluntary.

A purposive non-random sampling procedure was used to select the interview participants from each school board. That is to say, selection of interview participants was

purposefully non-random, as selection was based on chronology of response to agree to participate in the study. Essentially, the selection of interview participants was based on who volunteered first. Fortunately, although there was a limited number of early-career principals in both school boards, especially newly appointed principals, almost all eligible candidates for research consideration chose to participate. Candidates' acceptance to participate was communicated to the leadership coordinators of the appropriate school boards and forwarded to the researcher as they occurred.

Letters of Invitation and Consent Forms (Appendix C) further detailing the research proposal and participation requirements were emailed to each of the potential participants for their perusal. Phone calls were made to each of the prospective participants to initiate verbal contact with a follow up introduction and to address any questions that potential participants had regarding the study. At this time, participant criteria and category placement was confirmed for each potential participant. In one instance, it was determined that, although one of the principals had been an "acting principal" for six months prior to her first year as principal, she was still regarded as only having one year of official experience by the school board and was categorized as such for the research study. In addition, the logistics for potential times and locations for interviews were discussed with each prospective participant. Hard copies of the Letters of Invitation and Consent Forms (Appendix C) were brought to the interviews and thoroughly read and signed by the researcher and participants before commencing with the interviews.

It was much easier to coordinate times and locations for interviews with participants from one of the school boards. The reason for this was that the leadership coordinator was able to assist in the process by organizing interview times and locations based on time of availability, proximity of participants, along with accounting for the logistics of travel and transition time for the researcher. In addition, one principal had to drop out of the process due to extenuating circumstances prior to the beginning of the interviews and the leadership coordinator was able to quickly contact another viable candidate for interviewing. It should be noted that the selection of participants for each category of comparison (newly appointed principals and one-year experienced principals for each school board) was not limited to four participants per grouping. However, at day's end, it was determined that each school board

only had this number of eligible participants for each category that were able to be interviewed.

Data Collection

The intent of the study was not to evaluate principal preparation and support programs, nor to asses the quality and efficacy of beginning principals. Rather, the purpose of the research study was to thoughtfully explore the perceptions and experiences of school leaders who were immersed in the processes of early phase leadership. In an attempt to understand how beginning principals in Nova Scotia experienced and perceived preparation and support for their roles as educational leaders and how these experiences influenced their roles and practices, I included participants' from two comparatively progressive regional school boards within the province. Essentially, I wanted to examine how neophyte educational leaders learned to lead and continued to learn to lead.

Eight newly appointed principals and eight one-year-experienced principals from two different school boards were interviewed regarding their perceptions and experiences as beginning principals. I endeavoured to shed light on the preparation and induction experiences of early-career principals as well as gain a deeper understanding of how beginning principals understood their roles enacted their leadership practice. In keeping with the intent and integrity of the phenomenological tradition, I have made every attempt to present material in a way that best described participants' actual experiences and perspectives.

A qualitative study allowed for a more detailed view of a phenomenon and encouraged a face-to-face method of data collection (Creswell, 1998) which enabled unanticipated disclosures about the topic under study. As a result, the reporting of their experiences could be viewed as less contrived (Creswell, 1998). A qualitative approach for data collection allowed me to become immersed in the data and to uncover emergent and multiple perspectives of the phenomenon of early-career principalship.

The data were collected through face to face interviews with participants. Merriam (1998) states "the decision to use interviews as the primary mode of data collection should be based on the kind of information needed and whether interviewing is the best way to get it" (72). Given my interest in the lived experiences of beginning principals, my chosen mode of

data collection was most appropriate, as my intent was to find out what was "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, 278).

Although interviewing all participants in person required extensive travel and organization by me, I deemed it necessary to take sufficient time and effort to conduct the interviews with participants in person and in context, thereby maintaining internal consistency in the process and comfortability for the interviewees. This also allowed me to observe the actual context and setting in which the participants worked. In addition, all interviews with participants took place in the school offices of the participants, thus enabling observations and points of conversation to support the interview process.

The data collected consisted of participant responses to a set of interview questions designed to explore the processes and dimensions of the beginning principalship. Data were collected through a series of tape-recorded sixty to ninety minute interviews following a semi-structured interview guide involving open-ended questions. The semi-structured interview guide allowed a conversational approach to participant interviewing while ensuring that both specific and broad areas of discussion were facilitated during each interview. Written records of interview notes taken during the interviews were kept, analyzed and later destroyed at the end of the study. Copies of documents pertinent to the study were obtained and a written record of observations was maintained. A document analysis was conducted on each school board's leadership programs and policies in order to gain pertinent background information, as well as to ensure that the study included an accurate account of relevant policies, procedures and guidelines regarding principal development and support. Data were transcribed from taped interviews with participants, after which all tapes were erased and destroyed. Access to raw data, interview transcripts and documents was restricted to the researcher.

Potential participants were sent an Invitation to Participate and Consent Form (Appendix C) via email and later given in hard copy at the time of the interview. This document was presented to, discussed with and signed by the participants prior to the commencement of interviews. Although a consent form was signed, participants still reserved the right to withdraw without penalty at any point from the research process. The primary purpose of the participation and consent form was to ensure that the participants had read

and understood the nature and requirements of the research. Participants were provided with telephone numbers and email contact information regarding any questions or concerns about the nature of the research and their participation in it.

Participants were afforded the opportunity to read their interview transcripts as well as the final thesis and were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and with all the data concerning them destroyed. Also, participants were reassured in writing about the extent of confidentiality and anonymity that was being adhered to in the study. As noted in the participation and consent form, any information that may have identified the participants, including who they were and for whom they worked, was removed.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were the prime methods of data collection and were conducted in order to assess the perceptions and experiences of newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals involving aspects of their preparation and induction as well as perceptions regarding their role enactment and leadership practice. The interviews took place at summer's end and in the early fall of 2005 with each interview lasting between sixty and ninety minutes. The interviews were conducted in a location of the participants' choosing, thereby encouraging a level of comfort needed for the interviews to be as conversational as possible (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

As noted previously, a total of sixteen beginning principals were interviewed (Table 1); eight principals from two different school boards. Of the eight principals interviewed from each school board, four were newly appointed principals and four were one-year-experienced principals. It was anticipated that the beginning principalship would bring forth many similarities in experience and perceptions, yet also be quite varied, especially between those newly appointed to the position and those having one year of experience. Also, participants in each of these categories from two different school boards might account for both similarities and differences in experience and perceptions.

Table 1

Participants Represented by School Board, Category and Experience, and Type of School

School Board A

Name	Category	Prior Experience	Type of School
Kari[1]	(0)	25 yrs. – 2Vp, (1*), 4(Sch. Board), Res. Teacher	Elementary (P – 5)
Carol	(0)	18 yrs. – 2Vp (vp/resource/guid.), Res. Teacher	Elementary (P – 5)
Brian	(0)	26 yrs. – (9**) P.E./Science teacher	Middle School (6 – 8)
Victor	(0)	30 yrs. – 1Vp, Middle school teacher	Elementary (P – 6)
Candice	(1)	28 yrs. – 4Vp (P – 4), Elem/Res. Teacher	Elementary (P – 5)
Daniel	(1)	18 yrs. – 1Vp, Middle school teacher	Elementary (P – 6)
Max	(1)	16 yrs. – 9Vp, High school teacher	Middle School (6 – 8)
Juanita	(1)	19 yrs. – 11Vp, (7* Jr. H), Science teacher	High School (7 – 12)

School Board B

Name	Category	Prior Experience	Type of School
Charles	(0)	10 yrs. – 3 Board, 2Vp (Jr. H), Jr. H teacher	Elementary (0 – 4)
Kim	(0)	10 yrs. – 4Vp (4*) Science teacher	Jr./Sr. School (7 – 12)
Helen	(0)	20 yrs. – 8Vp (8* teach/vp) 12 yrs. Teacher	El/Mid School (4 – 9)
Lexi	(0)	17 yrs. – (4**) Elementary teacher	Elementary (0 – 4)
Amber	(1)	7 yrs. – 3Vp, 4 yrs. Mid. school teacher	Middle School (5 – 8)
Steven	(1)	16 yrs. – P.E. teacher	Elementary (0 – 6)
Patricia	(1)	17 yrs. – 2Vp, (2*), 8 guidance, 6 teacher	High School (7 – 12)
Elizabeth	(1)	14 yrs. – ½ Vp (½*), 13½ Elementary teacher	Middle School (6 – 8)

* Denotes years of experience as a vice-principle in current school
** Denotes years of experience as a teacher in the current school

Questions were included regarding respondent's opinions about worthwhile preparation and induction experiences as well as conceptualizations and challenges relating to the role itself. Questions included issues regarding transitioning to the role and learning about their leadership contexts. Respondents' personal qualities, traits, values and beliefs were identified. Their leadership influence and agency were reviewed. The interview also asked about respondents' leadership practices including their philosophies, styles, routines and goals. Overall, interview questions attempted to explore aspects of preparation, induction, roles and practices involved in the phenomenon of the beginning principalship.

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[1] Pseudonyms were used for participants' names and letter designations (A, B) were used to identify the two different school boards referred to in the study.

The research began with semi-structured interviews that were open-ended in nature. The interview schedules contained both guiding questions (Appendix D1, D2) and emergent questions which were similar, although not identical, for all interviewees. The guiding questions used for both the newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals were similar in form and true to the purpose and intent relating to the themes and topics of inquiry previously discussed. Differences occurred for specific questions regarding tone and tense, accounting for the temporal nature of experiences for each group of principals. The same topic area or theme would be addressed for each participant group of beginning principals but from a different point of view based on participants' level of experience (i.e. How *would* you...? as opposed to, How *did* you...? and, What do you think *is* most important when...? as opposed to, What *was* most important when...?).

Kahn and Cannell (1957) have described interviews as conversations with a purpose. The interview questions were open-ended in nature. Open-ended questions have a number of advantages in that "they are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so he may go into more depth if he chooses, or to clear up misunderstandings; they encourage co-operation and help establish rapport" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, 277). While the same basic questions were asked of each participant, they were not necessarily asked in the same order. Rather, the questions were asked in a manner that permitted a more natural flow to the conversation with the following in mind:

> Typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal, structured interviews. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the informant's meaning or perspectives, but otherwise respects how the informant frames and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 82).

It was important to consider the phrasing of each question. I purposefully used a mixture of open-ended questions and statements that helped summarize or rephrase a participant's response. I tried to avoid affecting each person's response to interview questions by not giving cues regarding how they might or should respond to my questions (Weiss, 1994). I needed to consider the effect I had as an interviewer and had to bear in mind not only the phrasing of questions, but also the tone of voice and the type of responses I made to each participant's story. "As investigators, we are present in the study in every phase" (Weiss, 1994, 211), and as such, I was careful not to ask leading questions or be

friendly toward responses that supported my own preconceptions. Each question was asked in a way that felt conversational, yet remained within the framework of the study.

Interview Protocol

Each individual chosen for interviews was provided with a letter of invitation to participate regarding the interview (Appendix C). This letter answered basic questions about the interview, such as, "What was the interview about?", "Who wants to know about the information?", "Who will benefit from this information?", "Why and how has that particular interviewee been selected?", "How long will the interview take?", "Will it be confidential?', and "What responsibilities does the interviewee have?" (Gray & Guppy, 1994). Clear instructions made the task easier for the interviewees. Knowing that the interview would not be an onerous one was a good way of motivating the interviewee to agree to the interview (Gray & Guppy, 1994).

After the letter of invitation to participate and consent form had been sent out, follow-up phone calls were made to answer any questions and to sort out the particulars of the interview. Interview location and time was determined by the participant and was mutually agreed upon by the participant and the interviewer. This served to ensure that participants were comfortable with the environment where the interview was to be conducted, and facilitated both personal and work schedules as interviews occurred during the work day or after the school day. Interviews were recorded using high quality portable recording equipment. After the interviews, participants were contacted by telephone or email whenever clarification or explanation of specific points was required. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants received no compensation or special consideration for their participation in the study.

As noted above, study participants were contacted by telephone or email after the interview. They were once again thanked for their participation and invited to review their own transcripts to verify that the information presented in the transcripts was accurate. Any clarification or concern expressed by the participants was addressed. This "member check" was used to ensure that the data presented in the study was as accurate as possible. Results of the research were distributed to participants upon request and upon completion of the project. Any personal profiles presented in the research contain only general descriptive

information with pseudonyms being used throughout. Participants were referred to as "newly appointed principals" or "one-year-experienced principals" working in school boards "A" or "B." No excerpts of transcripts or descriptions of subjects or their places of work that could possibly identify participants to the reader were included in the thesis.

Interview Schedules

Using previous experiences interviewing Nova Scotia principals as part of a Canadian federally funded research project (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada - SSHRC) exploring principal succession, and after an initial literature review around the beginning principalship, various drafts of question typologies were developed. From this, preliminary versions of two similar yet different interview schedules were created for "newly appointed" and "one-year-experienced" principals. Utilizing a framework of socialization (Matthews & Crow, 2003), categories were devised and questions grouped according to three areas of inquiry regarding socialization experiences: personal socialization, professional socialization and organizational socialization. Within the three categories of the socialization framework a number of thematic areas of inquiry were included: background and influences; formal and informal preparation; pre-service and in-service support and professional development; required skills and knowledge; leadership/management dichotomy; leadership philosophy, style and practices; role demands and challenges; educational values and visions; successes and frustrations; relationships and networking; and trust development. The questions were piloted with selected principals from each school board for length, coherence and feasibility. Necessary adjustments were made including omissions and tailoring of specific questions, as well as the addition of other more pertinent questions.

Final interview schedules (Appendix D1, D2) were designed to serve as a frame of reference for questioning. Efforts were made to include various types of questions to facilitate exploration and description of knowledge. As noted previously, separate yet similar interview protocols were developed for the two groups of participants so as to best capture their experiences, knowledge of and views regarding the beginning principalship.

Highlights of the interview schedules are presented below. The first section of the interview requested general biographic and demographic information. Questions were asked about the interviewee's previous life and work experiences. The purpose of this line of

questioning was to engage the interviewee in a positive fashion to set a relaxed and comfortable tone for the rest of the interview, as well as to acquire relevant background information. The remaining questions were grouped into three categories or types of socialization (personal, professional and organizational) which served as a temporal and perceptual foundation from which to explore participants' perceptions and experiences related to aspects of the beginning principalship.

Personal Socialization Experiences

Attempts were made to identify previous life and work experiences that helped beginning principals develop personal understandings about schooling and leadership. This included discussing participants' 'personal understandings' about a number of personal and educational leadership based topics. Topic areas of inquiry included: motivations, influences and inspirations; the conceptions, challenges and changes of the role of the principal; personal traits and qualities; and trust development.

Professional Socialization Experiences

This section asked respondents to identify experiences that helped them learn specific aspects of the principalship including knowledge, skills and dispositions through informal means as well as targeted instruction and formal training regimes. Topic areas of inquiry included: knowledge and skills of the role; worthwhile preparation; suggestions for improved preparation; induction experiences; suggestions for improved support; and educational values and beliefs.

Organizational Socialization Experiences

This section asked respondents to identify activities and experiences where they learned how to enact specific aspects of the occupational role within the context of the particular learning community. Topic areas of inquiry include: transition experiences; learning about the school; roles with students; leadership intents and purposes; leadership influence on school; challenges to agency; leadership tasks and routines; developing relationships and building trust.

Limitations of the Study

The possibilities presented by this study are much larger than what was attempted. For example, it would have been interesting to compare ages of respondents, gender and

type of school, as well as previous educational work experience as factors for exploring participants' perceptions and experiences influencing their early phase leadership role enactment and practices. Also, a larger number of participants from a larger number of school boards could have been included. However, for logistics sake, it was important to narrow the possible areas of interest to only a few. As a result, the analysis was restricted to a comparison of perceptions and experiences of newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals from only two school boards. The number of interviews is small and is drawn from too localized a source to really describe a trend or trends in beginning principals' perceptions and experiences. While the author of this study hopes some generalizations may be drawn from the data, larger studies with more participants would facilitate a clearer picture, possibly revealing a provincial or national trend around the preparation, induction, roles and practices of beginning principals.

I also had to consider the possible impact of researcher bias (e.g. my own experiences with school leadership and principals) and then look to gain clarity of participants' perspectives. This was established throughout the interviews by asking participants to clarify descriptions of their experiences where confusion existed. At the same time, I tried to always be aware of the way in which my own bias could affect my interpretation of participants' responses during the interviews, as well as how it might influence data analysis. Overall, I considered not only the interpretations and explanations of the experiences of the participants, but also the accessibility to other readers. By using personal experiences of beginning principals, experiences that other educational leaders can relate to, I hoped to ensure that the summaries and conclusions would be useful to others as they consider the phenomenon of the beginning principalship.

Ethical Issues

As with any research involving human participants, a number of ethical concerns for this study were addressed. Permission to conduct this research study was obtained from the appropriate authorities in each of the school boards involved and approval was also obtained from the Research Ethics Board of the researcher's work place university. Participants each signed a letter of participation and consent (Appendix C) and were given the option of withdrawing and terminating their participation in the process at any time prior to, during, or

following the interviews. Also, the researcher assured participants that research results would be made available to participants at the end of the project.

The interviews were developed and conducted using the standards set forth in *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion* (Huberman & Miles, 2002) and in *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (Merriam, 1998). Participants were selected according to the criteria established in these books. As noted, the selection of participants in this study was a purposeful non-random sampling of beginning principals. The participants were asked to talk about their work place and, as such, they may have initially felt they were in a vulnerable position. Participants were asked to divulge information and perceptions about programs of development and support being offered by those considered to be their colleagues and, in some cases, their superiors. Also, participants were aware that research interviews were taking place with newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals in their own school boards and might have been able to discover the names of associate participants. In addition, participants were aware that the leadership coordinator of their particular school board knew about, and in some cases, organized interviews for the study.

In order to solicit the kind of information I needed about their experiences, I had to ensure that participants felt safe in sharing with me details of those experiences. I assured them full confidentiality and anonymity and I have used pseudonyms for participants and letter designations for their respective school affiliations. To this end, interviewees were assured that names were changed and work sites or school boards were not named. No attempt was made to deceive the subjects or to employ deceptive measures in obtaining data.

Since the interviews were tape-recorded, the tapes were kept in a secure location (private and locked) both during and following the research process. Notes were taken during the interviews in addition to recording the conversation at the time of the interview. After the interviews, computer discs and portable memory devices were used to record the information and the researcher's interview notes. Then, this information was backed up on the computer hard drive. A printed copy was maintained until the project was completed. At the end of the project all recorded and saved information was destroyed.

Perhaps the greater concerns regarding ethics were those that have already been mentioned, including the phrasing of my questions, the tone of voice I used and the manner in

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which I responded to each person's experience. In sum, I attempted to guard against bias in each interview by making efforts with participant so that each person felt comfortable enough to share their perceptions. In addition, each participant was asked to peruse transcripts and re-tellings of their experiences to confirm understandings and clarify them if necessary.

Data Analysis

The core interview questions were developed within a socialization framework which delineated personal, professional and organizational types of socialization experienced by new leaders. This framework served as a major reference point which also helped to generate the research questions themselves. The data were both compartmentalized and connected according to aspects of preparation, induction, roles and practices and were further reduced to resonating themes and categories. The process of reducing and transforming data in order to "make it more readily accessible, understandable and to draw out various themes and patterns" (Berg, 2001, 35) is referred to as data reduction. As part of data reduction, beginning principals' perceptions were categorized by emerging patterns and themes and analyzed for meaning. As the analysis of the data began, I identified and grouped common themes, thoughts or ideas as they emerged. This process included several meaningful stages of operation.

First of all, as the researcher, I immersed myself in the data. Re-readings were common until similarities began to emerge. Secondly, an anchor chart was created using categories matching the four research questions for this study. Thirdly, data were entered in terms of quotations matching anchor categories. In some cases, a datum fit more than one place on the anchor chart as there was some overlap between categories, particularly at the sub-category level. In such cases, further meditation on the meaning or meanings of datum proceeded until there was clarity regarding which category the item belonged in, or which of several categories would be most suitable for its inclusion. Once an anchor chart was complete and the data mined as fully as possible, the data were converted into an analysis of the research study. I strived to strike a balance, realizing my findings are context-specific while, at the same time, interpreting their meaning in a broader educational context.

Chapter Four

Preparation and Support for the Principalship:
Worthwhile Experiences and Suggestions for Improvement

The only real training for leadership is leadership.

– Sir Antony Jay

This chapter begins with a brief explanation of the scope and sequence of analysis concerning the construction and arrangement of the next four chapters. This includes describing and explaining a conceptual diagram which illustrates a temporal-foundational arrangement of analysis (see figure 4.1). Explanation provides insight into the progression and intellectual continuity between each chapter and how the collection, analysis and interpretation of data informed the process and grouping of analyses for each chapter.

From this point, the first chapter of analysis outlines beginning principals' worthwhile preparation and induction support experiences including suggestions for improvement in these areas. First, there is a brief introduction into the nature of principal preparation in Canada and Nova Scotia from which a number of experiences are identified by beginning principals as having been "worthwhile" in terms of helping them feel take on their new school leadership roles. Two major areas are considered; education/training, and previous leadership-related experiences.

Analysis regarding education and training is grouped into three main venues; university and college level courses attached to a postgraduate degree, school board developed and directed leadership programs, and provincially sponsored leadership modules. Analysis of leadership related experiences are categorized into two sub-categories; experiences and learnings specifically associated with holding a school based leadership position, and the leadership learnings realized as a result of interacting with school site and school board level administrators.

The next section of analysis investigates worthwhile induction and support experiences starting with a brief introduction into the nature and value of in-post support for newcomers. Analysis is separated into response categories attributable to each of the two studied school boards. For school board A, categories include New Principals Group monthly

meetings, school board liaisons, mentors, information networking and informal support. Analysis categories for school board B include monthly administrator's meetings, information networks and informal support mechanisms. The final section of the chapter includes the analysis of respondents' suggestions for improved preparation and support. Here, categories of analysis are grouped into three specific areas; pre-appointment preparation, post-appointment transition, and in-post support.

Figure 4.1 – Scope and Sequence of Analysis
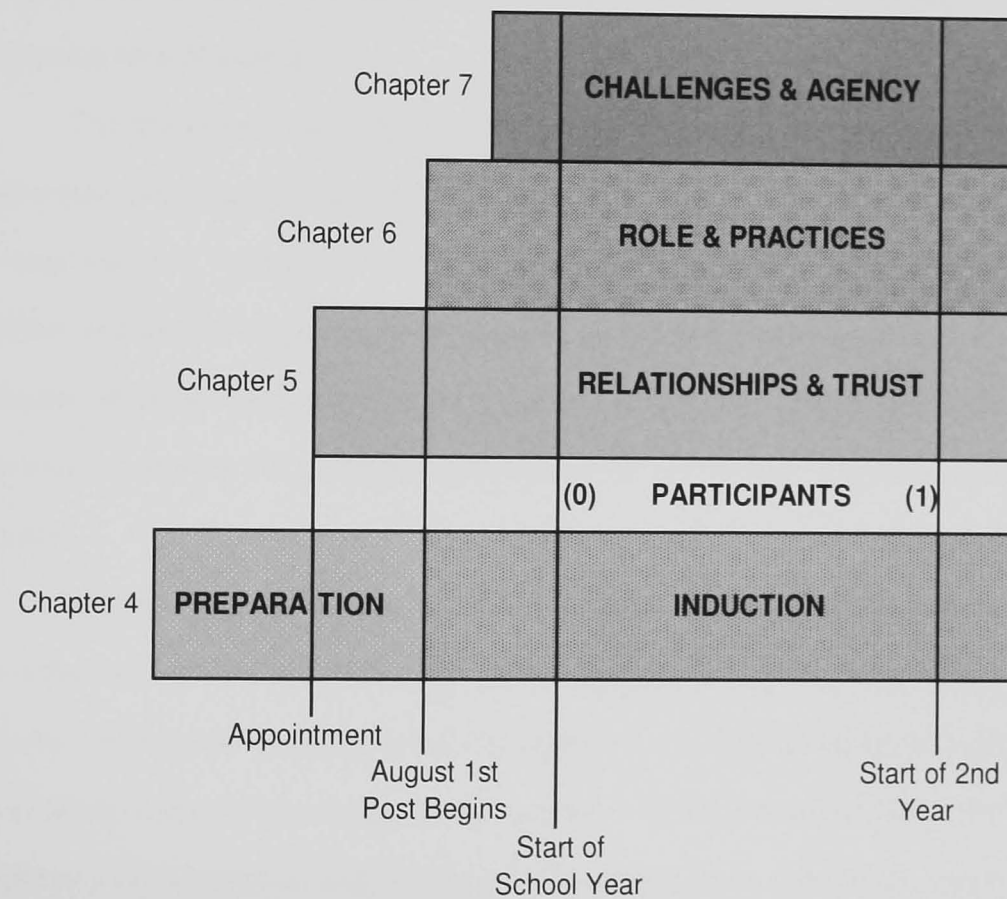
Scope and Sequence of Analysis

To better understand the phenomenon of the beginning principalship, I worked to obtain clarity regarding the preparation, induction, roles, agency and practices of newly appointed and one-year-experienced school leaders. To gain insight into these areas I focused my inquiry on the examination of new principals' experiences that have informed, influenced and illustrated their leadership roles and practices during the early phase of their tenure. This included investigating the extent to which beginning principals were prepared and supported in their new leadership roles, as well as examining how newcomers transitioned to their new roles and connected with their staff members and enacted their

leadership. Finally, by examining the roles and practices of new principals, including the tasks, routines, challenges and use of agency I was able to get further insight into the composite construction of beginning principals' lived reality.

The pathway of analysis followed a temporal-foundational arrangement beginning with examining the perceptions and experiences of neophyte principals prior to their appointments through their transition to being in-post and continuing on through to areas of practice experienced after taking on the principalship for the new school year. Each chapter of analysis is cumulative in foundation and construction and follows in succession according to originating time of experience.

The first chapter of analysis examines beginning principals' perceptions of their preparation and induction experiences and identifies worthwhile experiences and suggestions for improvement. Preparation experiences naturally occur prior to being appointed to the position and extend to taking on the post only weeks before the onset of the school year. Induction experiences commence from there on in. Together preparation and induction experiences provide the foundation and support for newcomers' emerging leadership practice.

The next chapter of analysis explores the first actions of new school leaders immediately after their appointments. This necessarily includes the connection and communications with learning community members and the development of relationships and the building of trust with colleagues and students. Although these experiences originate prior to official paid designation and can be considered part of the preparation phase they continue on for the duration of their post and set the foundation for further leadership practices.

The third chapter of analysis explores beginning principals' roles and leadership practices starting from the first days of their paid designation. This includes differentiating between the conceptions and practice of leadership and management and involves the exploration of commonly experienced tasks and routines. These ideations and actions provide the basis from which to tackle challenges and enact further forms of leadership practice.

The final area of investigation examines neophyte principals' leadership challenges and the exercise of agency. These experiences for respondents start just prior to the school

year and extend through the time frame of their tenure. For newly appointed principals this includes actions and experiences up to and including the first few weeks of their inaugural school year. For one-year-experienced principals, it includes this time period along with their first year at the helm.

Preparation

One's path to an educational leadership position may be as different and as unique as the number of individuals who take on the principalship. Typically however, an individual's preparation for the position comes from two main sources:

> Prep comes out of your experiences and your education. There is no one way to say for sure. Whatever leads you to that path, leads you to that path. It will be as diverse for people from this school to the next school.... People take on school leadership because they think that they can do something to make a difference. I'm not sure that there is one way for preparing for that (Kari – 0 – A).

In light of work to compare and share developments and designs of principal preparation programs and leadership practices throughout regions of the world (Brundrett, 2001; Bush & Jackson, 2002; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2006, 2008), pre-appointment preparation for school leaders continues to be regarded as an "act of faith" (Cowie & Crawford, 2007). Disappointment with traditional and theory-based preparation programs, coupled with the public demand for increased expertise in the principalship, has resulted in a wave of new and redesigned principal preparation programs (Lauder, 2000; Normore, 2006).

Universities are no longer the sole providers for preparing school leaders. Recently, regional educational jurisdictions have spearheaded numerous alternative programs as part of district-based initiatives that include canvassing knowledge and practical expertise from outside the usual offerings of schools of education, organizing course work into relevant modules aligned with their students' field experiences and setting up clearly defined induction programs as leadership support (Teital, 2006).

In Canada, education continues to be under the aegis of provincial ministries (Ungerleider & Levin, 2007). Provincial governments formulate and regulate educational programs and policy initiatives and often defer specific programming, including leadership development to regional school boards. As a result, professional development for aspiring and incumbent educational leaders in Canada is regionally determined. Consequently, training for both new and experienced principals is often sporadic and uncoordinated

(Hickcox, 2004). Almost uniformly however, school administrators are required to have Master of Education Degrees in Canada (Sherman, 2008). In Nova Scotia, aspiring school leaders have traditionally looked towards university postgraduate studies as the academic foundation for their leadership preparation and, upon completion, to serve as a hallmark necessary for possible entry into the principalship.

University/College Post Graduate Courses

In Canada, aspiring school leaders study for postgraduate degrees that typically span a multitude of areas including educational leadership, curriculum, special education, educational foundations, and more, to the extent that the relevant value of each area of study for principals is subject to ongoing debate and suggests a lack of agreement about the appropriate content of principal preparation programs (Webber & Sherman, 2008). In view of this, respondents from each of the two studied school boards in Nova Scotia indicated that, as part of the cohort structures implemented by their school boards, their degree-based studies required them to complete a number of courses focused in the area of educational leadership and administration:

> I took a couple of courses that were Ed. Admin. A lot of them were case scenarios of things happening. They were all situational.... They matched theory with what goes on and what would you do and the steps you take... We had a group of people with a lot of experiences to talk about. It was sharing and learning from each other (Kim – 0 – B).

Respondents identified a number of elements that made their postgraduate offerings and experiences worthwhile including aspects related to curriculum, andragogy, cohort structure and course participants. Within each of these frames, new school leaders highlighted specific features that positively impacted their preparation and influenced their current leadership thinking and practice.

Useful Curriculum/Andragogy

Respondents identified worthwhile postgraduate courses as those that combined educational theory and concepts with a realistic glimpse of school leadership. This included activities that were pragmatic in approach and situational in analysis.

> The 'Role of the Principal' course! I found people were real and situations were real, and it wasn't, "Here's a textbook." There were a lot of practical "hands on" activities where [I] had to prioritize (Amber – 1 – B).

Worthwhile learnings included topics of inquiry that were relevant to aspiring leaders where school leadership issues and challenges were explored. Conceding that many university-based school leader preparation programs have been criticized as being too theoretical and divorced from the actual practice of leadership (Levine, 2005), respondents noted that their most worthwhile courses were those that taught them more specifically "how" to do leadership in addition to learning "about" leadership (Fusarelli et al., 2010).

> We did [the course] "Dynamics of Change" and looked at change processes and how to institute change within a building and how to be a "change leader." We also looked at building professional learning communities and the developing of staff collaboration (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Instruction and learning activities encouraged the use of participants' life experiences and current work situations. In this way, the teaching/learning processes involved the socialization method of "investiture" where individuals' previous learnings and identities were valued and used to reinforce new learning (Crow, 2004, 2007).

> A course that I took about the role of the principal taught by [two previous principals from the board] gave me an opportunity to learn about that role and bring my own practices and experiences to it.... Through the presentations and the way that they presented it they actually gave me a realistic picture of what it was going to be like (Lexi – 0 – B).

> It gives me an ability to put theory alongside what I do and what I am expected to do as a school leader... I really found what the instructor wanted me to do was to relate to what I was experiencing as a vice-principal. It was a very useful experience to read a chapter and then contrast and compare it to what I was going through in practice right then. They were encouraging me to look at both practice and theory and see the contestation of the two (Charles – 0 – B).

Essentially, postgraduate curriculum deemed worthwhile was that which shed light on the reality of the nature and scope of the principalship while also including the situational reality of participants.

Influenced Leadership Thinking

Typically, as part of living a hurried life, most individuals tend to stay within the box, never questioning their assumptions nor venturing beyond their tried and true sources of information (Matthews & Crow, 2003). However, respondents identified that their participation in postgraduate studies enabled them to reflect and see things differently.

> I think the majority of the [M.Ed.] courses were very beneficial. We did a 'Foundations in Education' course which was really about challenging the way you thought about education and your pre-conceptions and your biases and it opened up a whole world of thinking. Going from day-to-day-to-day you consider yourself fair and "just" and that you do things in the best interests of

children. You don't ever consider your biases and how they affect people.... So that was a real eye-opener to start that process of critically thinking about [my] practice and [my] person. I hadn't done that before. I hadn't done a lot of reflective thinking. I was busy teaching. I had goals, I had stuff to do and sitting and reflecting upon them was never part of it (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

I developed the courage to be self-critical. That would mean thinking about what you are saying and why you are saying it.... Being reflective is all about taking a hard look at what you are saying and what you are doing and come to some kind of understanding (Charles – 0 – B).

Respondents participated in course work and learning activities that helped them to consider, reconsider and more fully understand their choices, assumptions, values and behaviours for purposes of reflecting on "why" they did what they did and improving on what and how they did things (Senge et al., 2000).

The course called "Diverse Cultures" was a turning point in the way I thought; the way I looked at things and the way I try to balance things... not just because I recognize differences and have the acceptance of cultures, colour or religion, but to value everyone's contributions. I didn't do this very well before, but now I'm trying to value what everybody has (Steven – 1 – B).

Informed Leadership Practice

Respondents indicated that their learnings and understandings acquired during postgraduate studies helped develop and solidify their educational practices at the time and contributed to their emergent leadership approaches as new principals.

It makes you more conscious of your practice. I think it helps when you're conscious of why you do what you do.... It gives you more influence to change and if you're right, it gives you more interest to stick to the course and know that you are doing things the right way (Juanita – 1 – A).

I think it has helped me balance. On the one hand, the books were more about cooperative leadership... you will get pulled towards the opposite in a school system with, "Do this paperwork and get this done." You have to mesh the two at some point. I mean at some point you do have to manage, you can't avoid it. It is part of the job. Having those experiences and reading that literature certainly helped me create some kind of balance that works for me (Charles – 0 – B).

Postgraduate course offerings that provided respondents with leadership tools and tangible take away strategies and mechanisms were deemed worthwhile in being able to help their organizations and colleagues once becoming principals.

My "Supervision and Development" course was amazing. I found that there were a few courses that I could get something out of that I could help other people with. Since that course, I have helped seven or eight teachers develop professional portfolios (Amber – 1 – B).

> Going back to some of my Master's courses; Philosophy of Education, you know, what do we believe in? What is important? What is not so important? I guess some of the courses that I'm really glad I had were the ones that made me think about my beliefs in education... what do I value and what is important? (Daniel – 1 – A)

Beginning principals entered into postgraduate studies as "aspiring" leaders from a number of different professional placements including being teachers, counselors and vice-principals. Given that "all individuals have the potential to continually learn and grow" and that "adults, like children, bring their prior experiences, beliefs, and perceptions to their work with new experiences to construct knowledge and meaning" (Walker & Lambert, 1995, 26) neophyte principals indicated that they were able to relate course learnings to their work roles and practice at the time while also being able to use them as preparation for, and, part of, their current practice as new school leaders.

Valuable Cohort Structure/Participants

The cohort structure for postgraduate studies implemented by the two school boards enabled respondents, as aspiring leaders, to engage in supportive and eye-opening dialogue with like minded colleagues from a variety of educational backgrounds and work placements who possessed a variety of educational interests, skill-sets, knowledge domains and viewpoints.

> Our cohort seemed to have different levels, different strengths... What we didn't know ourselves at first, they all taught us those things and we learned to accept everyone's strengths. I learned a lot.... When I went for this interview (principalship) and needed to talk about those things, I could through referring to my cohort and my group members' presentations (Amber – 1 – B).

> I think that the most worthwhile part of the Master's program was the opportunity to talk and interact with the other Master's students and hear their stories and hear about what their frustrations were as administrators in their schools. I had only worked in two schools at that point, so I didn't have huge experience. I was ten years in as a teacher so, learning about the culture of other schools and the way that other administrators worked, that sharing stuff was the most worthwhile part (Juanita – 1 – A).

One of the most noticeable benefits of being able to share ideas and insights with colleagues was the ability to gain confidence and a deeper feeling of being reassured in one's own educational beliefs and approach to work.

> I think that it's reassuring that the beliefs and ideas you have about education and leadership are not just you.... Just the stories about what kind of experiences they had when they tried things and what happened because we had some practiced administrators in the groups. It was really interesting for me to hear some of the vice-principals... coming from different school

cultures.... I think it's good to have the different levels and the different experiences because it is very different being a vice-principal from being a teacher (Juanita – 1 – A).

Respondents asserted that, regardless of the actual content being explored in the postgraduate courses, useful learning for the purposes of preparing for an eventual principalship came from the insights gleaned from analyzing the practical experiences of cohort classmates, including both the fruitful and failed strategies employed by colleagues of varying positions and experience.

> We had a very supportive cohort; a group of people that I consider myself fortunate to have gone through it with. They were excellent with so many different perspectives and very dedicated and intelligent folks; just the professional conversations that happened were so valuable and we learned from each other. Going through this process together was really valuable (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

The cohort structures organized by both school boards designed to assist members in attaining postgraduate degrees also held active and residual benefits for participants even after completion of the degree. Participants were able to develop familiarity, connections and increased collegiality with their fellow colleagues over time. Social connections that originated within the cohort remained a foundation for professional conversations when working in the principalship. Respondents' ongoing professional bond with fellow principals was supported by the connection first established as colleagues in postgraduate cohorts.

> Just as a cohort, even if it wasn't a great course, having that sense that "we did it together" was great. [Another principal] and I were in the same course and we talk two or three times a day, even now. We share things and I feel like I can take a risk. I can say, "I have never tried this. Can you tell me how to do this?" There is a bond built that I think is safe (Amber – 1 – B).

> When you start your Master's program you get a crew so you were going through it together, so we got to know each other fairly well. And, still [another Principal] was in my Master's class, so that connection that was made there makes me feel very comfortable talking [with her] about issues now (Juanita – 1 – A).

New principals identified their cohorts as being a safe and profitable place for engaging in meaningful learning. For many, it was a developmental process in itself. The diverse talents and perspectives of esteemed colleagues provided the needed dimensions of seeing things differently and being a source of support when examining pertinent educational leadership processes and concepts. Cohorts enabled students to build a sense of collegiality and collaboration as knowledge, experiences, values and aspirations were shared (Walker, 1995). The cohort-based format for program delivery was a structural element that enabled

participants to forge trusting and comfortable relationships that facilitated the exchange of advice and feedback later on as principal colleagues.

Beginning principals identified specific experiences and learnings related to their postgraduate studies that were worthwhile in preparing them for the principalship including course content that was informative, situational and pragmatic in nature and which presented a realistic picture of the issues, topics and challenges associated with school leadership. Useful teaching/learning processes were student centred, emphasized a nexus of praxis, encouraged the inclusion of participants' experiences and current situational dynamics, and also promoted critical and reflective thinking. The cohort structure and diversity of participants' experience and position was deemed most worthwhile. It enabled the safe and supportive exchange of multiple viewpoints which helped participants to expand their own perspectives and, in turn, provided a foundation for developing a rich understanding of the theories and practices that were explored.

School Board Preparation Programs

In an attempt to fill the dearth of leadership brought about by increasing numbers of vacancies in the principalship, a number of educational jurisdictions within the province of Nova Scotia have taken heed of research findings to build and develop pools of worthy candidates for future school leadership roles. Both the school boards involved in this research study utilized a preparation program for aspiring school leaders; Principal Leadership Development Program (School Board A), and the Aspiring School Administrators Program (ASAP) (School Board B). Potential participants were required to apply for a two-year placement with approximately twenty applicants being accepted to the program for each of the school boards. These programs were headed by leadership coordinators from each of the school boards and were implemented to develop, coordinate and consolidate preparation efforts for aspiring school leaders. As part of these programs, the two school boards developed and directed a number of offerings including both educational and training activities in the following four areas:

- Mentoring/Shadowing – School Board A (twelve days total; eight days with the same principal and four days with the participants' choice of others; mentoring plan/goals/project objectives required). School Board B (four days of observations of

a principal). Both school boards provided release time from current work situations via substitute coverage.

- <u>Saturday Sessions</u> – Both school boards had eight full-day sessions with participants (approximately once a month) involving the discussion and exploration of various leadership topics and issues.

- <u>Professional Portfolio Development</u> – Both school boards required participants to complete a professional portfolio by the end of the two-year program.

- <u>Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSELC) Modules</u> – Both school boards required leadership program participants to attend and complete the three day provincial module offered in August entitled "Module #1 – Working with People; Identifying Leadership Styles." School Board B also required participants to complete two more modules of their choosing within the two-year time frame.

Each school board (A and B) also required the completion/ongoing participation in postgraduate studies in order to be considered for an educational leadership position. In addition, both school boards required and or gave preference to applicants who had a Master of Education Degree for placement as a principal. To offset declining numbers of teacher applicants for administrative positions and the reduction in teachers pursuing postgraduate studies, both school boards started to organize and utilize cohort groupings of students for specific postgraduate courses towards an M.Ed in leadership in two of the Province's Universities. The use of cohorts was used to develop and organize pools of prospective candidates, as well as to promote and reinforce candidates' participation in postgraduate studies.

Neophyte principals identified specific aspects of their school boards' leadership development programs as being able to help them prepare for the principalship. Worthwhile preparatory contributions included learnings and realizations acquired during four specific activities; monthly meetings over a two year time frame as part of cohorts, pre-appointment mentoring and shadowing, leadership assessment activities and school board recommended provincially sponsored modules.

Although there were no formal grades assessed to participants, attendance was compulsory along with participation in activities and completion of individual and small group

projects. Both school boards required participants to make a two year commitment to attend regular sessions.

> It was a Saturday a month for two years that we committed to...For me it was filling the gap of being current and involved in my own education and current with the issues and literature around administration (Carol – 0 – A).

> There was a group of twenty to twenty-five people.... It wasn't formal course work through a university, but would we meet every month for the day or two days, or evening sessions (Kim – 1 – B).

> There was a leadership program that aspiring leaders could take once a month. It was three years ago when I took it.... You get a certificate that says you finished the Leadership Program (Helen – 0 – B).

Both the school boards' leadership development programs served as a catchall for providing participants of varying degrees of administrative education or training, including little or none, to acquire directed leadership preparation experiences and learnings as part of a cohort.

> The only thing that I took that had anything to do with school administration was the board's leadership program.... It's not a superficial program. It was significant (Victor – 0 – A).

Positive experiences included participation in workshops and in-service sessions as part of cohort-based monthly meetings designed to integrate and inform participants' educational practice.

> The two year leadership training program was most influential and effective in terms of helping me to be principal....it was current to what administrators were dealing with... and there was a group of us doing this program together as a collective group (Carol – 0 – A).

According to respondents, the leadership programs presented a window into the current reality of school administration including the contemporary challenges and issues facing educational leaders. Monthly sessions investigated real-time school leadership and school board specific issues and responsibilities.

> The [school] board's leadership program gave us insight into the real role of a school administrator; the complexities of it, dealing with our communities, student community, teaching community and parent community. I started it before I became a vice-principal, but I became a vice-principal before I finished it (Victor – 0 – A).

> Saturday sessions would be on things like programs and services, hiring practices and collaborative culture in your school, so some of them are run by school board people.... It is where I discovered that having [a] full understanding and comprehensive knowledge of the Education Act would serve me well as a school leader (Candice – 1 – A).

The leadership program helped me become aware of a lot of the issues in education but, especially with leadership, you know, time management and organization and all those kinds of things.... I think it is important to have a good understanding of what you believe in and having an educational vision and a lot of that was done in the leadership program; developing a vision for your school (Daniel – 1 – A).

The leadership programs of both school boards supported cohort members' efforts in building and creating professional portfolios, something that involved reflection and introspective analysis of work and purpose.

We did all kinds of things; workshops, weekend sessions. We did portfolios, which was kind of a nice thing looking at the kinds of things that we had done. They were nice pats on the back. Usually, we are too busy to think of doing something like this. They made you feel good about some of the things that you've done (Helen – 0 – B).

The attributes of the collective group taking the leadership programs included individuals with a variety of experiences, educational roles and skill sets. This enabled participants to converse and explore issues, concepts and learnings from wide range of perspectives specific to the concerns and challenges of each school board.

We had workshops throughout the year that were very helpful but I think the most important thing was just the networking in terms of me going into this role (Daniel – 1 – A).

There were classroom teachers and current administrators doing it.... There were experienced administrators doing these too.... It was such a strong influence.... It gave [me] confidence because [I've] had conversations with other people struggling with these issues to talk through. And, when they shared things about how it worked, that was solid (Carol – 0 – A).

Beginning principals were able to learn from the expertise and perspectives of their colleagues and enhance and transform their own understandings of concepts and current educational and leadership practices.

Pre-Appointment Mentoring/Shadowing

Respondents from both school boards noted the benefits of participating in pre-appointment mentoring and shadowing opportunities.

Now I did my mentoring prior to this position, so I spent four full days with [a principal] and that opened my eyes a little bit because I followed him. But, of course, he was doing everything and I was just observing (Lexi – 0 – B).

As part of their leadership program, respondents from school board A were required to shadow more principals and complete project-based activities under the guidance and supervision of the mentor principals.

We were offered mentoring days. So you connected with an administrator and you had release time from your position to be there. And depending on who you were with, they might give you projects to work on and develop (Carol – 0 – A).

I definitely benefited from doing the leadership program and doing some mentoring and practice with an administrator and walking in their shoes and see[ing] what it was like (Candice – 1 – A).

At the very least, even nominal shadowing of principals as promoted in school board B provided respondents with the opportunity to directly observe the work of experienced principals, if only for four days. However, new school leaders in school board A noted how they benefited from connecting with experienced administrators for mentoring opportunities and project leadership on a more comprehensive basis.

Leadership Early Assessment Program (LEAP)

For both evaluators and subjects alike, the acronym "LEAP" aptly described the process of moving into school leadership from other educational positions. As such, respondents noted how the two-day venture was an eye-opening and informative process that helped them to understand how they would handle the work of the principalship. By participating in the supervised activities, subjects were able to get a structured, supervised and realistic experience in the leadership choices and decision making involved in the principalship.

> We had the LEAP assessment (Leadership Early Assessment Program) where we had the opportunity to go in and do an "in-basket" of activities and chair a committee.... You were witnessed doing that by a professional, who then wrote up a report to you telling you what you were strong in and where they thought you could improve (Patricia – 1 – B).

> You have to do role plays and respond to different scenarios.... It was like you were given all kinds of things that have come across your desk and it is timed.... I thought it was really informative because it gave me a clear picture of how important delegating is and not trying to do everything [my] self.... I think it was probably one of the turning points for me.... I asked myself if this was something that I really wanted to do and if I should or could pursue it (Kim – 0 – B).

The "LEAP" process was brief, yet, intense and the evaluations were comprehensive. However, respondents brought to light the issues of validity and reliability of such a process. How much insight could be gained about participants' ability to lead given the limited nature of observing individuals in high pressure decision making activities over a short period of time?

I just wonder how you spend two days with somebody and then make those judgmental comments about someone. I just think that it takes longer to get to know people than two days, especially in high pressure kinds of activities (Helen – 0 – B).

Max remembers his experiences with the LEAP process and articulates the worthwhile purpose of such an exercise for all those involved in the process.

When I first went into it I was green as green can be and I wasn't an administrator yet. They run you through your paces very intensively and you find out pretty fast whether you've got what it takes to truly be in the game or not…. Well, what they're doing is they're looking to see if you'll survive. They're not looking to see if you necessarily make it to shore as much as do you come up kind of thing (Max – 1 – A).

When asked to give further explanation as to what exactly program evaluators were looking for in participants, Max replied:

They're looking for answers to "Is he struggling right from the word go?" "Is he stressed?" "Is he not able to make a decision on his feet or her feet?" "Does he have some thoughts about how he might put it together?" "What about his management and his time management?" "What about his personal self-discipline?" You know there are certain things that they plug you in front of and they want to see just what your set of values are in respect to where you are going to come from making decisions and they can do that without necessarily seeing the end product (Max – 1 – A).

There was validity in carrying out such an exercise for both those who responded to scenarios and for those who led the evaluations. By participating in the process, respondents were able to get a quick look into the tasks associated with educational administration and whether they would like to pursue such a vocation. For the school board members who led the exercises, they were able to get a quick impression of those who, in their opinion, may have been better suited to take on an administrative position, especially with regards to dealing with stressful situations.

Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSELC) Modules

Respondents noted that they were required to take a number of specified NSELC modules during the two years of their school boards' leadership development programs. New principals were also strongly encouraged to continue taking modules during the summer months once they had taken on an educational leadership position, including the principalship.

We had the Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSELC), where we were expected to do certain modules (Patricia – 1 – B).

We also did modules with the NSELC. We had to complete two modules through the program. We had to do module #1 on leadership and select another one to complete. I have gone on and done other modules after that just out of interest and wanting to continue my education (Kim – 1 – B).

Provincially sponsored leadership modules explored policy related educational topics and provided instruction and professional analysis of contemporary educational issues and ideas as they related to school leadership and administration.

The NSELC modules, I think they're very well done because they capture the things that are important and that you have to deal with as an administrator (Carol – 0 – A).

They have modules that cover everything from school accreditation, which is mandated now throughout four-hundred schools in the province, to law and education and the legal issues right now about care and custody. Other things too that principals need to know about like curriculum initiatives and things from how to read and use statistics and data... to personalities and developing and working within your teams.... There's one on race relations and cross-cultural understandings. These are all modules that are really key for understanding school leadership. They are snapshots but they are intensive snapshots.... They are meat and potatoes (Max – 1 – A).

Respondents identified the NSELC modules as important vehicles for gaining essential educational information in relation to school leadership. The relatively brief and self-contained nature of delivery and exploration for each topic area module enabled respondents to gain quick insight into important educational issues directly related to their emergent school leadership roles and practice.

Leadership Related Experiences

Respondents identified previous leadership and administrative experience along with their observations and dealings with experienced school leaders as worthwhile in helping them prepare for the principalship.

There is nothing written anywhere. It's just a matter of having been in a school and working with administrators and knowing that things like in-services and school planning have to get done (Helen – 0 – B).

New principals learned about the principalship informally through their day-to-day teacher-based interactions with administrators and school leaders, accumulated over time. Even if they were unable to completely grasp the full gamut of tasks, routines and responsibilities of the position, respondents were able to glean the leadership principles and soft skills that could be used as part of being principal.

I think it's just from watching other administrators and people in leadership roles and how they handled themselves. Basically, it's taking from them what I thought was good by watching them and their interactions.... People skills

and those kinds of things are important in this position.... So dealing with a number of different people throughout time and each person who you have some contact with, I think they leave a little bit behind and you take from them what works for you and move on from there (Brian – 0 – A).

Respondents noted that being able to take on leadership tasks directly related to school administration prior to entering the profession helped them to get a feel for the roles and responsibilities associated with educational leadership.

When I was a teacher I was substituting a bit for the vice-principal who was here.... The principal was good enough to let me fill in. I did have some experience then before the [vice-principal] position came up (Kim – 0 – B).

My work within the NSSAF (Nova Scotia Schools Athletic Federation), having to make those global decisions.... I've also been on this side of the desk a little bit as "teacher in charge". Prior to getting a full-time vice-principal position at this school, we had to have someone from time to time, while the principal was out, to step into that role, so I volunteered on a very regular basis to sit here (Brian – 0 – A).

Respondents indicated that their connective and interactive experiences with their principals at the time served to better inform them as to some of the challenges and responsibilities of the job and enabled them to see, to some extent, the nature and scope of the principalship.

You have training through the leadership roles that you do. I worked very closely with the principal who was here previously, so he prepared me. He prepared me a great deal as to what to expect. That happened for the four years that I was a vice-principal (Kim – 0 – B).

I've got a lot of experience, and I worked the past eight years with [a person] who is probably one of the top administrators in the province, if not, anywhere. She is just stellar and she let me participate in all aspects of school administration when I worked in her school (Victor – 0 – A).

[My former principal] had me involved in staffing, timetables and senior admin decisions. I did a lot of the admin stuff that really shouldn't have been the guidance counsellor's job (Patricia – 1 – B).

By directly participating in the some of the facets of school leadership newcomers learned many of the specific role requirements and tasks that they would later have to attend to as new school leaders.

Summary for Principal Preparation

Traditionally, the preparation and socialization of new principals has been individual, random and variable (Greenfield, 1985b). However, respondents noted that by participating in postgraduate studies and school board directed leadership programs as part of a cohort they benefited from aspects of serial, collective and investiture methods of role learning. By

design, cohort members' postgraduate studies were focused in the area of educational leadership and administration. Respondents noted that worthwhile learning experiences were those where instructors matched aspects of curriculum and educational theory with participants' previous leadership experiences and current work related challenges at the time. Coursework deemed most valuable for preparing respondents for school leadership was that which encouraged them to critically reflect upon their educational values and beliefs and informed their emerging leadership thinking and practice.

Beginning principals reported that their two year participation in their respective school board's leadership development programs helped them to analyze and learn some of the specific tasks and responsibilities associated with school leadership. Monthly weekend sessions helped participants focus their exploration of school board related issues and responsibilities. To varying degrees, both school boards required cohort members to participate in pre-appointment mentoring and shadowing of practicing principals. This gave cohort members a brief glimpse into some of the many situational realities of the principalship and helped to inform their decision to continue on in the vocation of educational leadership. Respondents valued their participation in the Leadership Early Assessment Program (LEAP) which helped them to experience a brief, yet, intense exercise focused on prioritizing tasks, problem solving and decision making in areas of the principalship. By completing a number of required Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (NSELC) modules, neophyte principals were able to get a quick analysis and overview of provincial educational policy related issues and topics.

Respondents indicated that their accumulated learnings acquired as a result of significant interaction with school leaders during their own day-to-day educational activities helped them to better understand the roles and decision making attached to the position. They also viewed any opportunity to participate in leadership related activities as important for understanding the responsibilities and parameters of educational leadership in general.

Clearly, the cohort model of learning was the most positive aspect of preparation activities as noted by beginning principals in both school boards. Cohort groupings for postgraduate studies and school board leadership programs monthly sessions included individuals with a variety of experiences, skill sets and perspectives which provided the

foundation and fodder for rich learning. The cohort structure enabled participants to build caring and supportive learning climates, foster strong interpersonal relationships (Crow & Glascock, 1995) and develop enduring professional support networks for each other's principalships.

Beginning Principals' Induction and Support

Becoming a school leader is "a process of growth and development rather than a single event marked by signing a school district contract" (Parkay, Currie & Rhodes, 1992, 48). Induction mechanisms create opportunities for new principals to become familiar with the operational rudiments of school leadership and to become comfortable in their new roles. Socialization processes related to induction help new school leaders learn the requisite knowledge, skills, behaviours, and values to take on complex, responsibility-laden school leadership roles (Crow & Matthews, 1998). The induction process begins the first few steps of a new principal's path towards professional self-sufficiency at the position (Daresh, 2004).

However, while new principals' most valuable source of learning is their on-the-job experience, in reality, actual practice provides few opportunities to engage in this type of learning in the course of their regular work (Schainker & Roberts, 1987). Also, given the challenges facing new principals it is easy to understand how they are "distracted from the core work of improving teaching and learning and overwhelmed by the demands of school leadership" (Lochmiller & Silver, 2010, 101). Essentially, to mitigate liabilities of newness to the position and to fully embrace early stages of "sensemaking" (Louis, 1980) involved in the principalship, new principals need some form of induction and support that helps them to shape their roles while also helping them to learn how to thoughtfully manage the conditions that influence their leadership (Lochmiller & Silver, 2010).

School Board A

Both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals in school board A provided overwhelmingly positive reviews about the structure and quality of induction support they received after beginning their inaugural school year.

> I'm fortunate. In my [school] board I have a phenomenal network of support (Kari – 0 – A).

> The support that I've received this past year with our new administrators program that the [school] board has offered was fantastic (Daniel – 1 – A).

Respondents identified specific aspects of their school board's new administrator's program as beneficial in helping them to negotiate the elements of their leadership landscape and responsibilities. Professional learning and support was multi-faceted with three key areas of interaction with school board members and retired principals serving as the mechanisms where new principals acquired information, learned tasks, solved problems, as well as dialogued about leadership dynamics, challenges and issues. Program components included new principals' group monthly meetings, school board liaisons and school board appointed mentors. In addition, new principals noted that they accessed the information network available to them, as well as utilized their own informal support system which included sharing perceptions and questions with trusted friends and administrative colleagues.

New Principals Group Monthly Meetings

Both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals identified the "New Principals Group" monthly meetings as a positive mechanism for learning and means of support for their first year in post.

> Last year our school board started a project where they provided monthly meetings for new principals. Once a month they would meet after school with all first-year principals for an hour and a half or two hours. They would develop a schedule of different aspects of being an administrator that they would cover. They would bring in different people from the [school] board to talk with you about some of the issues that you will be faced with over the course of the first year. It was like, "Here's a little heads up." They are continuing that this year with the same principals so they are working with Year-Two principals now. They still have a place for Year-One principals and I'm involved with that (Brian – 0 – A).

Respondents identified the responsive nature of the meetings and the exploration of timely administrative and school leadership-based topics as worthwhile.

> We had monthly meetings at the [school] board office. We had an agenda about the topics that were going to be talked about so we could come with examples. It was very open; structured but informal (Daniel – 1 – A).

> As things came up we looked at them…. Formally, we meet the first Tuesday of the month (Candice – 1 – A).

The New Principals Group was so successful that based on the recommendations of participants, the school board decided to continue the program for the next group of first-year principals, as well as continue on with a separate program for the original group of new principals now entering their second year in the position. The meetings will be information

and skill-based workshops given on a less frequent basis to address issues directly related to the group and individual needs of the second year principals.

> You talk about specific things like what to do you when you run into trouble with your budget? When you're hiring what are the big no no's that you never say in an interview? That's very specific. It's good too.... Our first one this year for second year people was "What you can do to start the year off well" (Juanita – 1 – A).

> There are Year-Two administrator workshops. It's not every month but it will be every second month (Daniel – 1 – A).

Monthly meetings required participants to build trust and comfortability with each other in order to honestly confront issues and ask important questions. As noted, it was a process that took time but was time that was well spent.

> You can't force honesty from people in these meetings because if there is no trust there, no one is going to open up and that comes through time with the group.... I think because she [leadership coordinator] just keeps saying, "We're all in this together and its okay" and [she] is such a reassuring person and what we say in this room stays in the room (Juanita – 1 – A).

School Board Liaisons

As part of the new administrator's program new principals were matched with senior leadership district coordinators as a means of providing them with a liaison and direct connection to the school board for support.

> It's just as another way of bouncing off an idea. It's another way of saying, "You know, in your experience, is this the way you would go?" Or, it could be just as a heads-up, "Here's what's coming." My connection is the new superintendent. He has connected himself to three new principals... So we get the regional leadership team people connected to us as part of being new administrators (Kari – 0 – A).

> The [school] board has provided to all first-year principals one specific person as a mentor-liaison.... Mine happens to be the Head of Human Resources who was someone I worked with.... It's a good fit.... And [he] was in a couple of weeks ago and he said, "What's up? Tell me how are things going and what can I do? How could I support you?" Then, if I didn't seem to have a bit of direction he would establish one, like, "Tell me about parents, how are you handling them?" (Brian – 0 – A)

School board appointed liaisons visited the schools of participants on occasion or when requested for informal contact designed to support new principals through casual discussions and face-to-face interaction.

> I guess it's just helpful to know that someone from outside is coming in to say. "How is it going, can I give you a hand?" It's good that it is in person because maybe there is something I need to show her.... The phone is the phone. It's like email; there is a lot of meaning that is lost. I think that the personal contact is very important (Daniel – 1 – A).

According to respondents, liaison support provided by the school board enabled them to gain a sense of security and peace of mind about their own professional welfare. It was all about maintaining personal contact with new principals by quelling concerns and demystifying processes when needed.

School Board Assigned Mentors (Retired Principals)

Well respected and recently retired principals were invited to serve as mentors for new principals. The premise underlying mentoring for new principals rests on the belief that when an individual first assumes the role of school leader, he or she should be "matched with a colleague who can provide ongoing information to a newcomer so that the novice could face the realities of a new job with a degree of confidence and a personal sense of competence" (Daresh, 2010, 122). In many ways school board assigned mentors acted as coaches, counsellors and confidants for new principals to help them learn the fundamentals of the job as well as how to face the challenges of school leadership as a beginner.

Leadership coaching has become an especially common form of induction for new principals and has been used to combat the competition of survival that new school leaders face during their first years whereby experienced practitioners, or in this case, retired principals provided "deliberate support to another individual to help him/her clarify and/or to achieve goals" (Bloom, Castagna, Moir & Warren, 2005, 5). Coaching can be an effective way to motivate and enhance competencies of those being coached, especially when the learner has adequate motivation and limited experience (Hersey, Blanchard & Dewey, 2007). The primary purpose of mentor type coaching is to "accelerate learning, ease entry into professional roles through socialization, and focus support on individual strengths" (Lochmiller & Silver, 2010, 102). New principals in school board A identified their assigned mentors as being able to proactively and responsively coach them through some of the rough spots on occasion.

> Just yesterday, I sat down with a retired principal who is mentoring me through certain issues. And I'll meet with him every two weeks on top of monthly meetings with other new administrators (Kari – 0 – A).

> My mentor comes in a couple of times a month and we sit down for 30 minutes and if we feel we need longer time he'll sit longer. We'll sit and talk and deal with specific issues. So the support network for me is fabulous (Brian – 0 – A).

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New principals noted that mentoring began at the start of the year to help them take on the immediate challenges associated with September start up and continued on for the remainder of the school year.

> I had a mentor to work with which at least gave me support as I got into it in September. Instead of flailing around, I had a person I could work with (Max – 1 – A).
> I would email her before she would come and I would tell her, "Here's a topic that I'd like you to help me learn a little bit more about." One topic for example was lice.... There were some pretty interesting issues around that.... So, I mean from lice to beginning the performance appraisal process I was able to have a lot of good discussions (Daniel – 1 – A).

Mentors provided support and guidance by demonstrating a personal interest and individualized approach to deal with common leadership concerns or self-identified professional issues and challenges.

> It's a structured program that is expanding.... And it's volunteer, it's by choice we had six of us this year and five of us are continuing the second year.... And the interesting thing is that everybody used it differently and I don't know how exactly because [my mentor] can't tell me because of confidentiality. He just said, "Everyone's used me in a different way." I always said, "Oh, my therapist is here." I would use him to talk about specific situations that I was dealing with and what my options were and what advice he could give me (Juanita – 1 – A).

Juanita identified that building trust in order to share thoughts and opinions was a necessary component of moving forward with the mentoring relationship into the second year:

> He did have an agenda but he was great because he said, "We can throw this one straight out if you just want to talk." I just ended up using him to bounce things off of and ask, "What would you do if this was you?" We've started a process and there is a comfort level and trust is built up with this person so I think we I don't want to lose it after this year (Juanita – 1 – A).

Traditionally, many mentoring arrangements are "ad hoc" relationships that rarely extend beyond the first year and typically focus on district operating procedures (Malone, 2001). However, respondents noted that their mentors were admired and respected for their leadership accomplishments, approach, skill and temperament and relished the opportunity to continue the collegial relationships for a second year.

> The one who is working with me, she is known within the [school] board and the Province to be someone that's new-age, innovative, always thinking, always out to make change. She was asked to be a role model, a mentor for me so that I could bounce things off of her. They are listening to our situation and trying to get to know our situation.... So it's very collegial, it's not a directive, it's not from on high, it's more of a team approach (Max – 1 – A).

Information Network

Newly appointed principals noted that they were able to phone school board office staff and program coordinators at any time to get specific information or assistance in gaining insight about how to proceed regarding particular leadership and administrative issues.

> The support of staff with our [school] board, you know people are wonderful and very good about saying, "Don't even look at the policy binder before you call one of us because we've had the question asked so many times we can short cut your search." Even to do that makes you feel so much better about making that call (Carol – 0 – A).

Newly appointed principals expressed that they were overtly encouraged to communicate and ask questions of school board authorities at any time, regardless of the type of question or nature of the inquiry. As a result, they felt supported in being forthright and transparent in their attempts to gain greater clarity and understanding of school board policy and protocol.

> There are wonderful people at central office that don't mind me calling and I do call, on the regular basis.... They're wonderful, no question's too small and they're the ones that are making the final decisions, the paperwork goes to them. So I can pick up the phone and I can call them and I can ask them. I don't have to call someone who's going to make a guess of what's right (Victor – 0 – A).

> I can contact different coordinators within the [school] board. I have a few that I call upon quite readily.... As I get to know people I get to know where specific questions should be directed... And again, that's part of the learning ladder.... I can pick up the phone and call anyone at the [school] board office (Brian – 0 – A).

In addition to phoning school board personnel, Brian also utilized open email to solicit information and assistance from his more experienced principal colleagues:

> Everything has been very positive. I can't say enough good things about how everyone has been quick to assist me and provide me with information. There has been a number of times that I've gone on email and done a blanket email out to all the principal's within our [school] board and asked a question on Dress Code or on parent PTSA (Parent-Teacher- Student Associations) and the feedback I get from them is great.... For policies within the [school] board, I'm very quick to pick up the phone and make a call (Brian – 0 – A).

Informal Support

Respondents identified that in addition to formal mechanisms of support organized by the school board, they also utilized and relied upon informal connections with trusted colleagues as a means of helping them tackle everyday challenges and issues attached to beginning school leadership.

I can draw on the retired principal from last year who knows the school. He knows the school as a parent and as an administrator. So, those kinds of things in terms of the history of a situation or whatever, I've got that at my fingertips (Kari – 0 – A).

There is another principal in this area, we travel back and forth, we share drives now because of the cost of gas and it makes sense too because we have a twenty-five minute drive and its good to have him as another person that I can bounce stuff off of. There are certain things that I can't share here with staff members. And there is not a vice-principal in the school so it is helpful to have a person who is another administrator from another school and we can get into the car almost daily and say, "How would you respond to this?" So he's been a good informal support person for me (Daniel – 1 – A).

Whether by happenstance or through making a deliberate personal effort to connect, respondents took advantage of unstructured situations to share perceptions and queries with fellow administrators and experienced principals. As a result, new principals noted that by being able to solicit and receive input from fellow colleagues they were able to feel a greater degree of confidence in their own nascent leadership decisions and practice.

School Board B

Respondents in school board B identified that they utilized three separate components to acquire information and insight to help support themselves in taking on their inaugural principalship. Respondents noted that they took advantage of the monthly administrator's meetings and the information network offered by their school board to get direction and quick access to information needed for moving forward as a school leader. Most notably, however, new principals used informal means of support to help them gain necessary insight and perspective needed for understanding and negotiating the day-to-day demands and issues of school leadership.

Monthly Administrator's Meetings

New principals suggested that they were required to attend monthly principals' meetings and that it was that particular venue that provided them with information and clarification of school board policies.

There are structured principal meetings every month. It is mostly discussion on policies. It is like a staff meeting on a bigger scale. You get together, this is due and this, and here are some issues we have to deal with.... There is some PD involved with it. They do a lot of record keeping. That is important. The school has to run and you need policy and protocol (Charles – 0 – B).

The monthly meetings are, "Here is more work for you" and you go back being depressed (Amber – 1 – B).

Although new principals were solicited to ask questions and contribute to the construction of agenda items via email, the meetings included all principals with afternoon sessions devised for concerns and instruction based on separate elementary and high school levels of school leadership. As a result, new principals were not afforded an opportunity to work as a group unto their own to explore issues and challenges specific to the beginning phase of school leadership.

> Every month I have to do a principal's reports, and we have monthly principal's meetings. I had the opportunity to have formal input through my report as to what I want on the agenda for the next meeting. There are sections there that say, "What are your concerns?" So, whatever I feel needs to be addressed in the next meeting, then it is on the agenda.... What they do is have a morning session with all of the principals from elementary and secondary, then the afternoon we are split (Kim – 0 – B).

The monthly principals' meetings were designed to address issues that were brought to the superintendent's attention by participants and also included professional development activities related to school board mandated directives.

> What [the Superintendent] is doing right now, at the principals meetings is that the mornings are for principal's stuff and the afternoons we are doing professional learning communities. We are working through a chapter of a text. They have been proactive about all of that and I learned that I am on the right track (Patricia – 1 – B).

New principals indicated that they were supported as school leaders only as part of a much larger group of principals. Although much can be gained by interacting with different levels of experienced principals, activities designed to address specific issues related to the beginning principalship might be even more useful for neophytes (Parkay, Currie & Rhodes, 1992).

Information Network

New principals stated that they looked to their immediate supervisors – their Family of Schools supervisors, as the primary source of formal support for their information and knowledge-based needs. They communicated with their particular Family of Schools supervisor to ascertain essential leadership related information, get official interpretation of school board policies and receive clarification of administrative decisions when needed.

> My Family of Schools supervisor is phenomenal. I can call him at any time and he is excellent (Patricia – 1 – B).

> The Family of Schools supervisor is very approachable, but when a decision has to be made she makes it.... It is nice to know there is a hierarchy and a structure here. I know the person the next step up from me is a competent person. I might not always like the decision that she makes. I know she can justify it and I know she can't please everybody (Charles – 0 – B).

Newly appointed principals noted that they relied on the support and direction provided by their respective Family of Schools supervisors for September start up and especially appreciated being given a list of what had to be done with due dates.

> There is so much to do in September that our Family of Schools supervisor was very kind and gave us a list of what had to be done... all the forms and things that had to be done for the month of September (Helen – 0 – B).

Helen further added:

> Well, for support, for questions, actually the Family of Schools supervisor's secretary was my best friend in September.... I'd ask her what I was supposed to do, how I was supposed to go about it, who I was supposed to send things to, that kind of thing (Helen – 0 – B).

> We have a very supportive Family of Schools supervisor. His office is in this building.... He is a valuable source of information. If I need to know something all I do is e-mail or go down and see him and he points me in the right direction of where I need to go.... He is very professional and very supportive of all of us (Kim – 0 – B).

Kim further added:

> I know the numbers of prime sources. I can call any of them right now and they will answer any and all questions that I have.... In time I will know the people who I need to contact. Right now I am still searching at times. If I have an issue, then I have to go through the experience of gathering the info of who I have to talk to. It is kind of situation where you learn as you go, but if I need to know, then I contact the [school] board office (Kim – 0 – B).

The hierarchy of authority for communication was evident, relevant, respected and appreciated by beginning principals. However, after the beginning of the school year, communication with superiors was accepted as the responsibility of newly appointed principals where they were expected to phone the school board or just figure it out and learn on the go.

Informal Support

All respondents of school board B made efforts to personally construct and utilize their own informal means of support for their principalships. Each beginning principal called upon at least one of a number of people including pre-appointment principal mentors, previous principals and cohort colleagues, as well as currently serving principals and school board personnel. In each case, newcomers selected individuals whom they felt they could trust to provide useful information, guidance and insight related to school leadership while also understanding the vulnerability involved in reaching out for support. The people they felt comfortable asking for support were those they believed had sufficient experience or

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expertise and someone who would be able to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the request in helping them to figure things out.

Newly appointed principals identified their informal support originated with people they developed positive professional relationships with as part of participating in a school board sponsored cohort for postgraduate studies and/or the leadership development program.

> I would have to say that the biggest support system for me is my thirteen cohort colleagues. We have been together for two years. We actually have a very special bond. Many of us have studied together, previously either at teacher's college or other universities, or we've taught together in the same schools. We've certainly have had many similar experiences.... We have such a special bond that no matter what it is, whether it's personal or professional, we call upon one another... we have been each other's backbones through thick and thin (Lexi – 0 – B).

> I am close friends with a principal in [another community]. We did the leadership program together years ago. We didn't know each other very well at the time. Last year I went on conference in Arizona, and she and I both went.... It gave us a chance to get to know each other and we have been really supportive of one another ever since. We are on the phone a couple of times a week. She has been principal for two years, so if I don't know something or she doesn't, then we call each other (Kim – 0 – B).

> I like that I can phone four or five people to ask a question. I don't want to phone the same person. Everyone else is busy and you don't want to bug them. I ask [Amber] most things, we were in the same cohort for classes. I trust her judgment and she is very good (Charles – 0 – B).

Elizabeth described how mutual agreement on designs for school leadership and programs were originally created with her administrative associate during time spent together as cohort colleagues for postgraduate studies years ago:

> I have a vice-principal and we went through our Master's cohort together. We've been planning this school for three years. On drives back and forth between towns for our classes we would say, "Wouldn't it be great if" and all that.... I think about how much more difficult it would be for me if he wasn't here (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

One-year-experienced principals noted that they too called upon the informal support of people whom they trusted. For them, it was former principals they previously worked where mutually respectful personal and professional relationships served as the foundation from which to get support.

> I phone principals that I know for help sometimes. For me to call my boss, it would have to be for something that I couldn't find an answer from someone else.... I have my mentor; the woman from [my last school], not an official one, but we always call each other (Amber – 1 – B).

> I don't have any official mentors. I guess the mentors I have are former principals that I've had. I have made lots of phone calls and asked. "What would you do in this situation?" It's informal contact (Steven – 1 – B).

[The previous principal] had been there for me. Last year when issues arose, I always was able to throw things by him if I had to, I could call him. He is a wonderful support. I certainly called him less this year than I did last year (Patricia – 1 – B).

Even when deferring to school board level personnel for advice and direction as part of informal support, a solid relationship based on mutual respect and trust was essential:

Support is there. I have called [the Human Resources supervisor]. I called her last year and would ask, "What would you do in this case?" You just need to talk once in a while. The great thing with [her] was that we went to Arizona together last year for a conference. That sealed our friendship, and knowing that she is going to be in the position that she is in this year, that has really helped. You don't have to take the time to build trust, it has already been built. I am open about asking questions. In principals meetings you just sit back and watch (Patricia – 1 – B).

Newcomers used principals with whom they had pre-appointment mentoring and shadowing experiences with as the mainstays of their informal support system.

I did my mentorship back in the spring before I was principal with a principal at [another school] within our [school] board. He has certainly been a support system (Lexi – 0 – B).

My former principal, I call him a lot. I run things by him. It's usually in terms of dealing with staff. I think that people who have done that longer, talking to someone who has been in this position before and saying, "Listen, you know this is what's going on, this is my approach to it, what do you think?" And I find that very valuable.... It's not a formal thing. He does it on his own time (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Overall, respondents in school board B personally developed and utilized an individuated structure of informal support based on trust and expertise whereby they solicited the input of principal colleagues as a means to compensate for an absence formally arranged mechanisms of individual support.

Summary of Beginning Principals' Induction and Support

Principals need support after they are appointed to the principalship (Parkay et al, 1992, 71). In efforts to provide support, both school boards implemented varying forms of induction mechanisms to help their new principals succeed. Newcomers from school board A benefited from a "tripod of support" (Parkay & Currie, 1992), whereby new principals were involved in "training, networking and coaching/mentoring" related activities sponsored by their school board.

The New Principals Group monthly meetings enabled first-year principals to individually and collectively direct leadership and administrative concerns to superiors and receive timely information and clarification of policy and issues from school board personnel.

The training was responsive and specifically related to their nascent stage of school leadership. One-year-experienced principals were so pleased with the program the first year that they opted to continue monthly meetings as a source of support for being second-year principals. New principals appreciated the fact that senior level school board personnel assigned themselves as official liaisons for newly appointed principals and believed that this helped connect them to the school board's support personnel and information, as well as provided professional and moral support via on-site face-to-face interaction.

School board appointed mentors met with new principals at least once a month or when requested and were the most widely used and appreciated form of support. From the start of the school year, retired principals served as mentors for new principals and acted as coaches, counsellors and confidants depending on the needs and preferences of the individual neophyte. Beginning principals also felt encouraged to utilize the information network to communicate with the appropriate school board personnel for guidance and clarification of administrative protocol. Even with the variety and depth of support provided by the school board, new principals also utilized personally constructed informal mechanisms of support where some newcomers called upon fellow principal colleagues for insight and guidance.

The prevailing attitude exhibited by new principals in school board A regarding the quality of their in-post support was best exemplified by Kari:

> It's a particular strength in this [school] board. They have been responsive to the administrative group. We will have an administrator's retreat in another couple of weeks. It's all about follow through. We say, "Don't bring us here, don't waste our time if we are going there for an exercise in quote-unquote 'being heard' unless some follow-up comes out of what the recommendations are as a group." It is a professional dialogue. It is a professional situation. We are extremely fortunate that that is the culture in this [school] board (Kari – 0 – A).

Essentially, respondents in school board A felt that they were encouraged to reach out and utilize specifically designed support mechanisms for new principals employed by their school board.

Respondents in school board B had mixed feelings regarding the type and level of support they received. They participated in monthly administrator's meetings as part of an entire group of school board principals with varying levels of experience. These meetings were used to clarify school board policies and dealt with school leadership issues as they

arose. They also included some type of professional development centred on the implementation and follow through of provincially mandated educational programming (i.e. professional learning communities, assessment measures). Respondents from school board B noted relying on their own initiative to contact their immediate superiors – their Family of Schools supervisors, for information and guidance concerning school board policies and school leadership protocol.

Most notably, however, was that in the relative absence of school board support designed specifically for new principals, both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals personally developed and utilized their own informal measures of support. This included harvesting perspectives and insights from trusted others. Newcomers solicited guidance from retired and practicing principals with whom they had developed mutually respectful collegial and or professional relationships with. For the most part, these relationships originated during pre-appointment cohort-based activities and or mentoring/shadowing arrangements. The reliance on informal mechanisms of support by new principals in school board B illustrated a limited "support culture" noted in the comments offered by Amber:

> Last year I had the old Family of Schools supervisor filling in as principal in [another town] calling me to ask me how to do something. I was stunned. I wondered why he would call me, and then I realized I was the safest person for him to call. Why call someone who has twenty years experience? I am new and fresh and look for help so I am not going to make fun of someone else. It was risk free.... It is not just the new people that need help sometimes; it's everybody (Amber – 1 – B).

The reality offered here suggested that school leaders, even experienced ones, profit from the assistance of trusted colleagues. Moreover, principals, especially new principals, could benefit further with structured support provided by their school board so they would not have to rely strictly on their own ability to canvass for support.

Suggestions for Improved Preparation and Support

As part of the growth process involved in becoming and being school leaders, respondents identified that it was important to seek out and receive timely preparation and support in three major areas; pre-appointment preparation, post-appointment transition, and in-post induction support.

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Pre-Appointment Preparation

Aside from taking postgraduate studies focused in the area of educational leadership/administration and participating in leadership development cohorts offered by their respective school boards, respondents suggested that aspiring principals could benefit from acquiring school leadership/administrative experience and participating in structured and significant mentoring/shadowing activities with experienced principals.

Leadership/Administrative Experience

Respondents suggested the possible benefits of experiencing "teacher in charge" and/or the vice-principalship principals to learn about the nature and scope of the job.

> And I think one of the things I wish I had been able to do was do the "teacher in charge" thing but I don't even know if it happened at my school at that time (Juanita – 1 – A).

> Well, maybe more time to sit down and more time to actually be in the admin field. I think it would have benefited me greatly to have been a vice-principal for a year or two, because I would have seen how this position operated a little better (Brain – 0 – A).

Shadowing

Unlike their counterparts in school board A, new principals in school board B received only limited opportunities to shadow practicing principals prior to becoming a school leader.

> As part of the leadership program we got to shadow three different principals. But one day of shadowing just doesn't cut it (Patricia – 1 – B).

> We spent some time in schools, but you really don't get the full effect. You are there for a morning and you get a snapshot of what is involved. Even if it is a bad day, you still get to walk out (Steven – 1 – B).

Post-Appointment Transition

The beginning of August marked the official paid starting point of employment responsibilities for new principals. However, this juncture marked only the midpoint of a heightened realization of change and transition for new principals before taking on the school year in earnest. Post-appointment transition was considered by respondents to be the time frame that started immediately after their appointment as principals of a particular school but before the onset of the next school year. In line with standard practice, usually this occurred for most while they were still immersed in the day-to-day responsibilities and job activities of their current educational posts during the hectic final months or weeks of the school year. This left new principals with little time to work on transitioning. Given the stress faced by

newly appointed principals, quicker appointments of first-time principals would provide more time for transitioning and might ease their transition into the field.

> If you're moving up a position, then you need to be released so that you can get to know that position better.... Having found out in June, I was coming out at the worst possible time of the year to leave my school to try and get out here and spend a bit of time when it's the worst, busiest time for the new vice-principal to try to spend time with me here at this school; the earlier the better (Max – 1 – A).

Early appointments for first-time principals were not the norm. According to respondents, school board policies dictated that employees with the most seniority and leadership positions requiring the most experience and expertise were given priority. Often, this left the hiring of first-time principals to the latest rounds of administrative appointments.

Unfortunately, newly appointed principals were required to transition themselves through this challenging process. In some cases, this meant having to learn about and make decisions for the school in which they became leader while still immersed in their current position. This required having ready knowledge in order to attend to and proficiently execute the processes involved in this "transition" time frame.

> I think it might be easier if there was some time allotted for transition things... to have a manual of some sort.... I've said, "Where's the principal's manual? Is that printed? Or is that information that could come to a new principal?" There should be something (Helen – 0 – B).

Neophyte principals identified having to grapple with deciphering school board policies. For those moving to new sites, they had to learn the specifics of their new organizations largely on their own:

> I also went through the policy binder and I went through the updates and changes.... Every day during the summer, I would just sit and read something about this school (Candice – 1 – A).

> It's the specifics of this school in this community that would have made a big difference to me had I had more information and awareness of people and processes (Max – 1 – A).

> The policies and procedures part – that became my summer read. A lot of people carry a novel around with them in the summer but this big black policy binder wasn't far from my reach the entire summer (Brian – 0 – A).

To combat the challenges and issues presented to first-time principals immediately after hearing of their appointments, respondents called for some type of structured support post-haste.

> There is never a clean cut from one to the other, because if I said, "Could we would spend some time at the end of June because decisions are being

made regarding the next school year?" you're not finished with your current position, wherever that is.... What is needed is something transitional. It's terribly overwhelming regardless of how we do it and sometimes doing things like if the [school] board offered PD in August sometimes it's too late. You know, it's better if it is earlier, because there is already legwork stuff you got to be doing. But getting a PD about it or getting the procedural stuff straight would be good (Carol – 0 – A).

One cannot talk about beginning school leadership without considering the contexts in which it occurs. For those moving to different sites, newcomers expressed concerns regarding their restricted ability to learn about their new leadership contexts due to the limited time and piecemeal nature of interaction with members of their new leadership venues.

It wasn't like it took place over two or three weeks on site where someone said, "Look we know the situation the school is in and, to do it justice, you need to be released from your school two or three weeks before you end the school year. You can spend time in that school every day with the principal, vice-principal, guidance counsellor and staff. You can walk the halls with the kids, hopefully meet parents or whatever so that you can get a really good feel for the place and they know more about you before the year ends." In my case, I saw no students, I saw staff for half an hour and I met administration once before the end of the year (Max – 1 – A).

It was thought that school board structured professional development and coaching could be offered in support of helping newly appointed principals deal with current work roles while learning about and executing the procedural necessities and foundational pieces required of them before the onset of the next school year.

Definitely do some type of shadowing at this school before getting here. Would it have been reasonable for me to come and spend some time with the former principal here? It would have given me some understanding of why he [the exiting principal] did the things the way he did.... It would have given me some insight on where to be more careful and where to forge ahead (Steven – 1 – B).

For newly appointed principals who moved to new venues, even if they could have been given sufficient time to interact with school members and get a grasp of their new leadership contexts, it was noted that they might have benefited further if they could have received individualized guidance at that time. New school leaders were not under contract as principals until the beginning of August. As such, rather than requesting the extra due diligence from superiors and/or depending on the goodwill of exiting principals, respondents suggested that they could have been better served to get the input of an actual mentor/coach assigned to them for guidance during the transition phase.

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Transition Mentor/Coach

New principals noted that they had to face two immediate tasks upon being appointed; learn and execute the tasks of the principalship, and learn about the people, processes and protocol of their leadership site. First things first, newly appointed principals had to learn how to run the school and discern between "custodial" and "innovative" dimensions of the job before taking it in a new direction if needed (Aiken, 2002). This struggle began right after being appointed to the position. Immediately, new leaders remaining on site had to perform year-end principalship tasks in concert with their school's exiting principals.

> But it would be a possibility to negotiate with leaving principals to have someone in place during the overlap time (Kari – 0 – A).

New principals that were moving to a new site had to quickly develop a network for acquiring needed information regarding the adherence to and application of school board policies, budgeting protocol and hiring practices.

> Develop a network as quickly as you can, people that you can go to, people who you can ask for professional support..... Sit down with a business manager, definitely! (Kim – 0 – B)

Whether remaining at the same site or moving to a new one, respondents noted that they could have benefited from having someone specifically assigned to them to assist them in transitioning through the "overlap" time at the end of the year and especially during the month prior to September start-up to help put things in place for the beginning of the year.

> I think it would have been great to have somebody who might have been able to come into the office with me and help me get things set up for the beginning of the year because I had no sweet clue. I was flying by the seat of my pants trying to find what to say and what to do for the first staff meeting. I remember asking myself, "What do I say and what do I do and what has to go out on the very first day?" (Lexi – 0 – B).

Respondents in both school boards identified that leadership challenges associated with taking on a principalship begin immediately after hearing of their appointment to the position. As such, much like the support offered new principals in school board A after the start of the school year, respondents suggested that they could have benefited from some type of liaison or mentoring arrangement to help them in transitioning through the end of the current school year and through to the beginning of the next school year.

In-Post Induction/Support

Respondents acknowledged that although they knew they needed to learn many

things they found that they had not yet experienced enough to really know their bearings.

They felt that they "didn't know what they didn't know yet." They reported that much of what

they needed to learn was embedded in the system in which they were recently immersed and,

as such, would require time and guidance if possible.

> In terms of this system, I need to learn this system.... Some of the things you
> have to learn here, you've got to get into it. You've got to be here doing it
> (Kari – 0 – A).

> I think the big thing is just specific policies of the board. There are so many of
> them. People ask you a question and you are never quite sure of anything
> specific. They give you policy books. It is hard to get at though. I think that is
> where I feel most insecure is not knowing policy. However, I wouldn't have
> wanted to sit down for a course on policy before hand. It would have been
> boring and I wouldn't have listened.... So, I guess just somebody to come in
> here and walk me through stuff (Charles – 0 – B).

Newly appointed principals voiced their concerns about entering their positions lacking

knowledge and experience in dealing with school finances. They suggested that could have

used real-time support to learn the necessities and nuances of school budgeting:

> I would want to know more about the financial aspects of it all, the budgeting.
> That is something that is a little hard until you really come into it.... It wasn't a
> comfort zone. I actually initiated that contact with the business manager to
> come here (Kim – 0 – B).

> One of things that I've been struggling with since I became principal is that I
> don't know anything about money. I don't know where it comes from.... I walk
> in the door and I've got money and there are different allocations of money
> and I have no idea. My administrative assistant explained some things to me
> but I'm actually going to sit down this afternoon with a business manager
> (Helen – 0 – B).

As compared to their counterparts in school board A, who received liaison and mentor

support from the start of the school year, respondents from school board B indicated that they

were left to their own devices to figure things out and could have gained immeasurably from

having someone formally appointed to guide them through aspects and issues related to new

school leadership.

> It would be nice to have somebody here right now with me helping me out
> (Lexi – 0 – B).

> I would say the mentoring would have helped me. I felt when I came in here I
> wasn't afraid to come in here.... I had the parameters. I knew what I was
> responsible for, however, within that realm of responsibilities, I think there
> were some things that had taken me off guard and a lot of it has to do with

the feeling like you're never on top of it. It rolls you. Certain things you control, but a lot of things roll you (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Elizabeth added that she could have benefited from the support and guidance of a formally appointed mentor who was a past or present principal colleague with sufficient experience and trustworthiness:

> I think mentoring is very important. The connection, trust and talking to somebody who has been there and can say, "This is this" or "I think you did the right thing there or next time you should do this." It's somebody who you respect because they have been there (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Previous research indicates that new principals report a strong sense of isolation (Daresh & Male, 2000; Hobson et al., 2003) and "unlike new teachers, who can usually find an empathetic colleague just down the hall, principals literally have no peers in their building" (Lashway, 2003, 2). As noted, this sense of isolation was exacerbated when they received little, if any, interaction or feedback from superiors:

> I think that when you walk in here to a job like this you are on your own a lot of the time.... As a brand new principal, no one darkened the door of this school.... I was out here geographically removed and nobody was making any phone calls to see if things were getting done or if there was a problem... there is little support really.... I would love to have more support, somebody that you could talk to (Helen – 0 – B).

Having a formal mentor or liaison in place could impart strategic knowledge and insight as well as to comfort and reassure newcomers especially when going through times of crisis or experiencing extreme difficulties.

> I had a really hard staffing season last year. I could have used someone to hear me out while going through it. I had people and I bitched to them once in a while. I thought I should phone a counsellor. I needed to let off steam. I was devastated by what was happening.... I phoned [the former principal] and talked to him. It would have been nice to have someone officially though (Patricia – 1 – B).

Unfortunately, by nature of their position and the expectations placed upon them, new principals are compelled to demonstrate competence of authority and act with confidence. This meant having to negotiate elements of "duo-organizational" socialization. Newcomers had to demonstrate their abilities to members of two organizations at the same time; the school site for which they lead and the school board administrative group to which they are accountable to. In both cases, they were expected to be viewed as capable. As such, new principals are less likely to ask for help, especially from those in which they are supposed to lead (school site) and, again, not from those they are supposed to impress (school board). As

a result, a formalized support structure based on openness and confidentiality could be a valuable tool for new principals.

> For someone to be in this position, you do not always ask for help when you need it. You want to be the leader of the school, and less likely to ask for help than other people. Personalities play into that as well. However, I think a real structure would be a mentoring thing... to structure a time, and maybe part of school time, where someone comes in here once a week and I had a chance to debrief about situations that happened during the week; tell them what happened, how I handled it, and get some feedback (Charles – 0 – B).

Neophyte principals in school board B communicated that they needed some form of formally devised support for their inaugural principalship. As part of learning and negotiating the embedded realities of the system, respondents noted the importance of having a mentor/coach in place for the start of the year to impart much needed practical, hands-on, survival skills and knowledge.

Summary of Suggestions for Improved Preparation and Support

In order to enter the principalship with an adequate understanding and respect for the overwhelming nature of the job, including knowing the many responsibilities, tasks and routines generally associated with being a school leader, beginning principals recommended that aspiring leaders take the opportunity to accrue sufficient leadership and administrative experience as part of their pre-appointment preparation. Aspiring leaders could shadow a number of principals in a variety of school contexts so that they could get insight into a variety of leadership contexts and leadership practices and learn specific strategies to deal with the scope of the job and the seemingly relentless task of having to deal with the unexpected.

Respondents identified experiencing a "post-appointment transition" phase in which they noted as being a crucial time for support and learning. For new principals moving to new sites, they requested a sufficient amount of release time to walk alongside the exiting principal and become more enlightened regarding the contextual nuances and the challenges and issues they could be facing the following year. Beginning principals from both school boards suggested that they could have benefited from a formalized structure of individualized mentoring/coaching to help them learn and execute immediate principalship tasks through the end of the year and set things up for the start of the next school year. Respondents from school board B noted that they could have profited from the structured and individualized support of an "in-post" mentor/coach to help them tackle leadership challenges as they arose.

Chapter Five

Beginning Leadership Connections:

Developing Relationships and Building Trust

*Trust men and they will be true to you; treat them greatly and
they will show themselves great.*

> – Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, first series, Prudence*

In view of the nature of contemporary school leadership, this chapter begins by

discussing the need for beginning principals to develop relationships and build trust with staff

members as a means of establishing leadership credibility and facilitate legitimate leadership

authority. This includes discussion highlighting the paradoxical and countervailing tensions

associated with new leaders' efforts to mesh supportive instructional leadership with servicing

reform and accountability measures.

The analyses of beginning principals' perceptions and experiences are categorized

into two separate yet related areas; developing relationships and building trust. Analysis of

how new principals develop relationships focuses on differentiating purposes and actions

related to four areas of intent including; initiating connections, interacting and communicating,

creating collaborative culture, and supporting staff members.

Next, discussion centres on the defining and explicating trust including how new

leaders' credibility and reputations fall within the gamut and continuum of trust. Analysis of

how neophyte principals build trust spotlights two separate yet related areas; interactions and

communications. Analysis of actions in the area of interactions include; taking responsibility,

demonstrating commitment, modeling/engaging/participating, and purveying and empowering

staff members. Analysis of new principals' actions pertaining to communication include;

maintaining confidentiality, having conversations, and keeping one's word.

The Need for Building Trusting Relationships

The vision of the principal as an indefatigable source of ideas, energy and charisma

has faded. The iconic image of the school principal as the "trail boss" has largely

disappeared (Good, 2008). Increasingly, the school principal is seen as one who distributes

leadership across teachers and staff for specific purposes related to completing a particular

task (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Individual principals may utilize referent power and

demonstrate considerable skill, character and commitment to inspire their colleagues to work to great lengths but, ultimately, they share power and, accordingly, it is a mix of shared leadership and management that moves the school forward.

Leading is not just about telling people what to do but rather about opening spaces for people to learn about what matters to them (Sackney & Mitchell, 2002). This, of course, takes time, and is fostered through leaders making efforts to purposefully connect and interact with their colleagues where they can have meaningful communications. For new principals, however, they must enter the fray anew, devoid of the tacit knowledge, expertise and positional experience that are acquired through practice.

Upon appointment, newcomers are confronted with having to establish themselves as credible leadership choices for their particular venues (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). They must take immediate action to solidify their position as the school's legitimate lead authority while at the same time, develop and utilize interactive mechanisms designed to nurture relations and engender teacher support and confidence in their leadership.

New principals are required to take the helm and lead people, fashion policies and implement programs which they may or may not be completely familiar with. As such, they must immediately take steps to develop relationships and build the trust needed for leading and interacting with their staffs and educational stakeholders. Strong positive relationships are the foundation upon which one builds a healthy professional learning community that sustains school reform and improvement. Empowerment, good communication, a collaborative school culture and positive discipline are key elements to consider when developing and enhancing healthy relationships in schooling (McNabb, 2005). In order for an organization to function effectively, solid relationships must be established, since the foundation of any healthy professional relationship is trust (Palson, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Research indicates that a principal's trustworthiness promotes school health and reflects positive school culture (Smith, Hoy & Sweetland, 2001) and is positively correlated to the use of collegial leadership practices (Hoy, Smith & Sweetland, 2002). Trust based relationships increase the ease and incidence of organizational communication and decision making in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Overall, the effectiveness of schools has been

linked to school leaders who foster and develop trust with their staffs and educational

stakeholders (Hoy, Tarter & Witkowski, 1992; Tarter, Sabo & Hoy, 1995).

Although each leadership situation may be unique, every school as an organizational

entity is recognized as a human service organization and, as such, has the overarching goal

to change human behaviour for the better (Johnson, 2010). In schooling, the main goal is to

educate students, whereas the main responsibility of school leadership is the improvement of

teaching and learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Murphy, 2002). This entails working with

colleagues and clients to develop and fortify teaching and learning programs and processes

for the purpose of maximizing student achievement. However, school leaders must consider

the multivariate influences and players represented in such a complex organizational system.

As part of operating in a value-laden, morally charged milieu, principals must attend to a

variety of participants' needs, service competing agendas and, of course, attempt to meet the

plethora of expectations placed upon them (Scott, 2002). At the same time, while being

charged with securing optimum student performance and continued school improvement,

principals must lead in professional environments characterized by expanding job

responsibilities, a resistant technical core, structural constraints, finite funds and limited

resources (Crow, 2006).

Beginning school leaders face a difficult task. They must work to develop trusting

professional relationships with their teachers and staffs so that they can find ways to

adequately motivate, support, direct and supervise their colleagues' best efforts. Even with

increasing numbers of primary movers and shared power arrangements, school leaders are

still directly responsible for shaping their school's social architecture and cultural milieu so

that it is supportive of cooperative relationships, shared expectations and collective

responsibilities (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). A culture of shared understanding is ideal, but

schools historically have been viewed as loosely coupled organizations due to their perceived

lack of coordination and structure within the operating core (Rowan, 1990).

Traditionally, school leaders have been required to lead loosely coupled organizations

with a technical core that has been somewhat separated from them (Weick, 1976, 1995). The

combination of the principal's isolation from instruction and the procedural ambiguity

associated with this activity makes it difficult for a principal to closely supervise all aspects of

teachers' work. As a result, teachers have enjoyed a significant amount of professional autonomy in the planning and implementation of their work with students. The norms of the teaching profession have mitigated the effects of direct supervision (Johnson, 2010).

With an increased emphasis on accountability and school reform measures centred on improving student academic performance, school leaders are being asked to employ greater amounts of instructional leadership. As a result, the building of relationships with staff presents new challenges for new school leaders. On the one hand, school leaders are given the task of nurturing and supporting the professional growth and development of their teachers while at the same time they are required to ramp up standards and teaching practice via direct supervision, monitoring and performance feedback. The irony of these dual challenges is not found in the mutual relationship they share; rather, it is found in the paradoxical and countervailing tensions they create – tensions that must be skilfully balanced when developing positive and productive working relationships (Johnson, 2010).

Developing Relationships

Beginning principals identified four areas as important for developing relationships with their staffs; initiating connections, communicating and interacting, creating a collaborative culture, and supporting staff members. Actions taken in each of these areas were carefully considered and contingent upon a number of factors related to individual school leaders, including professional background, previous experiences and relationships with onsite teachers, professional reputation being carried forward, onsite experience and contextual insight, as well as participants' understanding of contextual issues and related action to immediately address concerns.

Initiating Connections

The announcement of principal appointments usually occurred near the end of the current school year. This presented significant challenges for beginning school leaders in making their transition to the position and in forging connections with members of their new sites. In the words of two interviewees:

> I had very little time and support to transition. That's part of the concern; often times you don't get hired until the end of the school year. You've got to do your piece in the previous school that you're in – complete everything and do it justice but also try to get up to the school that you're coming to before students are gone so that you can meet them and meet staff before they go

on vacation.... I had one staff meeting before the staff left and that was for about half an hour. It was good but I needed more (Max – 1 – A).

I had a problem with them saying, "You are hired, so have a great school year." I was left asking, "What am I going to do?" (Charles – 0 – B).

The challenges associated with transitioning to the principalship and developing relationships with colleagues as the school's prospective leader also held true for new appointees taking the helm in their current schools:

I knew how things worked here. I had been here for seven years previously.... I had to do a lot of things for this year and things for being the principal for next year (Helen – 0 – B).

Given that the majority of respondents were new leaders of smaller-sized schools located in the heart of long-standing rural communities, it was not surprising that, upon being appointed, they made efforts to immediately initiate or strengthen positive relationships with staff and community stakeholders. Even with limited time and opportunities, beginning principals moving to new sites overcame these obstacles and employed a number of methods, or combinations of such, to connect with their new colleagues. These included phone calls, day visits, year-end staff meetings, and summertime consultations and conversations. For example:

I felt the staff had to know that this was important to me and I was interested and motivated to be their principal.... I called the school and asked for everybody's phone number and I called their homes and introduced myself.... Then I came for my staff meeting and they said, "Here she is." I held a staff meeting here in June before I was really on the job (Amber – 1 – B).

I was able to come over and be introduced at the end of year assembly.... It was with the whole school body and parents.... I'm not a fixture in this community, so they might have known my name but nothing about me. It was worthwhile (Candice – 1 – A).

I was allowed to have a day of release time from my school to visit my new school. So, I spent the day in classrooms so the kids could see my face and the classroom teachers could see me in their space kind of thing. Then I went back to my school and finished off the year (Carol – 0 – A).

And in concert with this:

On one of the marking days during the last week of school I came over and spoke to the staff and gave them a letter outlining my background and my philosophy. I didn't have time to go over it with them, so I just told them a bit about who I was and gave them my summer contact information and told them that I would be in the building most of the summer and that they could also get me at home with any questions (Candice – 1 – A).

Candice further added:

> I came in during the summer just wanting to get a flavour of things.... I told them I was going to be in the school the last two weeks [of August] and to please come on over and visit. And so they did. The counselors came in and we had chats about their roles and then the resource teacher came and talked about her role and the music teacher dropped in. Certain classroom teachers came in and that was good because I didn't really know the staff other than their names (Candice – 1 – A).

Initiating connections with school members and introducing themselves as the

school's new leader for the upcoming year served multiple purposes for new principals; to

inform prospective colleagues about who they were, to communicate their leadership intents,

to acquire basic personnel and organizational information, and to develop insights about their

new leadership contexts.

> By asking people questions and by doing personal research with the staff before school started in September, I was able to get a grasp on things. I probably learned the most the last week of August. Not that I have all the answers now by a long shot, but at least I'm beginning to figure things out (Victor – 0 –A).

> It is all about having the small conversations with people. I came here last year in May/June for a bit and spoke with different people.... They told me about the school, what personality would fit best in the school when hiring people. I got a feel for the people and the parents. These are things that you don't get from sitting down in a staff meeting (Charles – 0 – B).

Charles further added:

> I had a long chat with the principal who was leaving. I had a long chat with the admin assistant. I talked with the people I thought would have a good sense of the school. I looked to the more experienced staff and asked them questions.... You just keep asking without prying (Charles – 0 – B).

Amber added:

> I asked if I could have an admin day to come and meet with [the] principal here and I did that. In that meeting I had a list of questions and a list of things I wanted to know about the things they had in place. I wanted to know the students on IPPs and on accommodations.... I also met all the kids. From that, I was able to figure out a few things and then I went back to my school and got cracking with my assistant.... We put together all the stuff I could take with me to use here (Amber – 1 – B).

Having previous work experience and ongoing professional relations with members of

the new leadership site enabled newly appointed principals to connect with prospective

colleagues by proxy. On-site friends and former colleagues were able to pass on their views

about the new principal's work-based leadership reputation. For example:

> I knew about 25% of the staff. I was lucky that I had some staff here who knew me so they did some of the leg work for me. Teachers here were asking about me once they found out that I was coming and so friends of

mine here would be saying things about what I was like as a person and what I will be like as a leader; things like, "As long as you're carrying your weight Max will be in your corner" (Max – 1 – A).

New principals transitioning to their new leadership post in the same school were required to participate in a reconnection of sorts with their colleagues. Upon the announcement of being appointed the school's new leader for the upcoming year, beginning principals immediately embarked on transitioning to the role and reassuring their colleagues that things were not about to be changed simply because there was a change in leadership. Prospective principals located in their home sites also reported taking on many of the principal's year-end responsibilities, especially those centred upon organizing things for the start of the next year.

> I had a different role as principal and I didn't know how they'd take that. You know, "You're the one who goes out for coffee with us and now you're the one who's going to tell us that we're not doing our job." It's a change in role with them (Juanita – 1 – A).

> I knew what I needed to do. I had to make them comfortable with who I was and guarantee them that the world wasn't going to change.... I said that I had no intention of changing what was working (Patricia – 1 – B).

> The Code of Conduct, all that new stuff had to be done before I started here in September. Even staffing for this year became my responsibility. It made June extremely difficult (Helen – 0 – B).

In all, for new principals, making initial connections with staff members of their new leadership venues was a necessary part of building a sense of familiarity and establishing themselves as credible leaders for the upcoming year. For new principals embracing a new venue, making an initial connection set the foundation for carefully soliciting information and to learn about the people and programs of their new schools. By doing so, new principals were able to gain an understanding of their new work contexts and become better situated to further develop and strengthen working relationships with their colleagues for the start of the new school year. For beginning principals taking on the leadership post of their current school, it was a matter of making attempts to reconnect with and relate to their in-house colleagues as their prospective leader and to immediately begin taking on responsibilities and completing tasks of the school's leader.

Interacting/Communicating

After starting the school year, respondents noted that making a determined effort to engage in meaningful interactions and communications with school members helped to

develop and fortify professional relationships with their colleagues as well as to inform their leadership practice. By personally interacting and communicating with staff members, beginning principals were able to both learn and lead while on the go. Interacting with staff members enabled new principals to demonstrate and express their educational values, communicate their intentions, canvass for information and perceptions and, as a result, learn more about their colleagues and the specific nuances of their leadership contexts.

> I spend a lot of time in the classrooms. I drop in regularly so that I know what's going on in there (Helen – 0 – B).

> I have an open door policy.... I ask everybody not to be the least bit hesitant to give me the "heads up" on things. You know, things like, "This is how we operate; this is the way we work; we'd like to continue that way; or, this is how we've been doing it and here are some things that didn't work" (Victor – 0 –A).

> When I stepped into the principalship, I wanted them to realize that I am still the same person I was in June. I said to them, "Please approach me and let me know things.... We are still on the same common ground so let's work together as a team" (Lexi – 0 – B).

By opening lines of communication, asking questions and taking the time to actively listen to staff members, beginning principals were able to learn site-specific routines and protocols and make informed leadership decisions.

> It has been sort of a struggle being new with the number of staff members who have been here twenty-some years. I have to ask questions, but at the same time I am trying to balance that with not seeming like I don't know anything. I try to frame it as needing to know specifics about this school in particular, not like, "What am I supposed to do?" (Charles – 0 – B).

> I've had to canvass in order to get good info. I've had to ask questions to people around things like practice and procedures. I've had to canvass to get at things.... I don't plan on changing things but I do need to know what's normal and what's expected.... I'm constantly asking, "How was it done before?" "Did it work?" "Is there something you feel that should be changed?" (Victor – 0 – A)

Even being familiar with the staff and the facilities required the incoming principal to tread carefully:

> I know this staff so well. I know this building so well and I think that they know me fairly well that I'm continually communicating with them and going to them and saying, "We have to speak. Tell me what I'm not doing. Tell me what I'm doing wrong. What's coming up that I need to be on top of?" The staff has been very frank with me.... It's a matter of trust and confidence...they may not have as much confidence at this point in what I'm doing but I think they have respect for me from having seen the way I've operated in the past as a teacher. I'm open and honest (Brian – 0 – A).

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For beginning principals, interaction and communication went hand in hand and were reciprocal in function. When new principals took the opportunity to personally interact with colleagues, they were able to engage in communication processes which, in turn, promoted further interaction and communication. Essentially, by taking the time to communicate and interact with school members, new principals were able to forge the beginnings of positive working relationships with their colleagues.

Beginning principals indicated that they spent most of their time as communicators and recipients while negotiating the early stages of transitioning to the principalship. In attempts to "take hold" and "immerse" themselves as new leaders (Gabarro, 1987), newcomers communicated with colleagues in order to express their own leadership views and intentions suitable to their new roles and, at the same time, carefully solicited their colleagues for important task-relevant information.

Creating a Collaborative Culture

Beginning principals recognized that one the most important things organizational leaders do is to create and manage culture (Schein, 1992). Immediately, newcomers were responsible for being or becoming aware of the interrelatedness of cultural aspects of the school while, at the same time, thrust into the role of leading people and organizing structures as part of managing the ongoing development the school's culture. However, having cultural knowledge involved an awareness of the history of the school, the characteristics of the staff, and the external demands placed on the school (McNabb, 2005). As such, beginning principals' perceptions of school culture were influenced and informed by their previous experiences and ongoing working relationships within their assigned schools. For some, this was accrued as a result of many years of insider experience while for others insights were limited to a few weeks of outside inquiry.

> I had zero prior knowledge. I applied for the job, got it, and met with the former principal on a Sunday for about two hours. I started getting paid a week later on August 1st (Steven – 1 – B).

> With my new role I was a bit nervous because I've been their colleague for four years and… I have heard their concerns and the things that they may have grumbled about and the things that they praised the former administrator about. I have taken all that into consideration (Lexi – 0 – B).

> Having been here for quite some time, I know there has been a real lack of "hands on" leadership…. [The superintendent] mentioned to me that there hasn't been a strong leadership team here… so I was going to have people

used to running their own shows and I was going to have to take the reins (Juanita – 1 – A).

Whether from away or from within, at the very least, new school leaders were required to get to know both who and what they were working with from the viewpoint of their new leadership posts. They were required to establish themselves as school leaders and attend to the new leader-follower dynamics that resulted as a result of a change in leadership. Necessarily, this meant contributing to or creating a new yet continuing sense of team and togetherness. This included organizing and leading group-based collaborative activities designed to bring people together. For new school leaders, having people socialize informally or as part of a structured routine increased feelings of unity and created group cohesiveness helpful for developing and achieving shared organizational goals (Schein, 1992).

During the start of the year, new principals organized informal social activities with staff members. Some hosted events at their homes while others went on outings with staff. New principals organized these activities so that they could get to know their new colleagues and for colleagues to get to know each other.

> The very first Friday of our first week last year I invited staff back to my house and most people came for a beer…. We did a dinner theatre night and not everyone went but they were invited…. It's through social things like that where I think you develop relationships where they get an opportunity to see you as a real person (Candice – 1 – A).

> Tonight, it's supper at my house. I need to know who these people are. I have twenty-eight teaching staff and I have ten more non-instructional staff. They need to know each other…. I'm going to be serving chili and corn cakes and they're going to be in little groups finding out who they are working with this year… the only rule is that you're not allowed to talk about school (Kari – 0 – A).

Informal and more formal social gatherings helped to not only facilitate principal/staff relationships but also helped staff get to know one another:

> I've made sure that we are doing a lot of group social activities together…. This is a staff that used to do that and from what I have learned, the veteran staff members are the ones who long for that. They feel that their building has changed and that it has moved away from that feeling of collegial cohesiveness. So, I have organized staff things in response to some of that (Kari – 0 – A).

> We tried to do a lot of team building with the staff. When I came in, I was new to the staff. I'm young in comparison to a lot of the teaching staff. I joined as vice-principal and, by Christmas, I was appointed principal. Some of these people have been teaching 20-25 years. So, we had to do a lot of team building with me as their new team leader (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

One-year-experienced principals made efforts to create and maintain a collaborative culture with staff members by leading and directing shared activities for a particular purpose or towards a group goal. Activities included working as a group to foster greater levels of participation and cooperation for school-based activities, utilizing pre-determined teacher pairings for increasing perspectives and ideas for assessment practices, as well as repairing and regrouping collaborative efforts for increasing awareness around teaching strategies.

> Having myself and teachers contact parents and making those extra calls and taking the time to ask how their child is has really helped build a team feeling with staff and family feel with parents. Now, when I need something, they are all there to help (Amber – 1 – B).

> I paired [teachers] to get a variety of perspectives and strategies concerning assessment.... Some will say it's a good idea because they don't get much of an opportunity to talk with many of their colleagues... they never see each other because they have different schedules.... Then we are having our big social afterwards at my cottage (Juanita – 1 – A).

> I am dealing with two opposing camps at this point. Veteran staff members have been very reluctant to try anything new while newer teachers are already implementing some of the more useful teaching strategies. That's where my relationship with some staff has gone awry.... I wanted to listen to one group because I felt we needed more of their ideas.... I had to put the brakes on and listen to everybody as a collective group (Steven – 1 – B).

Initially, informal group activities served as a means of increasing familiarity and building a sense of collaboration and cooperation important for moving forward with school operations. In time, however, as new principals gained experience, they used collaborative endeavours as a vehicle for increasing the quality of teaching and learning processes. For some one-year-experienced principals, this meant working to coordinate staff or repair relationships by taking actions to be more inclusive and collaborative.

Supporting Staff Members

The quality of relationships within a school and within classrooms is central to effective teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1994). As part of developing and strengthening relationships with staff members and in attempts to increase the quality of teaching and learning processes, beginning school leaders identified taking specific measures to actively support and reinforce the efforts of their staff members. These actions included protecting the integrity of teachers' work environments by supporting teachers with discipline issues and buffering them from parental intrusions, respecting teachers' space, having professional

conversations using active listening, following up on issues, and the recognizing teachers' work and using positive reinforcement.

> Students will often go home and play mom against dad just like they'll play the parent against the teacher. I don't play that game... The teachers know I support them (Max – 1 – A).

> It's the small things, like the small conversations. It's me hooking up a computer for someone or carrying a box of books for them. It's also bigger things. It's supporting them when there is a discipline issue or intervening when there is a parent who is causing concern (Charles – 0 – B).

> As principal, I find that I don't like to spend as much time in the staffroom because I want them to sit and feel free to have conversations without worrying about me being there. They need to have time to get together without admin being there (Kim – 0 – B).

Regardless of an individual's personality type or leadership style, beginning principals indicated that in developing positive relationships with their colleagues, it was their professional responsibility to have mutually respectful and confidential conversations as part of listening to, understanding and supporting their staff members.

> I develop relationships with them all in different ways (Kim – 0 – B).

> If there is anything that they oppose, as far as my directions to them are, I say, "Please come and talk to me. If you have any concerns, whether they are personal or professional, I certainly am a great listener" (Lexi – 0 – B).

> I've been around for a fairly long time, so people probably realize that I will follow up on things. They know that I will follow up on requests and issues and that I have no problem coming in and closing the door and having the one-to-one conversations to clear things up when needed (Victor – 0 – A).

In addition:

> I think it is me supporting the teacher as best I can and having professional conversations. Even if I disagree with what teachers may have done or what they might want, only after having a one-to-one conversation in confidence can things be resolved with mutual respect (Charles – 0 – B).

> Beginning on Monday, I have a set of organized time where I am in classrooms with teachers doing work... based on previous meetings with them, being in their classroom with them, talking to them about some of their ideas around life learning and just finding out who they are (Kari – 0 – A).

As part of strengthening positive work relationships with colleagues, neophyte principals acknowledged and reinforced the efforts and contributions of staff members. One-year-experienced principals noted the importance of supporting staff members by engaging with staff and overtly recognizing and positively reinforcing their good work and contributions.

> It's a time thing. I want to know them. I feel that we try to do a lot of acknowledgement. We have a ton of people doing good work and I try to publicly acknowledge that through not only teacher appreciation but with

thank you cards in their mailboxes and going to see them and say thanks very much.... I am in classrooms all the time. I pop in and out. I am in the halls mixing in and out. I try to support as many extra-curriculars as possible when the staff are there and thank them for their contribution (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Some of the new staff are grappling with things. They need someone to come forward and notice that they are doing a good job. I got some good comments on [a beginning teacher] from parents and I made sure that I passed those comments on immediately because I wanted her to know what parents were thinking of her. Little things like that make a big difference in trying to establish a good working rapport with new teachers (Patricia – 1 – B).

In an effort to develop and fortify relationships with staff members, beginning principals acted in a number of ways to directly support their colleagues' work. New principals had taken action to safeguard and maintain the integrity of their staff's work environment as well as having made arrangements to carefully listen to and dialogue with staff in order to hear and understand their ideas and concerns. Over time, and with increased experience in the post, one-year-experienced principals made specific efforts to acknowledge and reinforce teachers' efforts directed at increasing the quality of the teaching/learning process.

Summary of Developing Relationships

Research suggests that the degree to which a principal is able to proficiently take on the leadership of a particular school depends, in part, on the new leader's ability to assess the organization and diagnose its challenges, to build a team concept focused on a set of shared expectations and to bring about timely changes that address organizational challenges (Gabarro, 1987). However, respondents in this study acted in accordance to the understanding that their ability to use these strategies may have been dependent on the quality of relationships they were able to develop with members of their leadership venues. Given that staff members often have unrealistic expectations of new principals (Hart, 1993) or find ways to minimize the effects of principals in their lives (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996), it was important that beginning principals took appropriate action to initiate and/or develop positive relationships with their colleagues in order to move forward with leading the people, policies and programs of their schools.

Beginning principals identified the importance of taking action in four main areas of engagement to aid in the transition to their new posts and to develop profitable working

relationships with their colleagues. These areas included initiating connections, interacting and communicating, creating collaborative culture, and supporting staff members (see figure 5.1). Influenced by individual contributing factors, neophyte principals had taken specific actions related to each of the areas of intent for specific purposes related to developing relationships with their colleagues. By doing so, new school leaders were able to transition to their new roles, establish their leadership and, as a result, learn more about their schools in order to shape their emerging leadership practice.

Figure 5.1 – Developing Relationships

Individuals' Contributing Factors

- Professional background
- Previous experience/relationships with onsite staff members
- Professional reputation
- Onsite experience/contextual knowledge
- Ideas to address contextual issues

Areas of Intent

Initiating Connections	Interacting/ Communicating	Creating a Collaborative Culture	Supporting Staff members

Purposes

Initiating Connections	Interacting/ Communicating	Creating a Collaborative Culture	Supporting Staff members
Build familiarity and establish credibility	Learn/lead on the go	Learn/lead new leader-follower dynamic	Safeguard integrity of teaching/ learning process
Inform colleagues about leadership qualities/intents	Demonstrate/express educational values	Create sense of team and togetherness	Encourage staff input/feedback
	Learn site nuances		
Acquire school/ personnel info	Canvass operations info/perceptions	Develop cooperation to improve teaching/ learning processes	Increase quality of teaching/ learning process
Develop contextual insights	Acquire task-relevant info	Repair relationships	Motivate staff

Actions

Initiating Connections	Interacting/ Communicating	Creating a Collaborative Culture	Supporting Staff members
- Phone calls - Day visits - Year-end staff meetings - Summertime consultations - Conversations - Proxy - Reconnect w/ home-site staff - Defacto leader	- Open door policy - Class visits/discussions - Invitation to discuss - Participating in activities - Asking questions - Active listening - Mutually respectful dialogue/conversations	- Host informal social activities - Lead group-based activities - Organize/attend staff outings - Use shared input decision-making	- One-to-one conversations - Counsel/resolve issues/dialogue - Attend events/ activities - Recognize/ reinforce efforts - Buffer staff from conflict - Deal with discipline issues - Respect space

The four areas of intent can be conceptualized as part of a strategic action-based framework of engagement for beginning principals seeking to develop relationships with their colleagues. Beginning with initiating connections, new principals progressed to ways of interacting and communicating with colleagues as a means of developing or strengthening their relationships. Moving from individualized mechanisms of interaction to more collaborative measures, beginning principals then became more focused on finding ways to directly support their staff members as a means of improving the quality of the teaching/learning process.

Building Trust

Trust is an essential component needed for development of positive relationships. In fact, it behooves even the most confident of beginning principals to form trusting relationships with staff members and learning community constituents. Trust is a complex, multidimensional and dynamic construct (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and is largely a function of the nature of the relationship that exists between participants (Gambetta, 1988; Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998). The conceptual definition of trust in its most basic sense is the "belief in the capabilities of others to care for something important to the trustor" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004, 4). A more comprehensive analysis of the term sees it as an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, open and honest (Mishra, 1996; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Trust is formed through repeated social exchanges with other individuals and is an affective response to a social context (Fahy, Wu & Hoy, 2010). It is an emotive construct; a feeling one has, very often visceral in nature and yet, either intentionally or unknowingly, realized as a result of ongoing and reflective cognitive analysis. Information utilized to discern the perceived trustworthiness of another party stems from two primary sources: behaviour patterns and socially defined expectations of acceptable behaviour (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Discernment of trust is predicated upon one's disposition to trust (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995) and can be viewed through a multitude of perceptual lenses brought to bear by one's unique negotiation of lived experiences which are expressed as a result of an accumulation of one's personal history and life-learnings and are fundamentally based on the assumptions

and preferences associated with one's belief system (Northfield et al., 2008). Individuals bring their own experiences and values to bear in judging others as being trustworthy in order to predict the actions and intentions of others as benevolent, or at least benign, in the relationship that exists.

For individual school member constituents, being trusted "nurtures a person's morale, self esteem, and feelings of self worth" and is particularly important when change occurs (Bottery, 2005, 8). From an organizational standpoint, trust between individuals and groups of individuals is known as 'relational trust' and is deemed necessary for the attainment of institutional objectives, as people and groups rely on each other to perform and carry out expected tasks (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In schools, principals have to trust that teachers will make good efforts in advancing student learning, will help to improve the school and will work to sustain positive relations with parents, while school leaders are expected to impart procedural fairness in adjudicating competing interests among faculty, to maintain a predictable environment governing basic school operations, to acquire adequate resources to conduct instruction, and to provide professional support (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

> Trust is a two way street. Teachers have to trust me to do the best for them and I have to trust that they're doing their best for students (Max – 1 – A).

> For teachers to trust that I value their welfare and their professional needs, I have to make it clear that I will work to make sure that they are given what they need in support, encouragement, positive reinforcement, professional development and resources so that they can then deliver the best possible program to the students (Max – 1 – A).

Research suggests that in the social dynamic of interpersonal exchange within schools, principals base their judgments of trust of teachers more heavily on competence, reliability and commitment, whereas teachers' views of principals tend to be anchored more in caring, integrity and openness (Blake & MacNeil, 1998). As such, for new school leaders, the artful use and application of interpersonal skills was an important area of consideration when attempting to build trust with school members.

> I think I developed trust by showing each person in any situation that I was fair and things would be handled thoughtfully and professionally (Candice – 1 – A).

> There are things that need to be learned and used in leadership. If someone had written down the ten rules of management, being respectful and courteous to people should be there (Patricia – 1 – B).

Since interpersonal relationships within organizations are not devoid of power imbalances or differentials (Baier, 1986), and operate within varying contexts, constraints and influences, the nature of vulnerability may change as the level of interdependence and the stage of the relationship changes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Vulnerability and interdependence are relative conditions for individuals in schools. As Tschannen-Moran (2004) notes, "[b]ecause of the hierarchical nature of relationships within schools, it is the responsibility of the person with greater power to take the initiative to build and sustain trusting relationships" (35).

> Trust moves up the chain of command, too. I expect my boss to be upfront too. I expect to hear informally, things like, "Here is the feel about the school. Here has been what is happening and here is my feel as your supervisor of what has been happening and here are some areas that need to improve" (Charles – 0 – B).

For beginning principals, leadership legitimacy begins with trust (Greenleaf, 1977) and can be developed over time as relationships mature and individuals are able to gather and evaluate increasing amounts of trust relevant information (Lewicki et al., 1998). Once in position, the beginning principal's use of the authority allotted to the role is a key factor affecting the development of subordinates' and constituents' trust in their leadership (Hardy, Phillips & Lawrence, 1998). Since leaders generate and sustain trust through their actions (Bennis, 2003), it is important that neophyte principals act in ways that fulfil role obligations congruent with the role expectations of organizational members. However, in meeting expectations in areas of critical interdependence, it is important that new principals not only "do the right thing" but also do it in a respectful way, and for what are perceived the right reasons (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

> Teachers trust us, because, for example, when they send a student to us, we act in good faith and respond to it. We are all working for the same common goal (Kim – 0 – B).

> Each one of us has to be the best we can be and I have to be the leader of that (Candice – 1 – A).

Initially, when new leaders take charge, a level of interdependence is initiated immediately by virtue of the shared purpose of schooling. Since individuals extend a certain amount of provisional trust until evidence surfaces to either confirm or diminish initial trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004), the cup may seem half full for beginning principals when it comes to receiving the benefit of the doubt from school members. However, after initial contact, a commitment

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period marked by impression-making followed by more intensive exploration of trustworthiness ensues (Tschannen- Moran, 2009).

Beginning principals noted that the real action phase for cultivating trust was the start of the school year. Almost immediately, staff members began to take stock of their new school leader's behaviours. In some cases, new principals' actions were subject to their colleagues' careful observation and analysis as a test to see if they did indeed match up with staff members' behavioural expectations and preferences.

> It was the fact that I was principal now. I knew I had eyes on me.... In September, as a principal, they don't know how I am going to function and how we are going to work together as an admin team (Kim – 0 – B).

> I think that, when I first came in the door, the staff wanted to see what I was made of and they tested me. They wanted to see if I was going to stand up.... They wanted to see if a kid was caught outside smoking whether I had the balls to do something about it (Max – 1 – A).

Both Max and Juanita point out that trust is something which must be earned:

> We did have the odd parent come in and staff, of course, would wait to see how I was going to handle it. Usually, one would be watching in the office area. Was I going to sit there and say, "Mr. So and So shouldn't have done that," or would I support the teacher? (Max – 1 – A)

> I knew the staff and I think my biggest error was assuming that they would immediately follow. I figured they would trust me and go where I wanted to go (Juanita – 1 – A).

Even for those completely familiar with their schools when taking charge, trust of leadership is something which must be earned. Trust is a choice and "cultivated through speech, conversation, commitments, and action. Trust is never something already at hand. It is always a matter of human effort. It can and often must be conscientiously created, not simply taken for granted" (Solomon & Flores, 2001, 87). As beginning principals noted, trust is something which must be carefully created as part of a continuing and cumulative process.

The Gamut of Trust

The development of trust for school leaders, including new principals, occurs along a fluid four stage continuum (Macmillan, Meyer & Northfield, 2004, 2005), (see figure 5.2) beginning with 'role' and 'practice' trust, where actions of the principal can be anticipated and judged according to legally ascribed expectations of the principal's 'role' and predicted over time as a result of accumulated observations and experiences with regard to the principal's 'practice'. Trust becomes 'integrative' when the intentions of the principal's actions can be

accurately interpreted, understood and associated with corresponding values and beliefs. At this point, trust can stagnate, diminish or deepen. If the principal's actions, policies and values are perceived by participants as acceptable, appropriate and congruent, then the 'correlative' construct of trust can be realized. Here, there is a "thickening" of trust (Bottery, 2005) or an increased degree of cognitive confidence (Kee & Knox, 1970) where shared values and mutual respect serve as the foundation for an intuitive working relationship. In effect, trust between the principal and staff members begins as being strictly professional and may then develop over time to incorporate deeper, more personally shared measures of trust into the relationship (Ingstrup & Crookall, 1998) with gradations and variations in between.

Figure 5.2 – The Continuum of Trust

Stages of Trust	Description of the Level
Role Trust	Teachers and vice-principals trust the principal to function within the legal mandate of the position. That is, the principal will follow the laws, policies and regulations that govern schools and the position.
Practice Trust	After observing the principal's practice, teachers and vice-principals can predict how a principal will respond in a given situation.
Integrative Trust	After observation of the principal in a multitude of situations, teachers' and vice-principals' trust is based on their identification of underlying principles/values on which the principal makes decisions.
Correlative Trust	Teachers' and vice-principals' trust is based on a deep understanding and sharing of the principal's beliefs and philosophy such that they are able to function as part of a mutually supportive team.

Adapted from *Continuum of Trust* by Northfield, Macmillan & Meyer, 2008, as cited in *The CAP Journal*, 2008.

Respondents noted that building trust with their colleagues was a slow and deliberate process requiring insight and patience. As part of moving along the continuum of trust towards consolidating 'practice' trust with their colleagues, newcomers felt it was important to give staff members a number of behavioural examples to draw from in helping staff discern their trustworthiness as school leaders.

> You have to develop a trusting relationship slowly but surely with people and give them little examples of who you are (Brian – O – A).

I think trust is something you have to be patient with. You can't build it right away and it is all of those small things that you establish – being honest, thoughtful, cooperative and collegial (Charles – 0 – B).

"Trust is the glue of life. It is the glue that holds organizations, cultures and relationships together. Ironically, it comes from the speed of going slow. With people, fast is slow and slow is fast" (Covey, 2004, 162). According to one-year-experienced principals, it was an accumulation of judgments about their leadership actions over time that enabled their colleagues to ascertain increasing levels of trust with them as school leaders.

This year is still pretty new yet, but I think that I have made inroads in developing trust from last year. It took a little bit of time. They weren't quite sure about me, but I got the sense they liked what they heard. I think that there were things that we worked through together last year to make things better in terms of problem-solving issues (Candice – 1 – A).

I don't know if I have built trust with everyone yet; that takes years of experience (Patricia – 1 – B).

Building trust last year was just a matter of getting to know people over time (Daniel – 1 – A).

Max used a banking metaphor to describe the trust process:

If you're a brand new teacher in my school or I've never made "deposits" with you then we've got nothing to work from in our critical dealings and conversations. We don't have that rapport, that relationship, that trust, or that deposit, for me to sit there and say, "Okay, I'm making a 'withdrawal' today." In my mind, I'm not saying it out loud, but I need to know that I've got enough deposits with people so that I can afford to make one and still have them on my side (Max – 1 – A).

Recognizing that trust can deepen and become more authentic when individuals interact and get to know one another over time (Zucker, 1986), new principals grasped the importance of taking the time and making the effort to purposefully engage their colleagues in supportive fashion, but also realized that their designs were a work in progress and would come to fruition in time. By giving examples of what they perceived to be trustworthy behaviours as a reflection of their noble leadership intents, beginning principals believed that they were better positioned to call on their colleagues to be receptive to and respond to their leadership directions and requests.

The scope and sequence of trust ranges from contractual forms to more organic forms of trust with relational trust sandwiched in between (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It is within the "relational" phase where "practice" and "integrative" forms of trust are achieved through interactive and observational dimensions of social exchange. By observing and experiencing

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an individual's actions over time and being able to link others' actions to intents and values, individuals are able to predict another's behaviour and make the choice whether to trust that individual or not. Prior and ongoing social relationships are the means through which individuals build up a bank of knowledge about a person such that the scope of her/his actions can be predicted with some degree of accuracy (Bottery, 2003).

Upon taking up the post, in some instances, respondents noted that a few of their staff members were either former colleagues and/or close friends with whom they were able to previously develop trusting professional and/or personal relationships. These new principals noted that they were able to canvass support, if not project support for their leadership, via close colleagues and friends. In addition to friendships and previous work connections, professional reputations also served to enhance possible trust formation for new school leaders.

> Trust can also be felt in your reputation and what other people say about you. People talk.... You hear stuff, and what people are saying about you informally is a good indicator of whether or not they really trust you (Charles – 0 – B).

New principals' experience and reputations as skilled practitioners served to establish leader credibility and trustworthiness:

> On the practical side, I think you really have to be a good teacher first and get your ducks in a row there.... I think that for you to lead and for you to share your vision with people and have them follow that vision, it is only effective if people perceive you as a proven commodity as a practitioner (Charles – 0 – B).

> It helps that I taught here because the staff here already know what my work style and ethics are like. They couldn't have gotten a better advertisement of who I am than to be teaching with me before I became principal.... I was encouraged by the response when they knew I was selected to be the principal.... I got a response from the staff that was positive. So that was helpful, which means that I've got a step in the door.... My credibility is on the line. Right now they trust me and I can't blow that (Kari – 0 – A).

In addition:

> I think I have the reputation of someone who has excelled in what they've decided to do. I would hope that it would be something for people to see.... I don't want to send my resume out on the first day of school and say, "This is why you should listen to me." I want to be out there and be successful in things and people will know why I'm here (Charles – 0 – B).

> People tell you that your reputation follows you, which is good because there were people here who did not know me. I had three or four teachers who came with me from my old school, so that helped me and I had a couple of teachers on staff who worked with me before (Amber – 1 – B).

Reputations can serve either to strengthen high trust or diminish low trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004, 21). Respondents identified that a network of mutual friends and acquaintances served to enhance the likelihood that trusting relationships would develop and become stronger with new colleagues. When many people perceive that an individual has a good reputation, it is more difficult for a negative event to significantly reduce a high level of trust in that individual (McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998). Respondents noted that having a positive professional reputation as a result of previous work connections and experiences helped them feel more at ease and act with increased confidence upon entering their new posts.

In some instances, however, the social dynamics of the work context, including the perceptions and resulting leadership expectations of a specific group of staff members, can present significant challenges for a new school leader attempting to gain their trust in his or her leadership.

> I'm still struggling with trust. I am faced with the challenge of having been the junior high vice-principal and trying to break through the thinking by some high school staff that I'm only in it for the junior high.... It's been a year now and it is still taking time to develop trust.... The high school vice-principal was one of my biggest challenges in trying to establish my credibility to lead the entire school.... It's an undermining thing. It's that kind of thing that gets out there and people pick up on things (Juanita – 1 – A).

The judgment, observations, and gossip of others can tend to "lock in" relationships at either positive or negative extremes (Burt & Knez, 1996). In this instance, a beginning principal may be faced with having to overcome the perceptions, actions and influence of an informal power group within the school. More specifically, the new leader had to find ways to reduce the impact of an administrative colleague acting as a "negative power broker" (Northfield et al., 2010).

Regardless of the support or barriers being presented to newcomers, they noted that it was important to keep one goal in mind when attempting to build and fortify trust with their colleagues – to actively support staff members.

Support Staff Members

To be a trustworthy principal is first and foremost to be known as a person of good will where teachers are confident that you have their best interests at heart and will do whatever possible to support them as individuals and help them develop as professionals (Tschannen-

Moran, 2004). Newly appointed principals identified quickly taking action to support their staff members by carefully attending to and responding to their colleagues' needs as a priority in establishing trust.

> It's responding to their needs.... It's about responding when they need me to respond. Just being here to listen when they need that and supporting them if they need something (Kim – 0 – B).

> I need to work to earn their trust and communicate and show them that I will be up front and supportive. I can tell them all these things, but they need to see me making decisions based on the timely information that I have (Kari – 0 – A).

Respondents also noted that, in order to garner the trust of their colleagues, it was essential to actively support their staff members' efforts and contributions to the teaching/learning process. One-year-experienced principals identified how important it was to openly demonstrate support for their colleagues, to work things out on an individual basis and to secure optimum working conditions for their staff members.

> I have to show that I'm here for the staff (Patricia – 1 – B).

> It's about being able to sit down together with teachers to work things out and show them that I am supporting them (Max – 1 – A).

> I think you develop trust just by showing that you are caring, you respect and value their opinion. I think I did that last year by talking with staff, listening and trying to get a feel for what they needed and wanted (Daniel – 1 – A).

Other one-year-experienced principals concurred:

> They are not going to listen to me until they trust me and that's the visiting and the dropping in and supporting them when there is a need or conflict to be reconciled (Juanita – 1 – A).

> In terms of the running of this building and the happiness and the contentment of people in this building, whether they be staff or students or custodians or whoever, I always try to be in tune with what it is they need and what the right work conditions are [in order] to try and help them to work to the best of their ability (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

By overtly demonstrating their leadership intentions to be supportive, beginning principals worked to be trustworthy in the eyes of their staffs. Essentially, it was about being able to come through for their colleagues by making well-informed and thoughtful decisions while also making efforts to be there for them to help solve problems and provide for them. Through finding ways to actively interact with and communicate with their staff members, new school leaders felt they were able to gain trust.

Interactions

Beginning principals noted that they interacted with staff members in a number of ways to build trust. This included providing for and empowering teachers, modeling appropriate behaviours, engaging and participating in activities with staff and demonstrating commitment by working hard and being prepared, as well as taking responsibility for decisions and actions that resulted in possible missteps.

Purvey and Empower

Respondents noted that, by working hard to provide resources and accommodate teachers' needs and requests, they were able to secure at least a modicum of trust from their colleagues in moving forward with leading the school. By taking the time and making the effort to "invest" in individual staff members and students, beginning principals felt that they could be considered leaders who genuinely cared about the welfare of their school members and who could be relied upon to make the right decisions for the organization. One-year-experienced interviewees made note of how their ability to provide for their teachers was a hallmark of their trustworthiness as school leaders.

> When a teacher needs something, I try to provide it for [him/her] in a creative and proper manner (Max – 1 – A).

> If there was a concern or if there was something a staff member needed, I guess I would do whatever I possibly could do to help them and tried to be as supportive as I could; trying to find funds for them to do whatever... just working hard to do whatever I could to support them (Daniel – 1 – A).

Evidently, one year of experience helped respondents understand the importance of empowering their staff members as part of their strategy to secure trust with them. By encouraging their colleagues, sharing leadership and focusing on their colleagues' strengths, new school leaders "acted in good faith" to help their workmates grow and develop as professionals.

> Empowerment; as much as that is a buzz word, it really was true.... You have to nudge them (teachers) and expect their best efforts. You have to celebrate what they do and then hone it so it's better.... I have to make sure not take control of everything and I have to find the things that I know I can delegate to others and give them praise and accept their best efforts and rejoice in that. And they may not do it the way I would have done it, but that's one of the ways that you can encourage others to have that shared leadership and have a school where we can all lead different things (Candice – 1 – A).

> I immediately found out something interesting about everyone on staff. I found their strengths and drew on that... I mean you have to focus in on them and empower them (Amber – 1 – B).

Building trust included making "deposits" and investing in school members:

> You need to be able to be there for them and you need to make enough "deposits" with each person so that when you need to make a "withdrawal" you can do it and still keep their faith, keep their trust (Max – 1 – A).

> The trust thing, too, is that the kids need to know that you are going to invest the time in them and that they are worth your investment. And no matter what happens, even if they mess up, which they are going to, you're going to support them. They are going to have consequences; they will be supported and it will be a learning experience (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Interestingly, only one-year-experienced principals indicated the importance of making sure to provide for and empower their colleagues as part of building trust with them. This could be as a result of their experience in the position whereby they were able to figure out what they were supposed to do and how they were expected to perform as school leaders. Being able to accrue an understanding of what they could deliver to others and when they could call upon others to take on tasks enabled these beginning leaders to reduce their colleagues' sense of vulnerability by being able to provide for and empower them, thereby building trust.

Model, Engage and Participate

Respondents identified a number of different ways in which they were able to interact with their colleagues as a means of building trust, including modelling appropriate behaviours and leading by example, individually engaging school members and participating in activities. They noted that taking charge and leading from the front entailed setting the example for staff by putting in the necessary time to organize and solidify programs along with completing projects and, of course, being lead learner.

> It is about building trust. And I think I have to lead by modeling. When we had our first staff meeting, I talked about what my philosophy was but I can't tell people to trust me. You know, I have to demonstrate that (Carol – 0 – A).

> It is done through leading by example. I believe that you have to have the courage to lead from the front and be consistent (Brian – 0 – A).

> If I want people to put the time in and have care and concern for the kids and want our programs to be better, then I have to show them. I can't be the one who leaves at 3 o'clock, the last one in and the one who isn't spending time working on the programs. I kind of expect people to work as hard as I do. I think, if they see that, it probably inspires them to work harder (Kim – 0 – B).

Kari and Max were also in agreement with this principle:

> I shouldn't be asking other people to work on things if I'm not working on things. Being an educational leader is also demonstrating that I'm learning

> and continuing to learn, that there are things that challenge me and that I'll hold them up for people to see as a challenge to me (Kari – 0 – A).

> Bottom line is that I won't ever ask anyone to do something I won't do first, whether it's to volunteer for something or take on a major project.... If I asked staff to help students clean-up outside, I'll be out there with my rubber gloves and a garbage bag helping them as much as I can. Or, if I want staff to chaperone the dance or whatever, I need to be there too. So they see that, if I'm going to ask them to do something, I'm going to be with them – maybe not every time, but as much as I can be. I will be visible and be open (Max – 1 – A).

For new leaders, deciding to take action and to "lead by example" demonstrated initiative and risk-taking and was deemed useful in gaining respect from staff members by fulfilling an expectation for appropriate action (Kanter, 2004). Ultimately, this helped newcomers to be viewed as capable school leaders and, as such, individuals who could be trusted to perform their roles appropriately.

By using their personalities as the prime motivator of behaviour and not their ideas of how to play a prescribed role, school leaders were able to live and lead authentically (Henderson & Hoy, 1982). In turn, this helped new school leaders gain trust with their colleagues by being sincere in their deliberations and interactions with staff members.

> I often go back to something that I have learned and that is, "to thine own self be true," and, if we don't adhere to that through everything that we do, then clearly we're missing the boat (Brian – 0 – A).

> I would like to think that, if I say what I believe, I am hoping that my actions reflect it (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Trustworthy leaders modelled standards of conduct that promoted the well-being of all members of the school community and explicitly invited others to abide by those norms and defend those expectations in ways that made clear that disrespect was not an option (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Modeling behavioural standards and professional expectations enabled new principals to live and act with integrity – another hallmark of trustworthiness.

> I use terms like "empowerment", "accountability" and "professionalism". I really mean the holding of professional standards and accountability to certain levels in terms of behaviour towards each other and expectations of self. I think that leadership needs to be modeling that, enhancing that and creating that type of environment (Kari – 0 – A).

Respondents identified participatory leadership as a means to gain trust with their colleagues. By being present and participating alongside their teachers in many different curricular and extra-curricular activities, they showed their support for school members' participation and demonstrated that they, in fact, valued such activities.

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I'm not going to stay in this room (the office). I'm going to continue to stay in the trenches.... I pair with teachers to teach exploratory courses once a week. This helps me interact with staff and students from an instructional standpoint and helps me see things from their perspectives, which helps me gain credibility with them as a classroom contributor (Brian – 0 – A).

I'm not in my office a lot. I try to be out there. I'm outside everyday at recess time. I'm assisting with our supervision duties. I just find it's easier to be out there to deal with things, anyway. And I guess that again might show my support for what they are doing (Daniel – 1 – A).

Principals and teachers also voiced needing to build trust with students as part of reducing students' sense of vulnerability so that, as educators, they could accomplish the essential goal of fostering student achievement and equipping students for citizenship (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

I feel it's very important for me to show up in classrooms on matters totally unrelated to discipline. I don't want the kids to see me as that old gray-haired guy in the office that keeps us all walking or hangs out in the hallways (Victor – 0 – A).

I am going to be spending a good amount of my time working with children building trust and doing some things that allow us to develop their sense of self-discipline and understanding choice-making and such things (Kari – 0 – A).

Another interviewee made it her priority, upon entering her second year, to lead her staff in actively engaging students during transition times to build trust with them:

This year I am making more of an effort to build trust with the kids. It's caring about them which means spending the time with them...getting into the cafeteria and seeing them, noticing the kid who is kind of hanging there who you know hasn't had breakfast; getting them something to eat, getting them started off in the right way (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

By following through on their intentions to be visible, open and accessible to their teachers during school-based activities and by taking the opportunity to engage students on a consistent basis, beginning principals were able to demonstrate their support and concern for school members' welfare.

Demonstrate Commitment

In situations of interdependence, when something is required from another person and the individual can consistently be relied upon to supply it, he/she can be considered to be reliable or dependable (Mishra, 1996). Respondents noted that by committing to take on the leadership of their particular schools for a guaranteed time frame, they instilled a sense of confidence and reliability for their staffs in that they could be counted on to provide stability and continuity of leadership and programming.

Being new, I told the staff that I am committed to be part of the leadership team for this school for at least the next three years. There has been constant turnover in school leadership the past few years and no forward, cohesive longer term planning. I've told the staff that right now we stop planning piecemeal and short term from September to June. This is the year that we know we are making a three-year plan as a step....I cannot let them down (Kari – 0 – A).

Opening staff meeting, I told my staff, because they were a bit shell-shocked with their third administrator in three years, "You can count on me for the next five years for sure. After that I'll probably retire" (Victor – 0 – A).

Amber echoed these sentiments:

I made a commitment to be here for at least two years. You cannot be here for only one year because you cannot do anything in one year. I said I know that I will be here for two years and depending on what the school board decides with the configuration of the school I will make a decision.... I will stay longer if allowed. I made that commitment from the beginning (Amber – 1 – B).

Amber further added:

I think I have trust with the staff because I proved myself last year. I walked in new last year and had to prove myself. I think the best thing I did was to be well-prepared and organized for the job.... I spent my whole summer last year here.... I really had to work the whole time to set things up.... They want to see that you are going to be a hard worker. I was at everything (Amber – 1 – B).

By judiciously preparing for the leadership responsibilities and tasks at hand and by understanding the seriousness of the nature of their undertaking, neophyte principals felt they gained trust by demonstrating their decision to lead in all earnestness.

I think if people know that the leader is committed they will be too. As a vice-principal and teacher here, I worked very hard to communicate with people. I worked very hard on provincial committees and regional committees. I have worked hard to upgrade myself and to be effective with my students. I think the people who have taught with me believe I am very committed to working hard. That translates into my leadership in the office now (Kim – 0 – B).

Take Responsibility

Respondents noted that trust was enhanced when they took responsibility for their actions and demonstrate a willingness to apologize for mistakes and account for decisions that resulted in unpleasant consequences for members of the school community (Greenberg, 1993).

I can make mistakes, and I have. I am willing to admit that and go back on decisions if new information comes forward that sheds new light on a situation. They need to see that will happen here (Kari – 0 – A).

Rather then waiting for there to be a problem, I'm trying to build relationships.... I look at stuff and say, "This is how this is coming down and

what can I do to change this?" I look to figure out how I can take a negative situation and make it a positive one (Helen – 0 – B).

By taking responsibility and demonstrating humility and foresight, beginning principals demonstrated both the validity and integrity of their authority by being directly accountable for their actions and decisions. This helped staff members to feel more at ease and trust their new leaders since they could see that their principals would not shift blame or distort the truth in order to save their own professional reputations.

Communication

Communication was a vehicle through which new school leaders and their subordinates created, nurtured and sustained useful exchanges necessary for moving their organizations forward. Effective communication between school leaders and their staff members was characterized by mutual trust, respect, and commitment (Northouse, 2004). For new principals, some of the positive communication behaviours that accounted for their leader emergence included being verbally involved, being informed, seeking others' opinions, initiating new ideas, as well as being fair and flexible in their judgments and discourse (Fisher, 1974).

> It's all about personal skills. Part of that is definitely being able to communicate effectively with your staff (Kim – 0 – B).

> You have to be a good communicator or no one will have confidence in you or take you seriously (Carol – 0 – A).

> Learning to be a good communicator with absolutely everyone you deal with is really important for the role and I mean in written memos and in speaking and talking with families and children and also in your interpersonal communication. It's being available for people, which is part of opening the door for good communication. I think some of them are your natural talents and others are things that you have to hone on the job (Candice – 1 – A).

Research suggests that teachers see principals as trustworthy when their communications are both accurate and forthcoming (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Respondents noted that a major responsibility of being a school leader was to manage the flow of information to all significant parties as part of maintaining organizational efficiency.

> It's my responsibility with the admin team to make sure they are getting information on time. It is a daily thing (Kim – 0 – B).

Aside from passing on vital day-to-day operational information to staff members, beginning principals used communication ideals and processes as a means of fostering trust with their colleagues. New school leaders noted that in order to build trust they were required to reveal

their personal and professional integrity by keeping their word, having respectful conversations and maintaining confidentiality.

Keeping One's Word

According to respondents, being trustworthy meant that they could be relied upon to keep their word or promise to individuals whether verbal or written (Rotter, 1967). To build trust with their subordinates, neophyte principals believed that telling the truth and keeping one's word had to be at the heart of any personal interactions and was most definitely the core of integrity for professional endeavours.

> I have to be honest and I have to follow through on things. In my personal life, a promise made is a promise kept. That's what I do at home with my children and that's what I have to do here. And if I can't keep that promise, it has to be for an extremely good reason that is ultimately out of my control.... Because I believe this and say this, I am very careful to decide what I will promise and I don't make promises easily.... I have to make sure that my partner in admin knows that he, too, cannot make a promise that we can't keep (Kari – 0 – A).

Respondents noted that it was essential that they followed through on promises made and made sure that their actions consistently matched their words:

> I believe this staff feels that my word is good; that, if I am going to say I'll do something, I'll do it. I mean, I might not get the desired results that they or I am looking for but I do follow through on things (Brian – 0 – A).

> We establish certain things at the start of the year and trust is judged on how you are able to follow through on things, matching actions to words and having proper intentions (Charles – 0 – B).

Candice and Daniel also agreed with this principle:

> I think that you have to be supportive of staff and do what you say you are going to do to build trust and confidence with them. You know the expression, "Say what you mean and mean what you say." I think that if you say something you have to stay with it and do it (Candice – 1 – A).

> If I'm going to tell you that I'm going to do something, there is going to be some kind of action. I guess, by doing those kinds of things, you start to get respect from people (Daniel – 1 – A).

Beginning principals realized that, to secure trust with their staffs, it was important to be seen as completely dependable and reliable in supporting their staff members by consistently following through on their intentions and their words.

Conversations

Respondents noted that by listening to what each person had to say, they marked the basis for meaningful social interaction with their colleagues (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). They

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believed that as a leader, it was important to seek first to understand and then to be understood (Covey, 1992, Gabarro, 1987). As such, neophyte principals noted that it was time well spent when they were able to take part in meaningful conversations with staff members.

> You have to be able to talk with people and, as part of that, you also have to be able to listen. A lot of times people don't really want you to solve their problems; they really just want you to listen to them (Helen – 0 – B).

Although school leaders engaged in many brief, yet profitable interactions and communications with staff members during the course of a day, it was the "closed-door, sit down" variety of conversations that new leaders indicated as being most beneficial for building trust with their colleagues.

> I am willing to open the door and listen to anything they have to say. I always say to them, "There are going to be times that I might not agree with you, but I will listen...." You are to be there for the teachers. If the teachers don't feel heard you lose their respect (Patricia – 1 – B).

> It's important that, when teachers come to me with a problem, I take the time to have a meaningful conversation and work together to find a solution (Candice – 1 – A).

In concurrence with this, Patricia and Victor stated:

> I think they do trust me somewhat. I think the fact that they [teachers] do come in here and comfortably sit down and say things to me shows they trust me enough to share things and express themselves (Patricia – 1 – B).

> I said, "You can count on me. I will support you." Sometimes, I might even think, "You're wrong, and that's a conversation we'll have together. That's just going to be between the two of us, but I will be there to support you. You can count on it." Sometimes teachers make mistakes and they need to know that I'm not going to bail out on them (Victor – 0 – A).

When new principals invited teachers to exchange thoughts and ideas freely with mutual respect and where there were no repercussions or reprisals, regardless of what was said, trust was enhanced between participants (Butler, 1991). In these instances, beginning principals felt teachers were more willing to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas, making them valuable resources for principals in leading and improving organizational operations (Zand, 1997).

> I said to this staff, "I want you to challenge me. If you think I'm going down a road that we can't go, I want you to challenge it and I'm going to challenge your decisions in that realm as well" (Carol – 0 – A).

> I don't mind being challenged. I mean, it's the challenge that I think is healthy. Dissension can be very healthy when it's for the right reasons or when it brings to light things that we are doing as a school that maybe we shouldn't

be doing, or for identifying efforts that could be better spent somewhere else (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

This type of openness exhibited by new school leaders where they invited colleagues to express their perceptions and opinions created "reciprocal trust" whereby staff members were confident that neither the information nor their person would be exploited and, as such, they were more readily disposed to trust (Kramer, Brewer & Hanna, 1996).

Trust was also be enhanced when school leaders "monitored" the tone with which people in the building talked with each other as well as when they communicated premised on mutual respect and positive regard (Snowden & Gorton, 2002).

> I also have to remind them that they have to talk positively amongst themselves and in the hallways and in the staff room because I know, last year, the atmosphere was kind of getting stale and negative within the school. They would say negative things about one another. I noticed some staff would back bite each other (Lexi – 0 – B).

Having individual conversations with staff members enabled new principals to build trust by demonstrating that they cared for their colleagues and were willing to genuinely listen to their concerns, perceptions and ideas. By being receptive, respectful and interested, new principals were able to show that they valued their colleagues' contributions and opinions thereby fostering a dialogue for problem solving.

Confidentiality

Research exalts that one of the more painful experiences new school leaders encounter is to have to bite their tongues in the face of criticism from others who do not have all the facts and relevant information (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). In spite of this, respondents noted that, to build trust with their staffs, it was essential to keep any personal disclosures and information given to them in confidence.

> Trust is about confidentiality. I have to be able to maintain confidentiality with my staff in any conversation or situation. I am the person who they come to when they have larger issues that go beyond the classroom walls (Kim – 0 – B).

> They know that they can come to me with an issue and they are not going to hear about it from somebody else. If it was something that was meant to remain between us, that's where it will remain. Confidentiality is key (Brian – 0 – A).

> They know that they can come to me in confidence.... They never have to worry about me sharing any of that information (Lexi – 0 – B).

Victor agreed:

> A lot building professional trust is in what you say and do as a leader, as well as what you don't say. You never share anything that another staff member has told you. That's for them to share. Even if it is something they said that is positive and not necessarily said in confidence. Even if it's a family anecdote or professional anecdote, you don't share it. You have to be very careful. It stays here. It's like a vacuum or a vault (Victor – 0 – A).

When new school leaders took the helm and worked to establish themselves as credible and trustworthy leaders they necessarily refrained from participating in the rumour mill about the people, policies and programs associated with their particular learning communities. However, being lead authorities, they were privy to all sorts of professional information and personal disclosures and, therefore, worked to carefully guide and monitor school communications on both organizational and individual levels.

Beginning principals noted that, in order to foster trust with their staff members, they had to be steadfast in upholding the basic principal of maintaining confidentiality when they were involved in discussions with their colleagues, especially information ascertained ass a result of closed door conversations. By doing so, neophyte principals felt that they could demonstrate competence, respect, personal regard and integrity with their colleagues – four lenses of consideration for discerning trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Rebuilding and Reinforcing Trust

In retrospect, trust was most noticeable in its absence and was perhaps deemed even more valuable by respondents after it had been damaged or destroyed (Baier, 1994). One-year-experienced principals identified the importance of having to restore trust with staff members as part of redoubling their efforts to redress the challenges and issues that compromised the consolidation of trust they faced in their first year.

> The process now is more or less mending fences this year.... We haven't had our (accreditation) data presented to us yet. The biggest thing with this process is trust. We need to trust each other.... We are all in this together. Every bit of data collected is reflective of the whole group. There are some trust issues that we have to bring to the forefront and, as long as we face them and say what is acceptable or not, people can then decide if they want to stay or not (Steven – 1 – B).

> I consider this staff to be a wonderful, hardworking staff and then there are 5% of them where I could work myself to death trying to get them onside and it still wouldn't pay off. They just have their own issues. Some of them have their own issues about unresolved things and about their idea of what a teacher should be. For some teachers, it is about being wrapped up in power and exercising power over kids. It's all they know or are willing to know (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

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Confidence in school leadership was fostered when individual members of the senior leadership teams (SLT) complemented one another in skill strengths and abilities. Staff members' allegiance and followership was further developed and entrenched when members of the administrative team acted in coordination and overtly exhibited belief and trust in each other.

> It's important for [teachers] to see that we [the administration team] are on the same page. It's interesting, the new vice-principal said to me, "The staff picked up on what was going on in the office and they'd play you guys against each other.... You guys probably thought that all your little battles were amongst you guys. Meanwhile, everyone picked up on it".... As an admin team we need to be very careful and we've all agreed for this year that the four of us will work as a cohesive group (Juanita – 1 – A).

For schools, the presence of trust in one school group can metastasize to others (Adams, 2010, 263). Capitalizing on this precept was essential for beginning school leaders who wished to establish and maintain a safe, secure and predictable teaching/learning environment for their schools.

Summary of Building Trust

Trust is almost always bounded and specific, as it is limited to the context and capacity expected of the other person (Solomon & Flores, 2001). Respondents noted that they were required to demonstrate both leadership ability and properly utilize interpersonal relations in order to be deemed trustworthy. The criteria that new principals felt they had to attend to in order to instil and build trust with their colleagues was categorized into two main areas; the ability to carry out their leadership tasks, and being able to demonstrate supportive and authentic behaviours related to developing positive interpersonal relations (figure 5.3).

First, newcomers confirmed that ability was not only having the knowledge and skills about what ought to be done (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), but also the competence to use the knowledge and skills to do the job assigned (Covey, 1992) in ways that were consistent with established practice and congruent with the ethos and culture of their specific organizations (Gabarro, 1987). Using ability to build trust with others meant utilizing both knowledge and skills in a timely manner and on a consistent basis demonstrating both reliability and dependability.

Figure 5.3 – The Criteria for Trust

TRUST = Ability + Interpersonal Relations

Ability

Knowledge/Skills
Competence
Consistency

Interpersonal Dimension

Care for others
- sacrifice self-interest/demonstrate commitment
- have positive regard for others/benevolence
- preserve other's dignity/confidentiality

Character
- make moral/ethical choices
- be authentic

Integrity
- be honest/transparent
- take responsibility/be forthcoming
- show congruence of actions, policies and values (APV)
- follow through on commitments, actions match words

Adapted from *Criteria of Trust* by *Northfield et al., 2008*, as cited in *The CAP Journal*, 2008.

Second, demonstrating trustworthy action in the interpersonal dimension meant

demonstrating a genuine care and concern for others that was selfless and sacrificing. To be

a trustworthy leader, neophyte principals felt it was important that their subordinates believed

that they cared for their best interests, preserved their dignity and maintained confidentiality of

their private information and personal perceptions. Through interpersonal relations, beginning

principals believed their character and integrity was measured on a personal basis. It was

important for new principals to do what was considered to be "the right thing", demonstrate

transparency in their decisions and actions, and be honest and forthcoming in their

deliberations with their colleagues. To build trust with others, neophyte principals had to be

sure to follow through on promises and commitments, to match actions with their words, as

well as to communicate and demonstrate clear congruence between their actions, policies

and values.

Fulfilling all the elements of trust criteria in their entirety is a tall order for any individual

working to build trust with others. However, beginning principals highlighted utilizing

combinations of components in developing the composite list of trust criteria. In attempting to meet the criteria set out for building trust, new principals noted that they had to work with one major goal in mind. Above all else, trust was fostered by their ability to demonstrate genuine concern and support for their staff members. They also realized that trust was something that was cultivated over time and was an integral part of developing relationships with their colleagues. New school leaders acknowledged that, as relationships mature, trust evolved from impressionistic and undifferentiated to more substantive, finely grained and differentiated forms (Northfield et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Previous research indicates that relationships are multifaceted; therefore, a person may trust another in some matters and not in others so that trust and distrust may be simultaneously present in the same relationship (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lewicki et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). This may hold true for early "role-based" trust associated with contractual arrangements. However, beginning principals noted that for more organic and deeply engrained forms of trust emblematic of "correlative" trust, this was/is not necessarily the case. Newcomers acknowledged that there was nothing faster than the speed of trust when it involved deep-seated and mutually respectful relationships where there was understanding, transparency and a sharing of values. Mistakes were forgiven, miscues forgotten and the benefit of the doubt was extended. New school leaders noted that, upon taking up the post, their positive professional reputations and the support offered by former colleagues and close friends on site helped them to expedite acceptance in their leadership and build trust with their staffs.

Beginning principals also indicated that relationships and trust are not static and do not thrive without effort. They confirmed that both are "maintained and deepened only as you actively nurture and build them with regular acts of kindness, consideration, appreciation and service" (Covey, 2004, 164). Respondents specifically identified utilizing elements of "interaction" and "communication" as means for building trust with their staffs (figure 5.4).

Beginning principals identified employing methods of communication and interaction to support their colleagues in improving the teaching/learning process in order to meet the needs of students and to maximize student achievement. When new principals were required

to rebuild and reinforce trust after one year, they focused their efforts in meeting trust criteria for the expressed purpose of supporting their staffs to service the needs of students.

Figure 5.4 – Ways to Build Trust

Support staff Members

Interactions

Purvey/Empower
Model/Engage/Participate
Demonstrate Commitment
Take Responsibility

Communications

Keep one's word
Conversations
Confidentiality

Improve the Teaching/Learning Process

Provide for Needs of Students

Increase/Maximize Student Achievement

New school leaders noted that the communication principles of "keeping one's word" and maintaining "confidentiality" were non-negotiable precepts that set the foundation from which to engender trust. Adhering to these principles demonstrated new leaders' trustworthy characters by showing professional and ethical acuity and the integrity to follow through on stated promises and commitments. In addition, having "conversations" and remaining true to these ideals enabled new principals to feel that they could be seen as individuals who genuinely cared about their staff members by taking the time to carefully listen to and value the opinions and perceptions of their colleagues. Having closed door one-to-one conversations with staff members enabled new principals to develop mutually respectful relationships and demonstrate positive regard for their subordinates.

New school leaders also indicated that "interacting" with their colleagues in different ways for the purpose of supporting them helped them to build trust with their workmates. By "modeling, engaging and participating" new school leaders were able to interact with their staff members in ways that showed that they valued their colleagues' contributions and illustrated their leadership integrity by matching their actions with their values. In addition, beginning principals were able to demonstrate their leadership abilities by taking the initiative to lead by example and to actively model behavioural standards and professional expectations. This served to reveal leader competence and to establish leadership credibility with staff members. By "demonstrating commitment" and "taking responsibility" for their

decisions and actions, neophyte principals were able to show their staffs aspects of leader professionalism, accountability and integrity. This helped them to be viewed as reliable and dependable in the face of fire.

One-year-experienced principals noted that they were able to build trust with their colleagues by demonstrating their competence as school leaders. Professional competence can be defined as "the mastering and successful application of privileged knowledge to instrumental problems of practice" (Johnson, 2010, 23). Accruing knowledge and experience during their first year as principals enabled these new leaders to find out what was expected of them and both what and how to do things. One-year-experienced principals built trust by interacting with their staff for the purposes of being able to "purvey and empower." By providing information and resources for their staff members in a timely manner and by presenting opportunities and encouraging their colleagues to lead task-specific activities, new leaders were able to demonstrate their professional judgment and expertise as school leaders.

Overall, for trust to form, it may not be necessary to have high levels of confidence in all aspects of trust criteria, only in those areas in which there is "critical interdependence" (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). According to beginning principals, their trustworthiness was initially founded in their ability to support their colleagues by demonstrating interpersonal behaviors indicative of care, character and integrity. Over time, however, beginning principals utilized elements of the interpersonal dimension to set the foundation for demonstrating task-related leadership ability and competence as a means for building and maintaining trust.

Chapter Six

Beginning Principals' Roles and Leadership Practice:

Leadership, Management, Tasks and Routines

You can judge a leader by the size of the problem
he[/she] tackles. Other people can cope with the waves.
It's the leader's job to watch the tide.

— Sir Antony Jay

Beginning principals identified a number of important realizations and challenges

associated with their attempts to take on their new roles and enact their leadership practices.

The chapter begins with a brief examination of the dynamics between neophyte principals'

roles and practices and includes discussion identifying organizational and external factors that

influence how new leaders conceptualize their roles and enact their leadership practices.

Analysis begins by focusing on how neophyte principals note the evolving nature of

the principalship role, as well as how it is a distinct change in role and transition for

themselves. Next, analysis focuses on how beginning principals struggled to negotiate a

leadership/management dichotomy and how as newly appointed principals, they were initially

immersed into early administrative and management learning and action.

Analysis then concentrates on how new school leaders defined and identified the

concept of leadership specifically with regards to roles and practices. Then, analysis is

directed at what neophyte principals specifically consider to be typical tasks and routines

generally associated with carrying out their principalship roles. Finally, recognizing that new

principals must deal with their own prevailing liabilities of newness, analysis focuses on

identifying the administrative challenges newcomers face and the strategies they use in

becoming bifocal leaders.

Beginning Principals' Roles and Practice

Beginning principals' role conceptions are a conglomerate of personal factors and

external influences exercised and experienced in a given context (Greenfield, 1995). New

principals' personal histories, values and assumptions along with their skills, knowledge and

attitudes interact with constituents' role perceptions and behavioural expectations in

combination with the dynamics of situational realities to influence the ways individuals enact

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their roles as school leaders and, ultimately, shape the nature and scope of their leadership practice (Cheung & Walker, 2006; Hart, 1993; Matthews & Crow, 2003).

Principals are often captives of their environments in which a number of organizational factors including size of the school system, size of the school, number of grade levels, quality of staff, nature of students and the prevalence of system infused and site-level support mechanisms all serve to influence the principal's definition of his or her work (Goldring, May & Huff, 2010; Salley, MacPherson & Baehr, 1979). New school leaders enact their roles and shape their leadership practice in accordance with constantly evolving educational goals, policies and accountability measures determined by political agents and upper-level educational factions. In most cases, especially within the past decade, accountability measures have been determined by administrators and politicians who are not part of the school, with little, if any input, having been provided by teachers and school-based administrators who worked most closely with the students (Sackney & Mitchell, 2005).

In addition to having to adhere to these externally driven ideals and demands, new school leaders enter a profession that is more dynamic and complex than in years past. "Changing student demographics, the knowledge explosion, the larger web of roles with which the principal interacts, and the pervasive influence of technology are a few features of this complex environment" (Crow, 2006, 310). As a result, the environment in which the principal functions is surrounded by an external world that is becoming less predictable, less orderly and more cluttered for school leaders, creating a much more complicated managerial context within the school as well (Crow, 2004; Louis & Murphy, 1994). Overall, individual, organizational and macro-level factors interact with each other to influence a principal's behaviour (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 2002).

The Chang(ing) Role of the Principalship

In Canada, the principal's role has changed over time, becoming more demanding in response to societal changes and school reform efforts (Sackney, 2007). The principalship is one of the most challenging assignments in the public education system where responsibilities and expectations have continued to be added to the position profile while little has been deleted from the role (Crow, 2007; Murphy, 1994). Principals are expected to be educational change agents, school visionaries, instructional leaders, co-curricular and extra-

curricular coordinators, support service managers, resource and budget allocators, as well as institutional and community liaisons (Davis et al., 2005; Pounder & Merrill, 2001).

In Nova Scotia, according to the Education Act, section 38 (1), "the principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has the overall responsibility for the school, including teachers and other staff" (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2002, 20). Section 38 (2) of the Education Act stipulates that principals are required to carry out fourteen specifically identified roles and functions including performing duties in the following areas; curriculum, student enrolment/attendance, parent/community contact, staff hiring/evaluations, professional development, school council, school advisory council, school improvement planning, annual reports, budgets and finance, school performance accountability, adherence to provincial and school board policies, and cooperation with the superintendent and government departments and agencies [see Appendix E].

Respondents noted that the principal's role has changed in recent times and continued to change even as they begun to experience it. They perceived there to be an increased number of responsibilities and tasks associated with the position compared to previous generations. Respondents argued that society has changed markedly over the past few decades, and, as a result, there has been an increase in the number of issues and demands placed upon education and school leaders.

> I believe the principal's role has changed. There are more issues placed on the educational system today. Twenty-five years ago the main worry for principals was to manage the building. There was very loose curriculum in place at that time. There weren't the same types of social issues that we are faced with now. There are just so many more things that are expected of us from the Department of Education, from the community itself, from the families to try to resolve certain family situations.... More things are downloaded on us. Yet, at the same time, there is more criticism being heaped upon schools from the general public that we're not meeting the educational needs of students (Brian – 0 – A).

> Over the years, I don't think principals get as much respect as they used to. I don't think teachers or anyone in education does. The profession is not selling itself.... There is so much negative publicity out there that you think you are going to be eaten by a parent at any given moment (Patricia – 1 – B).

Respondents noted that the increase in duties and functions related to the principalship brought about by escalating government expectations and accountability has occurred during a time of increased public criticism of education (Bottery, 2007). A related by-product of this has been a change in what has been expected of the principal. In addition

to being building managers and head disciplinarians, principals are being asked to be

instructional and learning leaders in charge of staff professional development, professional

learning communities and school improvement. According to respondents, no longer are

principals considered merely "gate keepers" of traditional educational processes. Schools

and school leaders have been forced to take on a more comprehensive role in resolving and

accommodating family issues in order to more fully support student learning. As a result, the

principal's role has evolved to include being the purveyors and coordinators of an increasing

number of sophisticated programs and services connected with their school communities.

This has meant that principals have had to spend more time organizing and integrating

community services. In addition, there has been an ever increasing focus on teacher

supervision and evaluation which has meant that principals need to spend a significant

amount of time in classrooms observing and formally documenting teachers' practice and

students' learning.

> A principal's role was primarily to be a disciplinarian. Now a major portion is
> being a site-manager with non-academic issues. But we're also expected to
> be curriculum leaders now. We're expected to be participating in all aspects
> of the school and we need professional development ourselves in order to be
> guiding other instructors towards outcomes.... I think that's been a changing
> thing as time goes on (Victor – 0 –A).

According to respondents, no longer was it acceptable for the principal to remain

tucked away, hidden in the office for any significant length of time. Principals are required to

be out and about, actively engaged in the life of the school and the school's community. New

principals figured it was more important than ever to get out of the office and to diplomatically

engage all constituents and connected stakeholders in the surrounding school community.

Respondents noted that as contemporary school leaders they were required to develop and

monitor professional learning communities which meant reaching out to learn needs of their

colleagues and constituents and staying current with the ever-expanding array of available

programs to service the needs of school members.

> When I started teaching it was accepted practice for the principal to be in the
> office all day and there was a certain mystique for staff and students. Kids got
> sent in and were not sure what would happen. I think now you are expected
> to be much more visible. You are expected to be much more diplomatic with
> the greater school community. It's much more of an open door policy than
> even ten years ago. Back when I was in school the principal was not out front
> and centre like today. It was more accepted to be an unknown, hidden
> commodity (Charles – 0 – B).

> Principals used to stay within their four walls and never seemed to be visible within the school or interested in what was going on in the classrooms (Lexi – 0 – B).

The interviewee further added:

> I think that it's different now because we are now moving towards professional learning communities in which the administrator really has to be a big part of that community and can't stay within the four walls.... It's important for me to be caught up on what's out there and what's available to our staff and students (Lexi – 0 – B).

According to respondents, today's principals were required to be more approachable than in years past. They had to shed traditional reputations of having closed confines and distanced personas by actively engaging staff, students and parents so that they can establish and maintain positive and productive school environments. Beginning school leaders viewed the principalship as being much more than a building manager confined to an office exchanging communications, and on occasion, serving final discipline to malfeasants. Today, the principalship requires active and responsive leadership and management on a number of fronts. Most notably, however, beginning principals expressed that high visibility and substantive interaction with staff members, whether fruitful or not, has become the standard for carrying out contemporary principals' leadership and management practices. Although new principals recognized these conditions and expectations to be associated with their posts, they still experienced ambiguity and realizations as they transitioned into their new roles.

The Change (in) Role to the Principalship

Beginning principals experience the "encounter/arrival" and "adjustment" stages of socialization as part of taking on their new leadership roles (Alvy & Robbins, 1998, 2005; Hart, 1991). This is marked by a change in role and extends from the time of entry into the new situation, to the time when an individual reaches substantial adjustment to and acceptance of it (Bridges, 2001). Although this is triggered by an objective event such as the promotion to the principalship, it is subjectively experienced as a transition. These transitions are psychological processes that people go through as they move from an old reality to a new beginning (Bridges, 1991). These psychological processes include increasing perspective and understanding of how they view the responsibilities and nuances of their new roles.

Now, as principal, I see the broader scope of things (Charles – 0 – B).

> As a leader-manager, you have to see things in more of a global sense. And that there are times that you're going to have to make tough decisions for the sake of managing things that you know maybe not everyone is going to like (Brian – 0 – A).

> Ultimately, responsibilities drop in my lap and I have to step up and say it's my responsibility. I have to take ownership of what's going on here and move on (Kari – 0 – A).

Newly appointed principals noted having to gain an aggregate school perspective as part of being expected to deal with large scale organizational issues; something that required them to coordinate people and processes, embrace forward thinking, problem-solve and to differentiate the relative urgency of concerns and matters that were constantly presented to them.

> I have to know my entire staff and I would want to know all my students. I need to know the strengths of as many of those people as I can.... I need to know where they perceive their own strengths; where they work well together in particular teams and where there is friction (Kari – 0 – A).

> I find myself working as a coordinator in trying to keep everything running smoothly, not only the maintenance of the school but coordinating and encouraging the staff too (Lexi – 0 – B).

Moving away from interacting primarily with students to dealing largely with adults was another role change realization experienced by newly appointed principals:

> I'm dealing with a lot of folks who don't feel comfortable making some decisions and will come to me with the big ones, small ones and silly ones. And, in many ways, they are usually one of two flavours; "Do I have your permission?" is one and, "I can understand that," is the other.... The other thing that knocks a lot on my door and takes a lot of mental and other energy is the same kind of request but really it is teachers asking, "Am I able to curry your favour and get a few little extras out of it?" The body politic, that's taking my time right now (Kari – 0 – A).

> As a classroom teacher, you often look at things within your own room and bring things to the administration that you think are vital and should be acted on somewhat quickly. I now see that administrators have a whole bunch of teachers, classrooms and issues to attend to and that not all of them are necessarily the same or as urgent (Brian – 0 – A).

It was a noticeable shift and change in role even for those transitioning from the vice-principalship. Moving from the middle space of educational leadership where tasks are assigned by the principal to becoming the one in charge opened the door to the accountability and realities of being first authority and having full responsibility for school affairs.

> It's definitely a change. When I was a vice-principal, I had certain tasks and I did them and that was it. It has been different this year working with the vice-principal next door and asking her to do things for me. It is hard for me to let things go sometimes (Charles – 0 – B).

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> Even though I was in the building as a vice-principal, I didn't understand it the way you need to understand it as a principal. I was working with the junior high staff. The high school staff was not a known quantity for me (Juanita – 1 – A).

> It has been a huge shift. It's the amount of time that I spend on different things. I feel like I have my hand in a whole lot of different places, where when I was vice-principal I focused mainly on attendance, behaviour and communication in the junior high.... Now, my main role is to facilitate communication through the whole building (Kim – 0 – B).

The ability to integrate a variety of role orientations was a necessary element for beginning school leaders (Crow, 2006; Hallinger, 1992). However, traditionally, the principal's first responsibility has been to harness the unpredictability of the school community and maintain an orderly learning environment (Elmore, 2000).

> Oh, the many roles.... My role right down to the basement level is that I need to provide a safe, welcoming and engaging learning environment for every child who comes through that door, for every staff member who comes through that door, and, for all of the family members and community members that we can, in order to be involved with and connect with those children (Kari – 0 – A).

> I also think that [my] role is to be a liaison with the community. It's my job to make people feel welcome in this building (Carol – 0 – A).

According to respondents, integrating both stabilization and enhancement activities for the teaching/learning process were essential elements of the principalship role (Morris et al., 1984). They believed that by carefully managing information and programs, as well as tending to composite administrative tasks, teachers were freed to maintain their foci on teaching and creating optimal learning conditions.

> In reality, for me, you have to be on top of the managerial stuff so it doesn't filter down to the teachers. You want them to have as little paperwork as possible. A lot of times they are filling out papers and doing all of the work and that takes time, the less time they are planning for kids (Charles – 0 – B).

Newly appointed principals identified embracing the totality of their newfound authority by acknowledging their responsibility for leading the entire organization and fulfilling the role of prime mover and motivator for their colleagues. They also realized that were expected to be both boundary spanners and buffers between various groups inside and outside their schools. As boundary spanners, their new role was to maintain organizational stability by detecting information about changes in the environment and maintain harmony between the school and the external community, while as buffers they were expected to protect the technical core of the school from external threats (Hoy & Miskel, 2005).

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My role is to create a situation where the teachers can do their job and they can teach kids and not have to worry about a lot of the other stuff that goes on, be it forms, budgets, irate parents. I would want to be the buffer zone between a parent and a teacher if there is going to be confrontation, just to support learning within the school and to make sure this is a good place to learn and a good place to be (Charles – 0 – B).

One-year-experienced principals identified how the change in role for them was realized in terms of gaining a deeper appreciation and understanding of the overall scope and nature of the job. Although they recognized the evolving nature and growing complexity of the principalship, upon experiencing the position, respondents realized the post was more involved and farther reaching than they first assumed.

I find there is a lot more than I thought plus, you know second day on the job, I was told to "F-off" on the phone and I mean you don't get that picture of the principal as a teacher.... When I was a teacher, I didn't see that the job (principalship) is never done and that it's not something that you can walk away from (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

I didn't realize that there were so many facets to this position. It's not just dealing with staff and kids and parents. It's an endless number of outside agencies and groups that want a piece of you (Daniel – 1 – A).

I'm a plant supervisor too and yeah, oh, that's been a joke. We have a renovation that's going on here that just made me almost pull my hair out.... I walk out here everyday and I am energized by kids. When I solely deal with the children in this building, even the staff, it's a great place to be (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Respondents' role realizations indicated a general sense of being overwhelmed by the multivariate, time intensive demands being thrown at them on a daily basis. Essentially, beginning principals were constantly involved in a non-stop effort to quickly and judiciously solve a wide variety of school related problems as they occurred. As noted, for many, this was something realized only after taking on the post.

I think if someone had told me about what goes into the job, I would have said, "Yeah, yeah, I know all this." But until you actually are in the trenches doing the job, I don't think anybody can understand how demanding it is and how much you are constantly having things fired at you.... It's all problem-solving whether it's with a kid or the water last night; I was plunging the toilet and I was thinking, "I have three degrees and I've got the rubber gloves on" (Juanita – 1 – A).

The principalship can be a very lonely place...so much that happens behind closed doors that affects you personally... it eats so much of your time.... Although teaching is a very busy job, I would finish at some point in time.... I'm never done as principal (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Beginning school leaders faced having to deal with complex issues and render important decisions by virtue of the authority and responsibilities vested in the principalship.

As a result, some reported experiencing workplace isolation and loneliness resulting from their attempts to deal with the complexities and subtleties involved in problem solving school related issues largely by themselves and in closed quarters (Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Depending on the situations and the issues they experienced, beginning principals expressed that the totality of their leadership roles included aspects of leadership and management practices that were often executed in concert and in competition with each other.

The Leadership-Management Dichotomy

New school leaders entered the position faced with having to complete required tasks and execute specific actions in two major areas; leadership and management. The central function of management is to produce order and consistency, whereas leadership is primarily concerned with producing change and movement (Kotter, 1990a). To manage means to accomplish activities and master routines, while to lead means to influence others and create visions for change (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). In simplistic terms, "managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing" (221). Management seeks to provide order and stability in an organization by attending to aspects of planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and problem solving, whereas leadership endeavours to seek adaptive and constructive change by establishing direction, aligning people and motivating and inspiring participants (Kotter, 1990a).

> I think there is a difference between leadership and management. To me managerial stuff is more organizationally related parts of the job.... Leadership is more about interpersonal skills; being out there, being interactive and acting credible (Charles – 0 – B).

Although leadership and management can be recognized as distinct constructs (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) they are not mutually exclusive domains. The principal is required to harmonize the perceived dichotomy between administration and leadership as a matter of daily course as there is no easy resolution to the conflict between the demands of efficient administration and purposeful leadership (Shakotko, 2005).

> I think that leadership and management are different but I don't think that they are not connected (Carol – 0 – A).

> The leadership-management mix for me so far has been learning all the office routines and learning the policies behind all the things that are popping up while making sure that I am out there with the staff and the students (Victor – 0 – A).

New principals often enacted both leadership and management tactics when dealing with the multitude of responsibilities attached to their roles. Respondents acknowledged that leadership and management involves interactive processes between participants and, in most cases, this entailed interactions between individuals with differing levels of responsibility and authority (Jago, 1982). Also, both constructs required working with people and involved elements of influence which were concerned with goal achievement (Northouse, 2004). In effect, new principals noted that they used leadership and management in combination to motivate and organize followers to accomplish group goals.

However, a leader is not necessarily a manager and a manager does not necessarily make a leader. To these ends, new principals were faced with having to both lead and manage as best they could in order to accomplish organizational goals.

> I probably go from managing to leading to managing to whatever I need to do. I really don't think twice about it. I would have to say that my leadership and my management work together depending on the moment (Lexi – 0 – B).

> I see the role as more of a manager of the building and someone who has to have pretty adept leadership skills and being able to read people and listen to look at things from a global perspective (Brian – 0 – A).

> In order to be a good leader you have to know how to "manage" people and resources. You also have to be an effective "leader" for people in that sense of the word too (Kim – 0 – B).

One-year-experienced principals noted the need to combine leadership and management tactics as part of fulfilling their administrative roles. However, their experience in the position brought to light the preponderance of administrative and management issues related to leading their schools.

> I try to manage situations and lead people (Patricia – 1 – B).

> I think it's a combination of leadership and trying to manage all the little things.... It's trying to lead while managing. At times, it's overwhelming between the fax machines, phone calls and people at the door and trying to get out there to support teachers (Daniel – 1 – A).

> I think this year I am more efficient with office work and responding to emails. Now it's about meshing in more leadership (Candice – 1 – A).

In their attempts to embrace the mantle of school leadership, respondents noted how they had to assume multiple roles that combined both leadership and managerial elements. In addition, neophyte principals identified having to make choices about where their time and attention would be best spent as part of being able to proficiently integrate the two.

Early Immersion into Management and Administrative Learning

Newly appointed principals indicated that they had to immerse themselves into the rapid fire of learning school operations and organizational procedures and protocols whilst also attending to managerial and administrative tasks associated with carrying out school functions and routines for the start of the school year.

> Over the course of the last two months, since July, it has been very much a managerial job; scheduling and responding to school board emails and info, while at the same time knowing that I will have to be the front line between all of that work and the teachers for the year.... In terms of managerial stuff in the office... it has been a lot of organizing and learning where stuff is; where files are and who to call and when (Charles – 0 – B).

> I'm in the office about 50-60% of my day. It's a lot. This month I've been pretty much a manager. I have a new person in the office. I have a new vice-principal joining me on staff. I needed to know how this office worked.... So, this month has been management (Kari – 0 – A).

Managing school operations required new leaders to first organize their work space and gain quick insight into office administrative protocol. In addition, newly appointed principals had to learn the school's daily routine and respond to staff expectations concerning scheduling activities and managing school programs.

> I'm very involved with the management stuff because I'm new and I have to learn it all... just in terms of the organization of the day, the scheduling, the bells to begin, dismissal bells and what all that means in terms of how kids respond to it.... People have expectations of me in terms of the management and scheduling (Carol – 0 – A).

In addition to diagnosing and learning school operations from the standpoint of being lead authority, new principals also had to take immediate steps to learn and monitor curriculum and instructional processes as part of maintaining and promoting the educational integrity of the school's teaching and learning program.

> People talk about a learning curve when you take on a position. There is no curve at this point. Everything is moving straight up. I am still learning each and every day and that will probably happen at least for this first year, because everything is fairly brand new (Brian – 0 – A).

> I certainly have to be up on the Department of Education's curriculum outcomes for each and every subject.... We are bound by contract to teach what's expected from the Department of Education (Lexi – 0 – B).

In the midst of learning to manage people and programs for the start of the year, newly appointed principals were also called upon to deal with and respond to the onslaught of email and paperwork issued by their school boards:

> I spend most of my time doing emails and phone calls (Helen – 0 – B).

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> I spend a lot of time dealing with staff and things that always have to be managed on a daily basis. There are a truckload of forms that come out of here all of the time and they have to be done (Charles – O – B).

> I mean holy moly! They send paper left, right, and centre.... It's the Department of Education. You've got your [school] board office, advertising companies; people left, right, and centre who are bombarding the school.... Going through the email is yet another thing (Lexi – O – B).

> I think I had an idea that it would be kind of a little bit of everything. I have a lot of email though from the board (Kim – O – B).

The interviewee further added how she was required to immediately manage budgets and allocate funds according to prescribed school board time-lines and expectations:

> As a manager, from the financial aspect of it, managing the budgets is a priority. Making sure that people have their needs met; budgeting for the shops, the labs, the gym and the book budget. Managing and making sure that we have money spent in the designated areas (Kim – O – B).

Immediately, newcomers where faced with having to employ efficient time management practices in order organize and solidify important funding information needed by their educational jurisdictions.

> Time management is a major issue because of all the things that are coming at you and trying to stay on top of things to make sure things are flowing smoothly, especially during September.... It's dealing with the demands from the school board – data that they want as a wrap up for the Department of Education... we have to be very, very precise on numbers and specific about grade level, age level and gender (Brian – O – A).

Respondents felt that they had to sacrifice other leadership elements associated with the job in order to learn about the information and address the demands issued through communications from their school boards.

> Email messages and notes, paperwork kind of stuff.... This is what I have to do right now.... I can't get to the classrooms as much as I'd like, but I anticipate next month I'll have more time (Carol – O – A).

In some cases, new principals were required to complete administrative tasks associated with managing staff information.

> Right now, everyday, I have to manage the staff attendance information in terms of who is here and how many days they have sick time and inputting appropriate codes to the school board. It's a lot of administrative stuff (Kim – O – B).

Taking on the principalship and being bombarded with responsibilities while learning new tasks and routines left newly appointed principals feeling overwhelmed and in a constant state of thinking that they forget to do something.

I knew that much of my time was going to be involved as site manager...
there haven't been many surprises. I guess my biggest concern is that I am
forgetting something. I'm always looking over my shoulder thinking I have
missed a date or something (Victor – 0 –A).

At times I'm feeling overwhelmed. There are not enough hours, I'm on the
run. I need a new pair of sneakers because I've worn this pair out. I'm just
running every day (Brain – 0 – A).

According to newly appointed principals, the first days of their tenure were dominated

by managerial and administrative learning and execution which required them to come to

grips with differentiating and utilizing specific technical skills associated with school

leadership.

Leadership

Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth

(Burns, 1978, 2). Educational researchers have grappled with defining the concept of

leadership and continue to struggle to find common ground on any agreed upon set of factors.

Traditional notions of leadership have often been equated with the power, responsibilities and

subsequent actions of those individuals afforded the opportunity to be in a position of

authority. More contemporary perspectives and analyses of leadership view it to be directly

related to the influence and actions of an individual, regardless of one's position or authority,

that help others to accomplish group goals. From an educational standpoint, the

"schoolhouse" definition and practice of leadership continues to evolve alongside corporate

models as the field invents itself (Sergiovanni, 1996) and is mainly concerned with direction

and influence. In school settings, leadership is recognized as "those persons, occupying

various roles in the school, who work with others to provide direction and who exert influence

on persons and things in order to achieve the school's goals" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, 9).

School leaders and students of educational leadership have emphasized the use of three

relevant skills for leading educational processes: technical, conceptual, and human (Hess,

2003).

Technical skills are the knowledge and tools that a leader in a given role
needs to employ – ranging from budget management to assembling curricula.
Conceptual skills refer to the ability to formulate and communicate a vision.
Human skills are those needed to establish expectations and then mentor,
lead, inspire, and discipline subordinates so that they achieve them (4).

Respondents viewed "leadership" in terms of taking action to support their staff

members in fulfilling their school's educational mandates. They specifically identified

"leadership practices" to be those actions focused primarily in the use of conceptual and human skills directly related to achieving goals in the following areas; organizational vision and goals, instructional leadership, leadership development, staff welfare, and resource acquisition and support.

Vision and Goals

One of the salient features in the data was beginning principals' understanding of the need to take action to create and articulate a vision for their respective schools. This included focusing organizational goals towards doing what was best for students.

> I think I lead by working together with staff to create a vision so that everyone has a voice here and that we come to some agreement about what we want in our building. I think, ultimately, the goal is about students and learning and it's not just academic, but students' lives and interests and social lives and their learning lives (Carol – 0 – A).

> Education is about teaching and learning both for the students and the teachers. The reason why we are here is because of the students.... What we're trying to do is help them learn through what we perceive what the Department of Education, through the parents and through society in general, identify as being important information and skills for them to know. But also, we have flexibility so teachers and groups of teachers are able to share a vision of what direction they want to go. And it's my role as principal to assist them in moving in that direction (Brian – 0 – A).

One-year-experienced principals noted that in order to implement and follow through on their schools' visions and educational goals it was necessary to get involved and lead the process by making decisions focused on students' needs:

> I find, as the school leader, if I want it to move forward, I have to lead by example and really get involved in it. It won't work if it's me saying, "This is our vision and now you guys go do it" (Amber – 1 – B).

> No matter what happens... it's what's best for the kids first. We can get bogged down on questions about how and with what, but we have to do what's best for the kids (Candice – 1 – A).

Beginning principals believed they demonstrated leadership when they worked to develop a well-integrated school vision aimed at adopting and following a consistent problem solving strategy useful for tackling the most important issues confronting them in their particular organizations (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002).

Instructional Leadership

Providing instructional leadership called for beginning school leaders to take time from their traditional attention on management tasks to focus on managing the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 1999). This included interacting and communicating with school

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members for the purposes of focusing change goals in the areas of curriculum, instruction, teacher pedagogy, and teachers' performance.

> I have to make sure that our school provides optimum conditions to improve student learning. It's supporting staff through professional development… to bring us to the point where we are a professional learning community with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. It is a huge umbrella: student discipline falls underneath that, staff PD, improving practices, and assessment. They all connect to three basic questions: 1) What do we want kids to learn? 2) How are we going to know if they've learned it? and, 3) What are we going to do when they are not learning? (Elizabeth – 1 – B)

> The leadership part comes in when I'm planning professional development and when I'm working with staff (Juanita – 1 – A).

New principals focused professional development on asking and answering the right questions geared towards servicing student learning. This included being a curriculum leader:

> Leadership is about being a strong curriculum leader. It's making sure that people in all the different curriculum areas are receiving professional development, support in the classrooms and ensuring that the new people and the term staff are evaluated appropriately. That is done through what we call the PPP (Personal Performance Program). There is a system; procedures from the [school] board that we have to follow (Kim – 0 – B).

In their attempts to support their teachers in maximizing student learning, respondents utilized approaches and mechanisms of instructional leadership that promoted a "culture of learning" by creating what they considered to be the "the right kinds of professional development opportunities" (Fink & Resnick, 2001, 599).

> Teachers need to have opportunities to develop professionally, so we are doing our own professional portfolios. And, with the performance appraisal program, the Personal Performance Program, the PPP program it's called, we have a goal each. And, with various strategies throughout the year we are trying to achieve these goals (Lexi – 0 – B).

> We will do professional learning plans for everyone. And that will be wonderful for me because it aligns to the performance appraisals that I am going to be required to do anyway on all the staff. So, it's the layering of activities and responsibilities (Kari – 0 – A).

As instructional leaders, new principals made overt their intentions to improve the teaching and learning program and demonstrated skills in fostering best practices by classroom teachers by creating a culture of respect and professional support (Daresh, 2010), as well as aligned professional development goals with school improvement initiatives. As part of providing instructional leadership for their schools, new principals identified the importance of

visiting classrooms, making observations, writing performance evaluations and having critical

conversations with teachers about instructional techniques and students' needs.

> As a teacher leader, I want to be visible in classrooms and I want what we document for performance appraisals to be the best it can be so it is an accurate reflection of the learning involved as a teacher (Carol – 0 – A).

> A principal is a teacher leader. And if you're not doing the work with teachers you're absenting yourself from a real key piece of the work that you'd need to do with teachers in terms of the educational leadership role... there has to be that element there to springboard instructional and teaching conversations (Kari – 0 – A).

The importance of principals serving as leaders of learning has been well documented

and is accepted as a goal to improving educational practice (Printy, Marks & Bowers, 2009;

Waters et al., 2003). Beginning principals attempted to build instructional coherence and

clarity around instruction as part of providing leadership for their schools. This was not easy

for them however, as "winning staff acceptance of a common framework is often seen as an

overwhelming task, because it requires continuing agreement, cooperation, and training on

the part of both old and new staff" (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth & Bryk, 2001, 314).

Leadership Development

Beginning principals utilized a "distributed' leadership approach directed at creating

diverse workforce roles by delegating the responsibility and accountability for tasks and

projects (Forrester & Gunter, 2010).

> Leadership isn't provided by a title. While I might be the principal, I might not be the leader in the school for certain things. I need to acknowledge that and promote the other leadership skills that I have around me (Kari – 0 – A).

Respondents viewed leadership was as an "action" and not something prescribed to one's

position or authority. It was something which could be brought to bear through experience

and the tacit knowledge of colleagues:

> I feel that my job as a leader is to help people find their strengths. I am working with people who have thirty years of experience. They have a lot more knowledge than I, so I have to try to empower them and get them to help me (Amber – 1 – B).

> I think one of my roles is to be a professional leader; to encourage leadership, small group and teamwork. We are doing accreditation in this school. I need to keep the teams functioning (Patricia – 1 – B).

Beginning principals encouraged their colleagues to develop their own leadership capabilities

as a means of increasing the overall leadership capacity of their schools. They likely

embraced the invitation of distributing leadership simply because the job was too big for any one person to effectively manage (Forrester & Gunter, 2010).

Staff Welfare

One-year-experienced principals identified the importance of utilizing interpersonal skills to attend to aspects of teacher welfare as a defining feature of their leadership. This included making the choice to take the necessary time to meet personally with staff members to problem solve professional matters and provide moral support for personal issues.

> We have a couple of teachers that have personal things that are going on right now. It's taking the time to be there for them. That to me is more important; people first and paperwork second (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

> It's the counseling that I have to do for staff. I still marvel at how much adults still need guidance. It's usually dealing with silly things that you would think are common sense where [teachers] will come to me and say, "I don't know what to do in this situation." And, you know what I've learned? They don't always need me to act. Sometimes they just need to vent (Juanita – 1 – A).

Patricia differentiates between what it means to act as a traditional manager and what she does instead to be a leader for her staff:

> Sometimes, I deal with teachers who are having personal issues and who are, for whatever reason, about to break down because they have too much on their plates.... I see a manager as somebody who would be very cut and dry and enforce deadlines. As a leader, I try to help my staff with their issues (Patricia – 1 – B).

Overall, one-year-experienced principals emphasized an "inclusive" leadership approach where personal and professional relationships were deemed crucial for the organization and in which they were required to be supported and fortified by mutual exchanges, understanding and trust (Forrester & Gunter, 2010).

Resource Support

Another area of support neophyte principals viewed as an integral part of leadership was resource acquisition. Over the course of the school year, it was important for new school leaders to be able to understand the unique needs of their local school contexts and to canvass for and acquire suitable resources:

> In terms of my overall leadership, we were in a situation where we needed a little more staffing last year and I appealed to the [school] board and was successful in getting additional staffing. I've been successful in increasing the amount of EAs (educational assistants) we have at this school. I've been successful in achieving two or three different grants to help support our breakfast program and I recently got a grant to improve the [running] trail just outside the school that I'm going to have to go out with my "whipper snipper" and fix. I think all those

examples are sort of an indication that I have shown some leadership abilities (Daniel – 1 – A).

Overall, beginning principals identified "leadership" as taking charge by utilizing a variety of leadership designs and approaches to personally interact with staff members for the purposes of inspiring, directing, encouraging and supporting their colleagues to harness and hone the skills necessary to meet the needs of students.

Beginning Principals' Tasks and Routines

Titles and intentions aside, the defining nature of lived reality for most any professional endeavour is marked by what an individual does and partakes in on a day-to-day basis. For new principals, this involves participating in and executing a number of technical and socially related tasks and routines associated with contemporary school leadership. Usually, this means having to execute a number of overlapping managerial and leadership tasks for the purposes of maximizing teacher performance and student achievement (Davis et al., 2005). Sometimes, school leaders are required to take on duties normally thought to be beyond the normal scope of responsibilities just to keep the organization moving forward:

> I was hired to lead the school; to develop programs, to work one-on-one with teachers, our youth and the community, not to be picking up garbage, not to be calling three hours a day for substitutes, not to be filing copious pieces of paper, not to be organizing buses for trips. Some of that administrative stuff is secretarial, but so far most of it sits on this side of the fence (Max – 1 – A).

Although school leaders hold significant legitimate authority to enact their particular brand of leadership, much of what they do on a daily basis is responding to immediate organizational needs. This necessarily includes taking quick and decisive action to efficiently address the many incessant wants and requests of superiors, staff members and school community constituents. A principal's day often consists of few self-initiated tasks, many activities of short duration, and an unpredictable flow of work with an emphasis on specific, concrete, and immediately pressing priorities (Goldring et al., 2008; Pitner, 1986). As such, for most school leaders, their initial interactions and professional dealings are largely determined by others, or, at least, are executed in direct response to others. In fact, up to forty percent of principals' daily work can be taken up by spontaneous meetings and unplanned activities not entirely within their control (Martinko & Gardner, 1990).

> I walked in this morning saying, "Okay, today is Monday, I wonder what will happen today?" That is just kind of how it goes. There is nothing that has to

be for sure. Some things are planned, but it's the other things that pop up that you spend your time on (Helen – 0 – B).

Most of my time is spent dealing with whatever pops up. It depends on the day because one discipline issue can take me the whole day... It's like putting out little fires. Sometimes resolving these incidents will take the whole day and sometimes it runs so smoothly in here that I am able to get some of the management stuff done... it all depends on the day; and you never know (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Upon entering the fray, new school leaders are expected to know and perform leadership and management tasks in accordance with ascribed professional standards (Hess, 2003). In addition, new principals are often asked to perform these tasks in line with previously established organizational processes and routines amenable with site specific expectations of the school communities in which they work (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Gabarro, 1987; Mintzberg, 1973). Often times, principals' leadership activities are determined by the organizational nature and leadership challenges characteristic of the contexts in which they are immersed including the expectations, needs and demands of site members.

The combination of beginning principals' knowledge, skills and dispositions in concert with their actual school site and associated contextual challenges influenced the tasks and routines that they took part in on a daily basis (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Salley et al., 1979).

There are all kinds of little things. I dealt today with a child in our primary class who has a wheel chair and we needed more equipment for him.... I have a child who's struggling in terms of family issues so I spent some time trying to figure out what I'm supposed to do with her. We have had a situation where a child told a teacher that he was using drugs a lot and who wanted to stop and so I spent some time recently with Drug and Addiction Services and trying to get some of those people online in order to get this child some help (Helen – 0 – B).

Before I could finish the emails, a staff member came in and I had to take a two hour session with him. I missed visiting a teacher's class again. I'm torn all of the time. The teacher knew I was with someone. I would say mental health before visiting a class (Patricia – 1 – B).

Respondents made choices on how to allocate their time depending on the challenges presented to them. Contingency theories of leadership emphasize the role that context plays in leadership and the influence of school conditions on principals' practices (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Proactive and responsive leaders readily adapt their leadership style to meet the demands of the environment (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). However, this was difficult for new school leaders as they noted the immediate and ongoing challenge of responding to the "predictable unpredictability" of the job:

> For most days I am able to do what I need to do to keep this school running and operating successfully. There are some crazy days as you know you never know how one day is going lead into the next. Usually, Thursday is our crazy day in which we have a lot of incidents happen whether they are on the playground, visitors coming in, telephones ringing off the wall, emails needing to be returned or paperwork up the ying-yang (Lexi – 0 – B).

The degree to which an environment is structured and predictable gives a leader a feeling of ease and competence in being able to deal with and contribute to the outcome of the task and the group process (Fiedler, 1993). According to respondents, the job was dynamic and engaging, yet, much of the time, frustrating and overwhelming. Unfortunately, neophyte principals found that the only real certainty in their jobs was the fragmented and fluid nature of the position. They noted that the nature of their work was characterized by a burdensome managerial and administrative workload and that they had to constantly make attempts to overcome this predicament in order to secure enough time to integrate sufficient leadership and support for the teaching/learning program and school improvement.

Challenges

The sheer volume of activities involved in learning the principalship while on the job created pressure and stress for newcomers (Daresh & Playko, 1992) as they had to figure out what to do, how to do it, and when to act.

> I have to constantly revisit our purpose and what we're doing because it is bowled over by everything else that happens (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

> I think there would have been a time when I would have said that the organizational, the structural and the routine things were most important. But now I would say that they are only a foundational piece that allows you to spring forward to do what's really needed. Otherwise you're wallowing in the paper and the quick. You're stuck in the rapid, ready, and the emergent and you're not doing what you think is your vision (Kari – 0 – A).

In attempts to combat role ambiguity and prevent themselves from being overrun with commitments, neophyte principals constantly revisited their overarching purposes for action and constantly focused their work efforts to align with "why" they were doing what they were doing (Waters et al., 2003).

Administrative Workload

Newly appointed principals noted that dealing with the non-stop email communications and paperwork from their school boards prevented them from getting out enough to visit classrooms and interact with school members.

You can easily get stuck in the paperwork and all the quickly emerging situations. It's dealing with whatever is coming at you and all the things that other people are declaring important. When this happens, you're not moving forward with the long stretch (Kari – 0 – A).

I check my email non-stop. There is a lot of communication that comes down through my email and I have to make sure that everyone who needs info gets it. I have to get it to them on time and a lot of it revolves around that computer (Kim – 0 – B).

There is never an email that doesn't expect you to do something. And a lot of the times the emails expect that you did the something yesterday... you're supposed to respond in a matter of two minutes... usually someone from central (school board) office (Helen – 0 – B).

Helen further added:

I like to feel like I'm doing something for someone. Sometimes, when you're sitting in here and you're pushing papers around, you don't feel like you're actually being helpful in any way.... I have very little time to spend it on what I actually should be spending it on – kids; and making sure the kids are learning (Helen – 0 – B).

One-year-experienced principals echoed strongly the sentiments of newly appointed

principals:

The one thing that I feel out of control on is that "God forsaken in-basket." The paperwork is astounding and I can't get a grip on it. I go to principals meetings and people are complaining bitterly about it. The e-mails; they send you e-mails, then hardcopies. They change the date and send it all over again. You wonder if it ever ends (Patricia – 1 – B).

The bureaucracy and the in/out tray and all that, it's massive. It's a huge battle. It's a conflict everyday. The internal battle; everyone recognizes this... they need to do something to give us more time to be instructional leaders (Juanita – 1 – A).

I always try to make sure that kids come first and paper comes second. But that's sometimes not the reality. I'm behind constantly. I know as a new principal I should have my paperwork done two weeks in advance to show them I am organized and on track, but I don't (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Respondents' greatest source of frustration was managing the time demands

associated with dealing with bureaucracy including having to fill out large quantities of

paperwork and respond judiciously to the numerous requests and communications

downloaded from school board and government level jurisdictions. Responding to the

administrative workload and external demands and priorities has pressured role orientations

of beginning principals toward becoming managers rather than instructional leaders (Portin,

Shen & Williams, 1998).

Insufficient Time for Instructional Leadership

Although newly appointed principals began to experience difficulty in finding time to provide instructional leadership for their staff members, it was the one-year-experienced principals who identified being unable to follow through on their intentions to be learning leaders over an entire year.

> They say they want us to be instructional leaders but there is no change in what our requirements are in terms of paperwork. There is disconnect between their actions and their words... because you're building managers, you're personnel directors, you're union people, you're the stewards, you're everything. As a result, instructional leadership ends up being at the bottom of the list (Juanita – 1 – A).

One-year-experienced principals experienced a multiplicity of roles, responsibilities and duties which pulled them away from being instructional leaders.

> It just all got buried behind the desk.... I am constantly questioning myself.... I don't get out to see the teachers as often as I need to...but you need two people on this job.... I am still struggling. I know what our job is but, to be a leader, you need to be out there and I am not out there enough right now (Patricia – 1 – B).

> I guess when I go into a classroom there are ten other things that are waiting for me and last year I probably was more inclined to spend only a few minutes visiting a classroom and then get out because I knew I had something else that I had to do.... I wanted to be in the classrooms... I didn't get as much done as I had hoped (Daniel – 1 – A).

Upon reflecting on last year's events and even into his second year of the principalship, Steven commented as to why he was unable to commit to instructional leadership to any significant degree:

> Last year, I should have been be more concerned with directly meeting students' needs and determining what instructional strategies teachers needed to use.... I was trying to catch up on my paperwork while trying to support the teachers. I should be asking myself, "What is it they need to for instructional strategies?" instead of, "What do they need today? (Steven – 1 – B)

Being a competent instructional leader requires principals to have the ability to recognize problems, as well as to select and direct attention to the right targets for improvement (Elmore, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000b). Ultimately, however, perhaps the most precious commodity for beginning principals in being able to provide instructional leadership was time:

> I feel like I should be present to them, listen to them, understand their worries and control their workload when I can. I feel that it is my duty. If I was going to change anything at the moment, then paperwork has to slow down and I have to get out there again (Patricia – 1 – B).

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> Oh gosh, they (the school board) need to have building managers to help us (Juanita – 1 – A).

> If there is one thing I wish I had is more time... I have to do teacher supervision. I didn't do last years (Steven – 1 – B).

Candice concurred with the need for more time for instructional leadership:

> I knew that management and paperwork would be parts of my role and I knew that they would be time consuming.... The thing that I felt that I didn't do well enough last year was getting into classrooms enough to be that instructional leader and the other thing was to be doing performance appraisals.... I'm hopeful that this year I will have more time to go to classrooms and get better organized with my performance appraisals (Candice – 1 – A).

Unfortunately, one-year-experienced principals noted that having to learn their craft and sort through and respond to a variety of managerial demands and an abundance of administrative tasks during the throes of their first year left little time for supporting and supervising teachers' practice; something they all figured they were hired to do in the first place. In reality, competing managerial demands and external expectations and pressures limited the amount of time even the most committed and well-intentioned beginning principal could give to instructional leadership (Pounder & Merrill, 2001).

Pressure, Doubt and Fall-Out

Aside from completing office related administrative work and communicating with external agents and authorities, the daily flow of action for newcomers, most often included engaging in brief, spontaneous, face to face, verbal interactions with colleagues. Everyday, respondents felt the pressure of having to constantly deal with the competing demands and responsibilities of the job. They felt torn between expeditiously dealing with the downloaded tasks and expectations of external drivers, while at the same time pressured to deal with the demands of internal drivers including attending to immediate managerial tasks and staff needs. The constant need to manoeuvre in order to subdue these forces resulted in newcomers having to negotiate the "unrelenting pace" of the job (Mintzberg, 1973).

> Last year I had no idea and I thought, "Oh my God, I've got to get those ten things done and I know there are going to be ten more things the next day, or in the next ten minutes." I was under the pressure of trying to do everything (Daniel – 1 – A).

> There are days where I wonder about surviving this job. I have a forty-minute drive home everyday and I do a lot of soul searching during that drive home. I wonder how much I'm really accomplishing (Max – 1 – A).

Respondents noted that they experienced a "perceptual preoccupation" where they were never free to forget their jobs or escape their own minds continually focused on searching for relevant information and new understandings (Mintzberg, 1973). The pressure was constant where they seldom stopped thinking about their work believing that they "might be able to contribute just a little bit more" (30).

> This job is really a life as opposed to a job and you have to walk that fine line to be in balance.... I have a loving family and I really find it tough when my eight-year-old son is saying, "Please can you just come home tonight?" That's hard (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Elizabeth further added:

> I try my very best not to take things home. I don't articulate it, but my husband sees it. Sunday afternoon he said, "You've got the motor going" which means I'm already in Monday mode. So, by Sunday afternoon things are starting in my mind for Monday; the list, the 6:30 a.m. list is going, only it's the weekend. So, I'm there but I'm not there.... I'm a year in and I don't know if I can continue.... I don't ever feel like I'm done (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Beginning school leaders acknowledged that the nature of their work was largely open-ended and ambiguous whereby situations that required decisions were often fluid, difficult to analyze and subject to a number of interpretations and possible resolutions. With only limited practical experience and perhaps only a nominal amount of accrued successes with regards to administrative decision making, newcomers experienced nagging self-doubt.

> It's the pressure of the responsibility to be fair. And, that's what bothers me... when I go home, if anything is cooking in the head. You know the drive home and [I'm] wondering what do I do with this or that or how to handle things. That's where I'm second-guessing myself all the time (Helen – 0 – B).

> Sometimes, it seems that the negative outweighs the positive in this job. But I'm not sure if that is a function of inexperience or if it is a function of a dangerous direction where this job might be going.... I'm hoping that a lot of what I'm feeling is inexperience. I'm hoping that the first couple of years are just part of growing and stretching until I get the process down. However, it's so dynamic and fluid that I constantly think, "I don't know if I can do this" (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

One respondent commented on how her efforts to meet the demands of the job had exacted a physical toll on her:

> I found last year I was just about done physically. Medically, I as in trouble... now, I'm really trying hard and I'm struggling with it. I know intellectually, I know I can't because, as my doctor says, I will not be functioning this time next year if [I] do not change what [I'm] doing. I mean, I was here at 8 p.m. most every night; I was here on weekends (Juanita – 1 – A).

Overall, beginning principals experienced the frustration and felt the pressure connected with learning and executing the multiplicity of roles, functions and duties

associated with the principalship. As a means of survival, newcomers developed compensating strategies to combat the pressures and realities of their new roles.

Bifocal Leadership

Leadership is both an art and a skill. It entails both the "prosaic skills of managing routine processes and the dynamic task of leading individuals through technological, organizational, and cultural change" (Hess, 2003, 4). It is an interactive process of sense-making and construction of meaning that is collectively created and continuously engaged in by organizational members (Harris, 2003). Educational leadership is inherently diffuse where new school leaders must gain and demonstrate the ability to read and adjust to particular contexts and situations (Day et al., 2000).

> There is no manual or prescribed way to do this stuff because every school is so different that there couldn't be. Every school has different needs. There are some common things but.... I mean you will have to learn how to balance your paperwork with your people requirements; that's a skill (Juanita – 1 – A).

> So much of it is dealing with people and dealing with difficult people but it is all situational you know. There is no recipe book of how to deal with people. Education is messy. It is a messy, messy job (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Respondents noted the pre-eminence of leadership and, yet, reported the predominance of management in their roles as school leaders:

> Once you get into it, you realize that leadership is ten times more important than management (Amber – 1 –B).

> The job is mostly management (Juanita – 1 – A).

> Management is time consuming but it's needed and it is task generated. Simply put, it's paperwork and phone calls. I have to manage the data and the paperwork that will allow us to have the knowledge or the response we need to give in order to have resources for teachers (Max – 1 – A).

To cope with the managerial demands of the job, newcomers were required to learn "what" to do, as well as, decipher which of the many competing tasks and routines "needed" to be done and in what order. Being new to the position, also required beginning principals to figure out "how" things were to be done. Essentially, new principals had to make choices in how to address these concerns and decide which tasks and routines were to be a part of their leadership and management practice.

Respondents identified utilizing aspects of a "bifocal" approach to leadership as a means of strategically fulfilling their leadership responsibilities for moving their schools forward (Peterson, 2001). Bifocal leadership purports that leaders integrate leadership and

management practices whereby every decision, choice and action reinforces core values and purposes (Deal & Peterson, 1994).

> You still need your core vision and values, but every situation is different. There is no prescribed way (Juanita – 1 – A).

Beginning principals implemented a number of strategies to both survive the numerous demands of the job and to reinforce and promote the meshing of their educational values into how they chose to lead their schools.

Prioritize and Filter

In order to deal with the overwhelming number of management demands they faced each day newcomers prioritized tasks based on what needed immediate attention within what was valued most. Prioritizing areas of action and filtering demands helped new principals to secure time to lead and interact with school members.

> To get anything done, you have to be able to prioritize (Carol – 0 – A).

> You have to be able to prioritize and manage the tasks at hand. Decide what is important to do today and what is most immediate. Sorting through what is coming through your door and onto your desk and being able to prioritize appropriately while dealing with people is extremely important (Kim – 0 – B).

In line with the post-transformational notion of "values-led contingency leadership" (Day et al., 2000) new principals filtered demands on their time and prioritized their leadership activities and management tasks according to their educational values and school goals.

> I've already decided on a filter that I think will take care of these things based on what I think is important…. You have to know what's driving your action. I don't think that you should make decisions and do anything without being able to say to someone, "Here's what I'm doing and here's why I'm doing it." I have to be able to articulate a rationale for my decisions…. You have to have something that you refer to and use for judgment and decision-making (Kari – 0 – A).

One respondent highlighted how developing and attending to shared values and purposes provided the foundation for her leadership decisions and actions:

> You look at things that are urgent and plot them out because you will have 10,000 demands on your time. So always be centred in what you know and what you feel is important and any decision should be in the direction of where your school is going and what you are about (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

The interviewee further identified that she prioritized her leadership activities and filtered the demands on her time according to what she deemed as most important – people. This meant, however, that she was never really up to date on her paperwork; a choice she was willing to accept after one year.

> Management is always last for me unless somebody needs something immediately.... It's not something I make a priority unless someone is calling and it is absolutely essential that I have it done.... That also means that I'm never done though. The desk is never clean and people are calling me, wondering where stuff is (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

New principals noted that experience in the position enabled them to acquire practical knowledge and insight related to the challenges, demands and expectations of the principalship and a more composite understanding of their organizations. In time new principals accrued tacit knowledge; an implicit understanding of how things work and applies to specific contexts and is practice oriented (Wassink, Sleegers & Imants, 2003). As such, the tacit knowledge gained by new leaders having experienced both "position and place" for one year helped them to develop needed perspective and foresight to more efficiently prioritize leadership tasks and filter demands for their second year.

> This year, I know more of what to expect. I know there might be ten things here but I know that I can deal with them in an efficient manner and that if it takes two or more days to finish it I'm not worried to death about it because I know what to expect between now and the end of June.... This year I think I've learned to prioritize things a little bit. And the priority to me is being in that classroom.... You can see that there are piles of things on my desk and that's okay. I'm okay with that (Daniel – 1 – A).

Daniel further added:

> I have a better sense of organization because I know what to expect. I know what's coming up next month, so I'm feeling better about getting things out there. I guess the other part of that is. I know who to call now for things.... I want to see it continue in that direction (Daniel – 1 – A).

> I'm much more confident in the role now.... I know what to pay attention to.... I know where I should be spending my energies – SIP goals and high school staff (Juanita – 1 – A).

School improvement goals and instructional leadership objectives are often implicit and rather long term, which meant that new school leaders needed to draw on their one year of experience and accrued tacit knowledge to transform school goals into everyday leadership routines that worked (Nestor-Baker & Hoy, 2001).

Organization/Time-Management

Respondents commented on how it was crucial to employ sufficient time-management and organizational skills to counterbalance the heavy burden of management and administrative demands.

> Organization is key. I can't imagine if someone didn't have really strong organizational skills and tried to pull it off... being able to group and compartmentalize things, even your time – time-management, those kinds of things are needed to be a good school leader (Helen – 0 – B).

> I don't like management taking up my day.... It comes down to being organized and having a list of things to do and crossing things off as they're completed. I have a list of things that they gave us each month to do. It's a problem because if you waste your time doing them you can't do your leadership and you can't spend time with the kids (Amber – 1 – B).

Beginning principals had to contend with a constant barrage of paperwork including communications, notices, forms, referrals, documents and informational materials that all needed to be read, expedited and filed for ready access when needed or requested. Thus, being organized in this capacity was essential in order to make time for leading.

> You also have to be organized or at least have someone around who can help you organize everything (Carol – 0 – A).

> You definitely have to be someone who is organized because there are certain things every single day that need to be done first and last.... I'm usually in here by 6:30 a.m. by the latest. So, every day, when I come in, I have to go through the list of what I have to do and note the things that have to be done by the end of the day (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

New school leaders expressed the necessity of using time-management strategies as a means of scheduling and organizing their day. This included committing time to facilitate the teaching and learning program:

> Paperwork can be done at any time but people are here in the building during certain hours so I spend time with them when I can (Kari – 0 – A).

> I'm so busy I even thought that I need to make myself a little schedule just so it's there for me where I can plot out times that I can be in everybody's classroom at some point in time (Carol – 0 – A).

As lead authorities at their sites, beginning principals were afforded the ability to take extra time to carefully consider issues at length, if they wished, and could also seek to save time by making series of rapid decisions on other matters (Owens, 2004). However, as newcomers, the challenge was to learn which decisions required more time and deliberation and which ones could be made expeditiously:

Every day you are faced with hundreds of different decisions to make and you need to be prepared to make them efficiently and quickly or give them more time and think through them (Daniel – 1 – A).

New principals' efforts to manage their work routines which have often been characterized as "out of control monsters" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, 180), included using "scheduling" to allocate specific times to attend to both managerial and instructional leadership duties:

> In this job, I "could" spend my whole day in this [office], easily. For instance, I might not see teachers and visit their classrooms for a week if I didn't have it on there and force myself to do it. It's a schedule, but it's not a rigid schedule in that I know that it's going to change when I have different meetings that I have to be at (Max – 1 – A).

It was important for newcomers to manage their time and organize non-scheduled time for instructional leadership so as not to get side-tracked or bogged down by the eventualities of the day. When attempts to schedule and complete work tasks during the school day were insufficient, new principals resorted to compensatory measures.

Extend Work Hours

In attempts to keep up with and complete the administrative tasks associated with the principalship, neophyte principals varied the use of time resources by stretching the workday into the evening, the workweek into the weekend and the work-year into the summer holidays.

> Paperwork can be done any old time...I have time after school for a few hours to do paperwork leaving a good chunk of hours during the day that I can fill my time with opportunities to meet with teachers; the educational leadership piece is key (Kari – 0 – A).

> There is always something that doesn't get finished. At the end of the day I always try to have the kids put away. That means that any issue related to school whether it be discipline related or a guidance issue or some sort of [issue] that was going to cause problems between students always gets done and it doesn't matter if it is 7 p.m., when I leave here or if I'm doing it at home at 9:30 p.m., it always gets done by the end of the day. But the administrivia never gets done, never! (Elizabeth – 1 – B)

Immediately, newly appointed principals exercised the option to take work home with them even after extending their work day to complete work on site:

> If I wasn't in here on the phone calling subs and managing everything I would be allowed to spend more time with the kids. The thing is we have to do it all, and if you don't get it done then you take home the stuff at night and have to do it then (Kim – 0 – B).

> I'm certainly taking work home and by 10 p.m. at night I'm saying, "Forget it, I'll just pick up tomorrow morning" (Lexi – 0 – B).

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Although newly appointed principals had begun to utilize weeknights to complete administrative tasks, it was their one-year-experienced colleagues who extended the workweek to include time on the weekends as a means of catching up on work:

> Instructional leadership is important and that's why we (principals) want to do it.... It's worth it to me to give up time on a Sunday to do paperwork so I can get into classrooms when I'm here (Juanita – 1 – A).

> You could stay here and do all of this paperwork, but that is not what I want the job to be. I take the time and if I have forms that are due, I'll take a bunch of those forms home and do them or I come in on Sundays. That way, I can do what I want and enjoy the week (Amber – 1 – B).

> Sitting during the day to enter discipline referrals is not something that I usually take time to do. So, it's usually a Sunday or sometime at night when I get them entered and filed (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Newly appointed principals identified extending their work hours to take care of administrative business. Over time, this reality did not subside. In fact, although one-year-experienced principals were able to acquire more knowledge and experience in being able to predict and more efficiently address administrative demands, they chose to deflect managerial work to after hours in order to use their time on site to interact with teachers and students for the purposes of developing the teaching and learning program.

Overall, newcomers used management practices to control complexity and utilized leadership skills to produce useful change (Kotter, 1990b, 103). They employed strategies to manage their schools and employed compensatory measures to combat the complexity of their jobs to make whatever time they could for leading school members in developing teaching/learning processes and move forward with school improvement.

Summary for Beginning Principals' Roles and Practices

Beginning school leaders identified the principalship to be multi-faceted and challenging. They noted the growing complexity of the position to be a result of the expectations placed on education by a changing and more demanding society. Respondents voiced that compared to the expectations of principals in previous decades they were required to be more visible, accessible and interactive with their staffs and community constituents as part of providing expanded services and being more accountable for organizational performance.

However, upon entering the post, new principals soon realized the position was more involved and farther reaching than they first assumed. It was adult focused, more global in

perspective and, yet, isolating in nature. It encompassed making decisions and problem solving in areas that were new to the fold including budgeting, bureaucracy and dealing with outside agencies. Newly appointed principals reported having to contend with a tremendous amount of administrative learning including figuring out office procedures and organizational protocol from the standpoint of being lead authority. For many, this meant engaging in predominantly management and administrative duties. One-year-experienced principals indicated that this reality did not subside over time, regardless of being able to accrue experience and tacit knowledge.

Recognizing the evolving nature and scope of the principalship, new principals understood there to be a multiplicity of roles and functions requiring both leadership and management skills and practices. Beginning principals agreed with Day (2003b) where "leadership is essentially the process of building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture and interpersonal relationships, whereas management is the coordination, support and monitoring of organizational activities" (191). Respondents specifically viewed leadership practices as those actions in which they were able to directly support their staff members using communication and interaction skills for the purposes of achieving goals in the following areas; organizational vision and goals, instructional leadership, leadership development, staff welfare, and resource acquisition and support.

According to respondents, the job was dynamic and engaging, yet, much of the time, frustrating and overwhelming. This is because the only real certainty in their jobs was the fragmented and fluid nature of the position. Daily work routines were dominated by tending to burdensome managerial and bureaucratic tasks amongst struggling to take care of immediate issues and situational problems as they occurred. New school leaders identified facing a number of challenges in their attempts to negotiate a leadership/management dichotomy including dealing with an overwhelming administrative workload, having insufficient time for instructional leadership, feeling the constant pressure to complete tasks judiciously, as well as having nagging doubts about their ability to do what was required of them.

To combat the complexity of their jobs beginning principals employed a number of strategies and compensatory measures. This included utilizing aspects of a values-driven bifocal leadership, filtering demands and prioritizing actions, utilizing time-management and

organizational strategies and extending their own work hours. In each of these instances,

beginning principals worked to reduce the administrative burden and make time while on site

for leading the teaching and learning program and move forward with school improvement.

Chapter Seven

The Neophyte Life:

Leadership Challenges and the Exercise of Agency

Leadership is influence

– John C. Maxwell

New principals, if they are to be successful, must exercise their individual agency to move their schools forward. Agency refers to the form of action that is instigated by people in different environments (Billot, 2002). For new school leaders, this involves the purposeful interplay of actions performed by participants of the school's immediate learning community, as well as having to deal with and respond to the influences of educational and political jurisdictions. Agency is both participant and context dependent. For school leaders, context is crucial and coterminously developed. Exercising agency within a school context is an iterative, reciprocal and interpretive process, whereby choices are imagined, evaluated and contingently reconstructed by organizational and community members as part of an ongoing dialogue within unfolding situations (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

From an individual standpoint, agency can be more specifically defined as "one's ability to pursue the goals that one values" (Archer, 2000 as cited in Day et al., 2006, 611). For respondents, this meant working towards what they considered to be important goals within their leadership contexts. For the most part, this involved developing expectations, programs and protocols concerning the school's teaching/learning processes for the purposes of maximizing student performance and achievement. As part of taking on school leadership, new school leaders entered into organizations and learning communities that already had established routines and pre-existing cultures. Thus, their specific leadership contexts required them to interact with a variety of individuals and groups who were supportive, benign or, in some cases, disruptive to their intended purposes and leadership efforts.

Challenges to New Leaders' Agency

In situations where beginning principals identified facing challenges to their leadership designs and efforts, they noted that a number of aspects related to the people, policies and administrative structures within the context of their particular learning communities challenged the exercise of their agency as school leaders. Respondents specifically identified leadership challenges to occur as a result of staff resistance, staff incompetence and commitment

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issues, disruptive staff dynamics and conflict, restrictive administrative designs and

designations, and burdensome school board policies and initiatives.

Staff Resistance

Whether taking on school leadership in a new or familiar setting, new principals

recognized that they became the lead authorities for organizations characteristically identified

as being traditionally conservative in nature and slow to integrate change (Lortie, 1975).

Through the use of positional authority, beginning principals functioned as the initiators or the

inhibitors of change, and, although they regarded themselves to be agents of change (Fullan,

2001a) organizational members mitigated their ability to innovate.

> They don't want change, I do.... I knew they (staff) didn't really want any
> significant changes because of the questions that I was asked in the
> [principal] interview... about preserving culture and traditions in the school.
> There was a good clear indication for me that it was important for them that
> some of the things that they value not be dismissed and discontinued (Kari –
> 0 – A).

Another respondent noted having to face the ambivalence and scrutiny offered by

organizational members for even the most minor changes in routine and protocol, especially

during the first few months of his leadership tenure:

> It seemed every time a new thing came across, it wasn't a simple decision. It
> was, "We don't know about this. The school's never had that before," or, "The
> school's never been able to do this." So, it just seemed in the first three
> months of school, every time I went to do something or something came up
> needing action or follow through, there was difficulty (Max – 1 – A).

Max added that he had to face indifference and resistance on the part of a few long-standing

staff members. Unfortunately, for Max, this is not uncommon for new principals entering

larger school venues with well-entrenched informal power groups led by veteran teachers that

have experienced numerous principal succession events in recent years (Northfield et al.,

2010). Max faced some staff members who learned to inoculate themselves from the effects

of principal turnover by resisting and/or ignoring their new leader's efforts (Northfield, 2008).

> The biggest surprise last year would have been just quite simply the sheer
> amount of time that it took to make the changes in this school that we needed
> to make... it took a huge amount.... Some of the changes that had to be
> made in the mindsets of some of the staff were pretty major because there
> were some people, not many, who were poison (Max – 1 – A).

Beginning principals faced resistance when they attempted to incorporate changes

affecting teachers' instructional and assessment practices. Traditionally, the development

and execution of instructional practice is largely in the hands of the autonomous technical

core (Elmore, 2000). For teachers, much of what happens is behind closed doors and done in professional solitude (Lortie, 1975). New principals were faced with having to penetrate this reality in their attempts to positively change teachers' instructional practice. However, Fullan (2001b) reminds us that not all individuals or groups buy into change and that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to change.

> I could do triple flips until I get some movement on classroom practice but I'm not going to see the kind of changes I want.... My disdain for those who are still doing the things that are twenty-five years old is becoming more of a frustration.... I find that many of the high school staff are so entrenched in what they do.... To make a difference, I would have to be in there every day and I can't.... I hate that. I just wish people would understand that I'm not trying to destroy their worlds. I'm trying to support them in trying something new for the better (Juanita – 1 – A).

As noted, demanding and reinforcing compliance from staff members who remained steadfast in their resolve to resist changes in their teaching practice could have been accomplished but it was deemed to be more trouble than it was worth. Time for more productive endeavours would have been compromised. Another one-year-experienced principal also faced a similar challenge:

> Some people are a little resistant to change and some people are a lot resistant to change.... There were definitely a group of teachers who were defenders of tradition and not really open to any kind of change... and because of the friction with those set in their ways, it seemed like every time I turned to ask one of them to do something it was a reaction of "No!" .... I would say it's all about instructional practice.... Maybe a little more teaching needs to be done in some classrooms (Steven – 1 – B).

New principals were immediately charged with ensuring that school improvement processes were in place and properly utilized to bring about agreed upon changes for their schools. However, as noted by one respondent, any significant innovation, if it was to result in change, required individual implementers to work out their own meanings (Fullan, 2001b).

> We are going through the school success planning process and we've picked two goals and I've been saying to people to ask themselves, "How does this work for me?" The first time that you do something like that it takes much longer (Candice – 1 – A).

Given the architecture of the North American educational system operates as a conservative, self-perpetuating hierarchy (Dolan, 1994) and educational reform movements are often implemented, not on the basis of merit but, rather, on affordability of expense and political will, it is understandable why many teachers and administrators are not fundamentally oriented towards change (Fullan, 2001a; Sarason, 1996). For these reasons, beginning

principals had to contend with some teachers who preferred to maintain the status quo rather than risk investing energy in the uncertainty of a particular change initiative.

> We need direction and we're getting there with the school success planning. They (teachers) still think the school success program is going to go away. I'm saying, "Look folks, we're into accreditation and it's not going away so let's make it work for us. Let's use the process instead of fighting the process" (Juanita – 1 – A).

Fullan (2001b) suggests that while complex, change can be managed in a successful manner when it is more fully understood by stakeholders. His research asserts that school leaders must not create change for the sake of innovation. Rather, they must engage with their staffs to carefully consider the purpose of change (i.e. school improvement for maximizing student performance) and find ways in which people buy into changes. While principals are "lynch-pins" in educational change (Hallinger, 1992), as change agents, new principals were required to re-culture the school's attitude towards change whilst acknowledging the complexity of the process and recognizing the impact of school culture on the change process itself. Given that organizational culture is created by people, and that key aspects of the culture and the organization will change if the organizational membership changes (Greenfield, 1991), some respondents were better served to move forward with change initiatives with the energy and support of interested colleagues and to simply let "resisters" leave in time or fade away to retirement.

> Last year I thought that I was making no difference here. I thought to myself, "I'm butting my head against the wall. Why am I doing this? I should just go back to the classroom." That's when [the superintendent] came in and said, "You will never make a difference with some of the people on the staff. A number of them are retiring in the next three years so you should stay the course and they will drop off and people will then realize (Juanita – 1 – A).

New principals understood that they were responsible for implementing change initiatives and realized that their organizational perspectives stemmed from professional and public expectations that they were accountable for the aggregate performance of their staff members. In Nova Scotia, a large number of mandated educational changes had been made and were being introduced by the provincial Department of Education. These included programs regarding curriculum, issues of public concern such as those examining anti-violence (i.e. Peaceful Schools), as well as the development and implementation of new instructional and assessment strategies.

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Beginning principals had to respond to staff resistance as part of implementing educational changes and school improvement initiatives. Staff resistance was not directed specifically at leaders insomuch that it was a response to new leaders' attempts to implement changes in instructional and assessment through school improvement initiatives. That was because teachers tended to focus the bulk of their time and effort on "relatively narrow issues of materials, discipline, and the problems of individual students, rather than on the acquisition of new knowledge and skill" (Elmore, 2000, 17). Also, according to Fullan (2001a), the psychological process of learning and understanding something new does not happen in a flash. "It is fundamentally related to whether teachers are likely to find the considerable energy required to transform the status quo. Meaning fuels motivation; know-how feeds on itself to produce on-going problem-solving. Their opposites - confusion, overload, and low sense of efficacy - deplete energy at the very time it is sorely needed" (47-48).

Recognizing that there was a naturally occurring "buy in factor" associated with executing change processes, and that because some staff members were resistant to perceived increased workload created by change, new school leaders needed to establish authority and credibility prior to attempting to make changes (Roberts & Wright, 1992). Unfortunately, new principals were pressed into action without significant time to carefully establish and develop trustworthy relationships helpful for establishing much needed credibility for leading change. In order to appreciate and acknowledge the complexity of change, neophyte principals should be supported in developing a comprehensive understanding of resistance and see the primary goal of school improvement to be the re-culturing the school's attitude towards change (Fullan, 2001b).

Staff Competency/Commitment Issues

Respondents identified staff competency and commitment issues as thwarting their efforts to move forward with leading their schools. This included dealing with the actions and non-action of both teachers and support staff.

> Whenever I went to one of the staff, or in this case the support staff, to accomplish a task... I'd come to find that we didn't have people that had backgrounds in those things. So I had to turn around and retrain several people who are support staff, administrative assistants, for example, on areas that I've never had to wonder about before in other schools.... These were all big hurdles for me. As a new person coming in, you hope some of those things are in place (Max – 1 – A).

Max further added:

> Well, to be honest, one of the ways we fall away [in education] is there is no other profession that I'm aware of that would not have employees either step up or get out. In education, there are too many safeguards to keep a bad teacher in the profession (Max – 1 – A).

New principals entered schools that were replete with teachers close to retirement. In many cases, this level of experience from which to draw upon provided much needed insight and leadership for guiding school programs. However, in some instances, some veteran teachers caused concern for new leaders as they chose simply not to participate or contribute to the organization in a productive and/or supportive manner.

> I've had to go to the staff member and say, "You're not pulling your weight. This is what you're expected to do, so do it!" You know, you almost like to say, "When is your retirement date?" Because my line for some people is that they've retired long before they walk out the door. It's my experience as a teacher to see some who shouldn't still be in the classroom. So, I've seen that and, as the principal now, I try very hard to make things more positive so that's not the reality (Helen – 0 – B).

In dealing with this type of performance-based issue, new leaders faced the arduous task of working through matters of recourse with individuals either incapable of changing their practice or reluctant to even try.

> The biggest challenge that I'm facing right now in this building is that I have a couple of people who are not toeing the line.... And so, when they are not toeing the line professionally, we have recourse. We have the professional performance program, so you try and work with people.... My intention is that we all act professionally and that we do what we do in the best interest of kids. So, when someone acts in a way that is contrary to that and it is brought to my attention, I'm going to deal with it.... I've had a hard time dealing with adults and cutting it straight when I know what the reaction is going to be. Taking even just one person to task is really difficult (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

For respondents, the difficulties associated with being new to the principalship were compounded by the need to immediately address training and skill-building for organizational members just to keep things functioning to acceptable levels of practice. Although this supervisory role is expected of school leaders, the fact that as newcomers, they had to effect change with veterans was disconcerting to them and something that, once again, had taken valuable time away from learning the job and leading school operations.

Staff Dynamics/Conflict

New principals entered unique organizations with their own histories, environments and casts of characters (Lashway, 2003) and, as such, they had to deal with the challenges and complexities associated with organizational dynamics and staff conflict. As new leaders,

respondents not only had to learn what to do as principals but also how things were to be done in their particular organizations. This involved quickly asserting themselves as viable leaders and assimilating themselves into the culture of their schools as "insiders." In turn, this required them to quickly discern the unwritten rules of their organizations and to identify, direct and, in some cases, placate the multitude of personalities and variety of influences at play (Aiken, 2002).

> I came into a situation with three secretaries, two of whom were not speaking to each other and one who moved her office across the hall…. I had to make sure that we got through that foolishness (Max – 1 – A).

New leaders had to deal with a number of different types of individuals in their schools, not all of which got along. They were challenged to figure out when to act and what to do in order to judiciously deescalate conflict in each specific situation.

> The person creating the problem is a teacher at the end of her career who resents the administration and has had battles with former administrators and, if I step in, her back will go up and it will not be pretty. And this teacher who came to me knows that and she said, "No, you can't get involved because it will make it worse" (Juanita – 1 – A).

Part of learning to be a new leader meant discerning between the various factions and informal power groups that were able to wield considerable influence in the school and deciphering the real intentions and impact of each of these groups. Operating for the first time from a schoolwide perspective and having had to deal with teachers as supervisors instead of peers, newcomers quickly became aware of and had to contend with the parochialism of some teachers' behaviour.

> There were some staff conflicts that I was made aware of before I got here. There were cliques and comments of, "This person doesn't get along with this person and so on." I was well aware of this going on and I think that passed on because there was always a certain clique that got along with the principal and who the principal did everything for…. It was some of the veteran male teachers… and they used to get everything, but they don't get any more than anyone else now. I put a stop to all of that. Some of them tried to come in and sabotage some other teachers. I said, "If you have a problem with someone, go talk to them" (Amber – 1 – B).

Two other interviewees also identified how they entered their leadership posts having to address issues related to pre-existing informal power dynamics, divided collegiality and self-serving decision making:

> We have certain groups of people who make decisions in the staff room and then assume that that's the decision and that's what will happen…. I knew it existed. I said it existed in front of everybody and then said why it couldn't happen. So if we've got a good idea, here's the process. If you're in the

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staffroom having a conversation and you come up with a good idea, here's the process to get everyone informed and to have the decision, a collegial decision. So I gave them process to do something (Kari – 0 – A).

The PTG group, which is our Parent Teacher Group, certainly feels that they provide the majority of the money to our school and because they do a lot of the fundraising, they really would like to dictate where that money goes to versus how can I allow the school to use this for their benefit. So, that has been kind of a struggle (Lexi – 0 – B).

Whether new to the school or not, as new school leaders, they were immediately faced with having to address the relational dynamics and mitigate the effects of conflict that existed between school members. Both building and repairing relationships takes time. As such, new principals had to take time away from their own learning and leading to resolve issues presented to them.

Administrative Designs and Designations

Respondents identified issues related to the design of their jobs and administrative designations as being problematic for them, especially as newcomers trying to tackle the responsibilities of school leadership. These included the following challenges; dealing with combined leadership and teaching appointments, the inexperience of new administrative colleagues and the restricted accessibility of senior leadership team (SLT) members. For one respondent, learning and executing the specifics of the position while also being required to teach everyday was a difficult and conflicting task.

Last year I was teaching an hour a day and that was a big chunk of my day to worry about. It was new curriculum and something I hadn't done before.... So, being 100% administration this year benefits me and it certainly benefits the program. [It] allows me to get into the classrooms more and that enables me to do my job.... It's the way it should be (Daniel – 1 – A).

Being a new principal and working with inexperienced first-time administrators also presented leadership challenges for newcomers. Whether it was having to take the necessary time to learn how to execute administrative tasks together or having to take on more work as a means of compensating for their colleague's lack of experience, new principals were left with less time to learn their own craft and less time to tend to the numerous tasks and responsibilities required of them.

I came in with two brand new vice-principals who I hired, so I had a completely new administration. That was a big hurdle (Max – 1 – A).

I have a new vice-principal who is not from the school or the area. There is a lot more that he had to learn than last year's vice-principal. As a result, it has kept me in here doing some paperwork that I would have passed off to the

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vice-principal.... I have a new guidance counselor as well. I am the only person who knows all three of those jobs (Patricia – 1 – B).

Beginning principals noted that when fellow members of the senior leadership team (SLT) were not given sufficient release time from their combined teaching-administrative roles, essential communications and teamwork were compromised. This also meant having to learn and perform school leadership largely by themselves.

> There was no release time for the vice-principal here, so I found that last year I was really consumed with trying to get on top of things myself (Candice – 1 – A).

> One of the challenges new for me is dealing with the vice-principal situation here. The vice-principal positions are usually considered 100% pay positions but the allocation of time is actually only 20% and so that means being in the classroom except for one day each week.... It is a definite challenge for me in terms of communication because, after being at administrators' meetings on Tuesdays, I miss not having not having her Wednesday mornings to debrief about it (Carol – 0 – A).

Overall, beginning principals were hampered in their efforts to learn and lead at the same time when they entered leadership contexts that required them to teach part-time or accommodate for their administrative colleague's inexperience or limited release time. Although new leaders exacted practices to work around these challenges, the challenges themselves were externally created and not within new principals' control to change. School boards would be well served to structure support specifically designed for newly appointed principals who face these types of challenges related to administrative assignment and personnel.

School Board Policies and Initiatives

As school leaders, who were responsible for maximizing the quality of teaching and learning in their schools, beginning principals accepted the fact that they had to implement educational policy initiatives related to instructional and assessment processes as a normal course of events. Adapting accountability-based government policy directives to suit the organizational and educational contexts of their schools was a leadership challenge widely embraced by novice leaders.

> I do think that there are some things that interrupt our vision, like how we do work... in terms of school success plans and accountability stuff and having goals that are measurable.... I really think it's all about interpretation when it comes to accountability measures. That's the piece that I feel really comfortable with and really firm with in terms of my beliefs. I think I can make it work. I think I can work with it to make it both meaningful to kids and

important in terms of the structure of our teachers and accountable to the government (Carol – 0 – A).

Begley (2003) identified policies and procedures as the cornerstone of administrative practice and claimed that school leaders often use them to guide and rationalize their decisions. However, beginning principals highlighted the reality that, in some instances, school board policies and initiatives bombarded the work life of their organizations and hampered their own leadership efforts to get to the important work of instructional leadership and supporting their staffs.

> [The superintendent] said, "I really want to reduce the amount of administrivia." and I thought, "You say that, but you sit down and the Director of Education Services stands up and talks about all the new stuff that is coming that we have to have plans for. So he is saying one thing but his actions and the people underneath him at the [school] board are doing the exact opposite. There is more and more all the time (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

> There is always one more thing that comes on board from the [school] board... and you also don't know perhaps what's coming up and all of a sudden (Candice – 1 – A).

District policies and initiatives were also experienced as an infringement on the school's normal mode of functioning and a barrier to new principals' attempts at responsible and efficient leadership. Some were viewed as unnecessary add-ons perpetuated as essential for education by government officials as part of enacting their own agendas.

> Everybody wants something. We have a very big [school] board and we have money for the first time in the Province of Nova Scotia and a lot of that money has been used to create consulting positions and all of these consultants each have their own agenda about how they think education could be made better by their position and it usually involves getting schools to make plans about something (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Elizabeth provided a typical example of how government attempts at increasing the breath and depth of education via the development and enforcement of new district policies had the unintended effects of creating professional conflict and a reduction in the quality of education for students.

> We have a race relations policy. Each school has to have one. There was a series of three in-services and, at each one of the in-services, we needed four people to go from the staff and one of them had to be me. And I thought why four people? I only have fifteen teachers and I was out two days already that week and this would have been the third day and, in this school, that's like jumping off a bridge with a bag of rocks around your neck because the school goes crazy when there are that many people out. I had called and said, "Well, can I send one?" My race relations advisor told me I couldn't send just one. [She] said, "No, you need to have four. And I thought, "No, I'm not sending four." So, anyway, I wasn't looked upon very favorably for that.... We had two more in-services where, basically, the same thing happened

where, again, you had people ask for people to attend. That's the person's agenda where she feels as if this is something that these people needed to go to. And there are more of them. There are all kinds of them. They want a plan for everything. And not only a plan, but reflections and budgets and more (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Although newcomers were cognitively aware of their duty to implement policies and initiatives, they were frustrated with the authoritarian nature in which district mandates were delivered. For the most part, government educational initiatives and school district policies were created without prior consultation with school administrators and were communicated as top-down directives requiring immediate accommodation and compliance.

> We just received an email that we have been chosen, and "chosen" is the word they used, for the tracking of instructional time.... It was apparently the Department of Education. That's what we're being told by the school board anyway (laughs). Especially when we asked if we could not be chosen and we were told "No, you're chosen!" What they are going to track is students' time on task.... This came out of those meetings they (Nova Scotia Department of Education) had in the spring about making the school day longer.... You look at all the stuff that we deal with and there is no way that you could know for certain whether a child is on task or not. Anyway, that's another one of those things that we have to do. I don't know how we got there or how I will be able to get to the classrooms now (Helen – 0 – B).

Working on newly employed mandatory policy-based initiatives required new principals to perform detailed administrative tasks that were all encompassing and time intensive.

> I didn't know what to do exactly, not ever having been the one who collected all the data for the Department of Education and the Head Office. So, I spent a lot of time getting on those things last year. And it is all a required policy thing that was massive and a lot of time.... That was a "forced" thing for all principals and it took a lot of time getting up on the occupational health and safety (Candice – 1 – A).

Taking the time to perform some of the administrative duties associated with school board levied directives seemed downright ridiculous yet, nonetheless, required:

> They sent us a young girl hired by the school board to come in and do inventory of every single thing in this school; everything; every piece of furniture; every piece of AV (audio visual) equipment; everything. I just thought, "Oh, for the love of God." She was here for I don't know how many days and scooting around doing this and doing that. It came to me in the mail to be verified; it's a document about an inch thick. I went into hysterics. I thought, "Are you kidding me? You want me to verify this inventory. There is no way I'm going to do that." Anyway, I got an email as a reminder stating that, "You haven't verified your inventory, if you could please get back to me" and (laughs) I thought, "Yeah, I'll do that. Yeah, that's real high on my list" (sarcastic tone) (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

Although beginning principals were charged with the responsibility of implementing important policies related to curriculum reforms, staff and student performance and site

safety, they were not accorded the level of discretionary power and respect required to effect change.

> It's about site-based management, being more of a manager when you think about it.... We work in Human Relations, we work in Finance, we work in Public Relations, we work in all of the things that site-based management has done; everything. The accountability and responsibility is on us. We have very little authority to exercise anything because we can't do anything without getting permission from somebody to do it. We've got all of the responsibility and none of the authority. So it's a very odd kind of thing (Elizabeth – 1 – B).

In some instances, new principals were powerless to change central office directives that contradicted local schools' needs and stakeholders' expectations and values. Kim provided one example:

> Availability of qualified subs is always a huge issue. It really impacts directly on students' learning and it is always contentious with parents.... Unfortunately, there are not many curriculum experienced subs out there in these areas and the ones who I get are part of the agreement with the board where I have to hire recent retirees first as part of their agreement with the board. That kind of plays on my mind a lot (Kim – 0 – B).

Overall, beginning principals had to operate in a policy arena common to the political and leadership landscape faced by contemporary school leaders. Aside from being in a constant state of anticipation and anxiety regarding what administrative download to expect next, respondents identified three separate yet related aspects of school board initiative and policy implementation that challenged their agency as school leaders. These included the following considerations; having to deal with initiatives and policies that were experienced as dictums and infringements on the functioning of their schools, having to adhere to policies that were not necessarily feasible or contextually viable, and not having sufficient power or efficacy to interpret and utilize policies and initiatives to suit their organizations.

Summary for Challenges to New Leaders' Agency

Beginning principals experienced leadership at the apex of site-based administration as a challenging, paradoxical and delimiting process. Although they entered the leadership landscape with the espoused intention of moving their schools forward by supporting and improving the teaching and learning processes needed for making schools better places for all students, they found that their attempts at innovation were obstructed by a number of people, policies, and socializing practices that maintained the status quo. Most of their leadership challenges were derived from their lack of power to manoeuvre beyond the confines of the loosely coupled nature of their leadership endeavour. On the one hand, new

principals were expected to exert their influence and authority for the sake of improving their organizations, and, yet, they had to deal with forces that limited or directly challenged their ability to exercise their agency to complete such a task.

Aside from having to deal with the inherent challenges associated with learning and performing the roles and responsibilities of being a school leader, beginning principals had to manage the messiness inside their schools and work around the external influences and processes determined from outside their organizations in order to accomplish organizational goals. New principals dealt with staff related issues including active resistance, incompetence and lack of commitment, as well as disruptive relational dynamics and member conflict. Whether these matters were individual, group-based, personal or political in nature, organizational professionalism was compromised which resulted in new principals having to intervene to problem solve and remediate concerns.

Being new to the position, and in some cases, new to the school, beginning principals had to learn the culture of the organization from a leadership standpoint as well as learn their jobs. They had to learn the roles and responsibilities of their job while also having to negotiate in-house issues which forced them to figure out where best to spend their finite time and energy. With virtually no principalship experience to draw from, addressing these types of issues was problematic. Relying on little if any referent or expert power, neophyte principals had to figure out how best to use their vested authority to mitigate issues. Although it is not uncommon for first year principals to be faced with "poor teaching" or "coasting/complacent" staff (Day et al., 2009, 71), the time spent retraining and motivating staff, actively engaging malcontents and redirecting resisters, as well as subduing parochialism, reduced new leaders' ability to exercise their agency in moving their school's forward.

With regards to administrative designs and designations, new principals experienced unanticipated tensions, constraints and ambiguities which pervaded their attempts to exercise agency as school leaders. School board determined administrative assignments including position-based responsibilities and time allocations restricted new leaders' ability to interact with and communicate with their administrative colleagues. Whether they had to teach while in post or having their vice-principals available for only a nominal percentage of weekly

allotted time made it difficult to focus on adequately attending to the functions and duties of their administrative posts or to work together as a leadership team. Once again, beginning principals were in a position where they needed sufficient time and support to learn and execute their leadership tasks. Unfortunately, due to circumstances and decisions outside of their control, they were restricted or limited in their capacity to exercise their agency.

Beginning principals' experiences of policies and initiatives as a hindrance to their ability to do what they thought was right was juxtaposed with their desire to improve their schools and remained an ongoing challenge throughout their early tenure. In some cases, externally devised and mandated policies and initiatives were experienced as top-down directives that were contextually inappropriate and non negotiable in their interpretation and implementation. Although this is not an uncommon reality for many school leaders, for beginning principals, the difficulties they faced in attempting to exercise sufficient agency to offset these challenges were compounded. New leaders lacked the tacit knowledge and accrued use of judgment to know what to spend time on and what to ignore. They were frequently "haunted by the fear that a moment of inattention will blossom into a crisis" (Lashway, 2003, 2). Also, newly appointed principals lacked the time to build relationships with their colleagues and develop sufficient organizational insight needed to readily disperse and distribute leadership for accomplishing the multitude of leadership tasks. As such, at the very time they were most susceptible to role confusion and work overload, and at a time when they needed to focus their energies to learn their craft and lead their colleagues, newcomers were confronted with trying to deal with the downloading of extraneous policies and initiatives thus limiting their ability to exercise their agency as school leaders.

The Exercise of Agency

New principals take on their inaugural post with the intention to make a positive contribution to the participants and organizational life of the school. This includes having an impact on the programs and performance of those who are part of the school's learning community. To do so, school leaders must take action in a number of different areas and in a multitude of different ways to positively contribute to the efficacy of those they lead in order to accomplish such a goal. Essentially, "the job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture

of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result" (Elmore, 2000, 15).

Successful school principals operate to improve employee performance by attending to employee's beliefs, values, motivations, skills, knowledge, and work conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008, 29). Day et al (2008) use the terms "layered" or "nested leadership" to indicate the presence of core aspirations, expectations, qualities and strategies available for use by school leaders in the successful application of their leadership practices (91). Day et al (2009) found that school leaders generally use seven strategies to attend to pupil care, learning and achievement including; defining vision, improving conditions for teaching and learning, redesigning organizational roles, enhancing teaching and learning, enhancing teacher quality, building relationships within the school community and establishing relationships outside the school community (130). In addition, depending on their particular school's needs and phase of development, principals "deployed the same leadership approaches but the combinations, sequence, timing of these approaches varied and were context specific" (126).

Beginning principals in this study noted that they both aspired to and took immediate action to positively impact the structures and relationships within their schools across multiple areas for the purposes of moving their schools forward.

> We need to move on from traditions that are not moving us anywhere.... I hope that, in the measures that I will be using, we will have a functioning school success plan that is driven mostly by the teachers and a core team that is working. I hope that I have groups of teachers seeking and making room for the professional conversations in the classroom. I hope that I have children bring their families to school to celebrate and share their work. I want a 90% turn out rate at parent teacher night. I want to get that for concerts and Fun Day. I want to get that for everything (Kari – 0 – A).

This included being strategic and trying to stay ahead of the game when configuring programming:

> I did a lot last year and I had to pull myself back and say [to myself], "You can't do everything at once." I did more than what they say to do. They say try one or two and I tried ten. They worked, because it wasn't all the same people doing it. This year we said health initiatives are on the rise, so let's concentrate on fitness and breakfast programs. So, we added that to the plate. You hear about all of these things. We knew we couldn't have pop in the school, so we took it out the year before. Eventually, we will be forced by the province to only have healthy foods. Why be forced? Do it now (Amber – 1 – B).

The ability to be strategic school leaders rests in beginning principals' capacity to exert influence and exercise their agency. The exercise of leader agency does not occur in a vacuum nor does it solely depend on the position and intentions of the leader. Leader agency is an interactive and mutual construction contingent upon how a new leader is able to mesh with and be accepted by school members. An aspect of socialization to be considered regarding the origin of new principals is whether they are insiders or outsiders to a particular organization. When insiders are promoted from within the school, often times, it is because it is assumed by superiors that all is going well and operations are progressing in the right direction. As such, limited system support is provided and no explicit mandate is given, because assumptions about the degree of socialization an insider has experienced already exist (Carlson, 1972).

> What I'm hopeful is that being here for eight years that I am able to bring a level of comfort to the already established middle-school philosophy and bring my philosophy that I have from all that to develop a continuity towards the future (Brian – 0 – A).

Being an insider also entangled a new leader in a web of historicity affecting her leadership agency:

> I knew the school not as well as I thought I did but I keep saying that it is one of the hardest things ever to come into.... There are advantages and disadvantages especially now when I'm learning operational stuff.... I sort of got thrown into culture issues faster than I probably would have, because I was already in the organization (Juanita – 1 – A).

The fact that a principal is new may not, in itself, be detrimental or beneficial to a school. Rather, the orientation a beginning principal takes as he/she finds the fit with the school must be considered (Davidson & Taylor, 1998). Ogawa (1995) asserts that the most important factor to consider when principals change is their "fit" with the new school's culture. Congruency or "fit" between staff's expectations and a new principal's practice can lead staff members to recognize newcomers' leadership and embrace their agency. When new principals were able to "behave in ways that reveal[ed] their concern and expertise, subordinates respond[ed] favourably" (Ogawa, 1995, 368). However, this was challenging for new leaders attempting to fit in to new sites while learning their new jobs.

> It has probably been the most challenging thing I have ever done... being able to come into the community and be accepted by the parents, students and teachers. It was about trying to make myself fit into the community but, at the same time, get the school to reflect what I am about as a leader as well –

to increase input; inviting parents to the school, having more voices in decision-making and things like that (Steven – 1 – B).

I think last year, for me, it was about understanding priorities at this school and getting a feel for the staff itself. It was a year of people getting to know who I am. Again, sort of developing a little bit of trust and respect in what I'm doing and how I'm supporting them (Daniel – 1 – A).

Essentially, not all beginning principals started at the same point or had the same platform from which to heed the call for change. New leaders' ability to influence colleagues and direct organizational processes were largely a result of the personal, professional and organizational factors and socialization influences at work in their particular contexts.

Beginning principals' leadership actions and use of influence in this study illustrated similar designs to those identified by Day et al (2009). New principals enacted their leadership to deal with learning community and organizational issues as well as to address and remediate school specific challenges. Both "what" they did and "how" they endeavoured was directly related to aspects of their own leader agency. This was determined, in large part, by new principals' own personal histories, skills, knowledge and abilities applied to their leadership contexts in combination with the people, influences and presenting challenges of their respective organizations.

I ended up coming into a situation where all the kids who lived in the fancy subdivision [whose] parents are doctors' and lawyers' were [placed] in certain teacher's classes and all the kids who live in poverty [were] put in other teacher's classes. So, I thought this is my kick at the can. This is not inclusive. It's not what's best for children in terms of it not reflecting the world we live in. And, it's not allowing teachers to show their true strengths in being able to teach all students with all sorts of backgrounds and abilities (Candice – 1 – A).

I've learned from my mistakes as a teacher. It's just awareness and I'm learning to communicate this...at every staff meeting I'll take five minutes and review a policy, just to make sure people are aware. I mean again, I am not going to read policies that do not have a lot of direct impact on what they are doing in their classrooms but ones I think that might impact on what they have to do, why not? (Daniel – 1 – A)

Agency is a temporally embedded process of social engagement informed by the past, oriented towards the future and enacted as practical evaluative action within the contingencies of the present (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Agency itself is always agency "towards" something. For new principals, it was interacting with others in working towards accomplishing the core educational goal of maximizing student learning and achievement. This entailed working on those things that directly influenced securing this core aspiration.

Beginning principals directed their leadership efforts to support student learning and achievement by working to improve the relationships, conditions and structures affecting the teaching and learning process.

Leadership Direction through Diagnostics

In some instances, new principals' leadership intents and actions were focused on implementing processes for diagnosing organizational strengths and challenges in order to direct leadership and collective efforts for school improvement. This involved entering their schools into the process of accreditation. The Nova Scotia Accreditation Program requires schools meet a standard of excellence based on goals that are specific and strategic, measurable, attainable, results-based and timely (SMART). Under the program, schools establish internal review teams to collect and evaluate data to identify both strengths and areas needing improvement. Based on those areas needing improvement, schools develop goals and a five-year school-improvement plan. The plan is examined by an external review team of independent educators and administrators who visit each school before approving it. Schools implement their improvement plan and provide annual updates to school advisory councils. Then, an accreditation team returns to the school after four years to assess progress. Finally, schools receive accreditation after they show progress toward the goals in their improvement plans.

Although accreditation was all about accountability in the long run, neophyte principals used the process in the immediate realm for gaining information about their schools so that they could best direct and focus their leadership efforts in conjunction with viable school goals and initiatives.

> It was my choice.... I wanted to gain info as quickly as I could, and I think accreditation is the best way. It was a way to fast track us in terms of knowing what needs to be improved.... I didn't know everyone's training and background. I did not have the overall global picture. As vice-principal, I really only had the view from my office because I was so busy dealing with student conduct. I knew the students, where they lived, their parents, what kind of homes they came from. That kind of thing I knew. I had to make a move to global awareness (Kim – 0 – B).

Even after experiencing one year at the helm, new school leaders utilized the process to solidify vision and purpose as well as to consolidate efforts towards achieving specific organizational goals.

We are part of the school accreditation process this year, by initiative. I went after this.... The process started after my first year here... we went forward with the process doing a lot of data collection and a lot of diagnostics: looking at community, students, teachers, results, report cards, and how things mesh together; looking at my job performance, teachers' job performances. I guess, indirectly, the data collected reflects on the weaknesses and strengths.... In order for me to become a better leader at the school and more effective in how this school should run, I think we need to go through this process (Steven – 1 – B).

Two more one-year-experienced noted the importance of using the accreditation process as a diagnostic tool for assessing school operations and guiding future programming through data driven decision making and patience:

I think by using the accreditation process I was reassured that a lot of where we are headed as a school is based on using our stats to drive ourselves and move the kids forward in their growth. We are not just testing for testing sake. We are utilizing it to see where a program or a student can grow (Patricia – 1 – B).

I think that the school success planning is a really good thing. I haven't convinced everybody of that but... as [the superintendent] said, "You can't change the world; it's going to take three to five years." I've learned that he's right. So, I have to be gentle right now (Juanita – 1 – A).

As part of a natural flow of succession events, some newcomers entered into new school settings and leadership situations that already had their schools participating in the follow through of school improvement plans and attending to written goals previously devised.

I don't like that they are already a year ahead of me in the school success planning. I wanted to catch up, so to get up to speed I decided to make a special effort to talk with everyone in the building. If I ever gave them a piece of paper or if we had a conversation I asked, "What do you think was meaningful? What concerns do you have about the plan? What was the best part of the process?" And, I overwhelmingly heard that there was no flexibility in how [the plan] was written (Carol – 0 - A).

In some instances, beginning principals used their authority to enter their schools into the accreditation process. By doing so, new leaders were able to work with school members to get a comprehensive look at the inner workings of the school including the people, programs and processes of the organization. The accreditation process helped new principals and school members work together to consider context when establishing priorities and devising specific improvement goals. This helped beginning principals configure how to enact their leadership and in what areas to exercise their agency so that their schools could offer quality programs and meet the academic needs of all students.

Improving the Conditions for Teaching and Learning

New school leaders acted quickly to do what they thought was right for positively impacting the people and processes of their organizations. One area in which they used their leader agency was to improve the conditions for teaching and learning. This included developing mechanisms and providing opportunities for school members to build positive relationships with each other, as well as to create and reinforce expectations and parameters for student conduct and behaviour.

Building Relationships within the School

Leaders create relationships both with and between their colleagues (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, 2003). Thoughtful organizational leaders overtly demonstrate a genuine and heartfelt care and concern for the people they lead and adhere to a "relationship-first" formula (Bishop, 2000). Beginning principals exercised their agency to extend this principle to developing professional and collegial relationships between their colleagues as well as to encourage and expect respectful and supportive relationships regarding teachers' and students' interactions between and with each other.

> This is the first time that the school has had this much shift in staff, so I did something early on to address this with the staff.... Each of my new staff met with me first before the whole staff met so that we could talk about the school and discuss expectations. Basically we went over things like, "Here are some of the cultural elements and traditions here in this building and here are some of the expectations that we have." It was for brand new staff; not new to teaching but new to our school.... I did a rookie camp.... And I also told my returning staff... that one of the expectations that I would have of them... was they would be expected to match up with a new staff person. I didn't put them together by grade... I had made choices based on the interviews that I did with new people and their areas of interest (Kari – 0 – A).

Kari noted how she used her current staff dynamics and school circumstances to aid her efforts in creating structures and opportunities for staff collaboration and teamwork:

> I told everyone that they would have to have a buddy partner, for a couple of reasons.... We were switching over to a new email system and not everybody here was comfortable with that so you needed an email buddy.... I've got a lot of people new to this school and new to the community. So I partnered people up and said to the returning staff that the pairings would also be used for things like curriculum as well as just getting to know the building. It was up to them to teach the new staff where resources are and for sharing information. So those are pieces that I put together before we even started the year (Kari – 0 – A).

The promotion and facilitation of healthy member relations was achieved by elevating behavioural expectations of school members and providing increased incidences of positive interactions through participation in a greater number of school-based activities.

> We had an awful lot of success last year with school activities and a very big change is the community's outlook on this school. We went from a school where parents were sending grade sevens to us who were scared to come here from what they had heard about the school to having parents come up and pat us on the back or thank us or congratulate us.... The fact is that their kids are coming home and they're talking about school and they're saying how much fun it is and that the school's culture has changed (Max – 1 – A).

Max further added how his ability to exercise his leader agency to build positive relationships within the school was a direct result of teamwork and collective efforts:

> We did it as a team and we introduced things in such a way that staff recognized that it was already here but it hadn't been followed up in any real terms. We communicated our plan to staff as, "This is in support of you and what you want to do with the children...." And truly, a lot of it was here but it had fallen away because things had gotten out of hand in other areas so much that it swallowed up the previous administration's time. We were able to get past that (Max – 1 – A).

Building relationships within the school meant that new principals communicated and upheld behavioural expectations for how school members related to each other. This included establishing and reinforcing the concept of professionalism and mutual respect with and between subordinates:

> I know that I've made a difference in little ways. Before, half of the staff wouldn't come to the staff meetings and they all come now and they're on time. They don't talk [that] much but we are working on that. That's stage two. My goal last year was to start small because otherwise you get frustrated.... It's a role model thing. I think that it could because they know I value punctuality and they know I value professionalism (Juanita – 1 – A).

As new leaders gained more experience and trust with their colleagues, they noted that they were able to exert their authority and enact their agency in a more assertive fashion:

> I need to now step in and be a little more assertive with the whole direction we are taking as a staff and that is what I'm starting to do this year; just simple things. Last year during staff meetings there would be people talking while someone else was presenting something and it drove me crazy. It's disrespectful.... It's not going to happen during our staff meetings. I'm just being more assertive. Yesterday, I had to go outside and deal with supervision issues. The EAs (educational assistants) were late for bus duty and I went out to check and they had never been called on that before and it's been a problem for years (Juanita – 1 – A).

Without delay beginning principals worked to build and maintain positive relationships with and between school members. It was an area where they felt they could have an immediate impact. They affected organizational culture by calling on their colleagues to

engage in positive professional behaviour. New leaders' efforts to create and reinforce a respectful and supportive standard of behaviour for school members set the foundation from which to elicit reciprocity of cooperation needed for engaging in the collaborative work of school improvement.

Student Conduct/Behaviour

New school leaders who were appointed to lead schools at the Elementary and Middle school levels purported the utility of exercising their agency for the purpose of "setting, clearly communicating and ensuring implementation of school-wide standards for pupil behaviour" (Day et al., 2009, 187).

> I've done a variety of different things for the school since I've stepped into this role in September. One thing is that we've implemented a behavioural expectations program for the students, very similar to the PEBS [Personal Expectations for Behaviour System] which is coming out... it has created a really positive atmosphere, not only for the students but for the staff as well, which was kind of lacking a little bit.... So this gave me the opportunity to kind of give it that kick start (Lexi – 0 – B).

The ability to take action to adapt and fortify a school's existing behaviour-based policy for students was aided by a new principal's familiarity with the school.

> We started out last year with our goal of [having] a "hands off" policy for children because we found that the children were pushing and pulling and shoving and kicking, little things that kids do but it was starting to get out of control.... I thought I would pull it over into three basic rules and they were; following directions, respecting others and yourself and being prepared for school. That takes a whole gamut of little rules that can fit under the umbrella of those three. So far it has worked out really well because it has also opened communication with the parents on a daily basis (Lexi – 0 – B).

Another newly appointed principal took action to redress the school's code of conduct for students by listing expectations in more positive terms. She did this immediately after hearing of her appointment to the principalship the previous year while still a vice-principal of the school.

> I had always thought of discipline policies in schools as being really negative things. And the first thing I did was, I took the agenda and rewrote the whole Code of Conduct so that it was no longer a list of don'ts like, "Don't run in the halls." Instead, I put in "Walk in the halls," that kind of thing. That was a pile of work in the spring to rewrite that whole thing but that was one of the things that I felt had to be done – to increase the positive things in the school. And I guess that's seen as the climate of the school (Helen – 0 – B).

A beginning principal who was new to her school constructed and implemented student behaviour and discipline policies where none had previously existed:

> There was a reputation coming from this school that there were a lot of

discipline issues.... It got better over the last year. We put a lot of things in place. They didn't have an agenda the year before with rules. There were no policies in place. So we made policies. They didn't have any programs with kids involved.... When the kids are involved in activities, it made a huge difference. Having written behaviour policies also made a huge difference. It was really tough at the beginning of the year because I had some of the parents ask, "What do you mean they are getting suspended?" I said, "Well, the policies are right in the book. You signed it and you were aware." It got better (Amber – 1 – B).

Acting on the belief that there was a need to change or improve behavioural expectations and conditions, beginning principals enacted their leader agency to develop suitable behavioural standards and discipline protocol for their schools.

Building Relationships with the School Community

In addition to being responsible for influencing the organization's culture and accommodating and integrating the legitimate needs of school members within the walls of the school (Begley, 2001), new principals also exercised their agency to build relationships with individuals and groups within the entire school community. New school leaders made immediate attempts to open communication and increase connection and participation with school community stakeholders. This included taking measures to integrate parent involvement in school activities, reconfigure parent conferencing, increase curriculum and educational outcomes communications with parents and open communications with fellow school leaders.

First of all, I hope to help this school stay open. We just had a closure study and it looks like we were on the axe. My vision is to have more communication between home and school. I want to see a situation where we have more parent volunteers; where parents feel more comfy in the building. I think the more that happens your reputation in the school community improves immediately, especially if you are trying some initiatives and you have parents in the building.... I want to get parents on board with the School Advisory Committee and have them run the breakfast program and get them involved as partners (Charles – 0 – B).

It was hoped that increasing stakeholder participation and parent involvement in school operations would positively affect the immediate functioning of the school and have residual benefits that would impact the future viability of the school (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998).

One of the immediate benefits is that there will be more support for the school at home. If the kids are getting strong messages about what a good place the school is from their parents they will believe in the school. It is reciprocal. If we support the parents then they will support us back... when we have the support of the parents in the school, then it is much easier to come to solutions with the problems (Charles – 0 – B).

In some instances, new leaders took advantage of trying to implement connection and

communication oriented practices already in place and experiencing success in other schools to alter and upgrade their own school programs and processes.

> When I walked in the building I looked at the practices in place. This staff still worked with the model where the report cards went out and the parent teacher [interviews] were the week following. That is a very old practice.... I said, "I want us to have better contact with parents.... I don't think report cards should be a surprise to parents." It's too late in my mind that we are now going to say, "Your kid's not doing any homework." I said, "I've experienced parent-teacher's (conferences) a week later (after report cards are sent home) and I heard teachers defending the report cards. I heard parents criticizing teachers, but I didn't hear a conversation about the child." They were really open to that. So we're doing parent-teacher (conferences) in October (before report cards) (Carol – 0 – A).

Another newly appointed principal emphasized updating the use of communication plans with parents in line with provincial and school board expectations:

> Every teacher in this province has been required to do a communication plan. It's meant to communicate things like, "So here's our curriculum. Here's how I do assessment. Here's what we do in the classroom." It's about sending that home to parents so there's no surprise.... I need to get this staff up to speed on all of the initiatives (Kari – 0 – A).

A one-year-experienced principal was able to capitalize on the success of a previously utilized program event to communicate curriculum and educational outcomes to parents:

> We are a math project school this year, which includes eight after school sessions with our math consultant and, I guess, my belief is we need to share this with our parent community.... We've often heard of "Literacy Nights," and I'd like to do the same with "Math Nights." I think it's important that we explain to parents what we've been learning and how the children are now learning some of the new math outcomes (Daniel – 1 – A).

In one instance, a new leader immediately took steps to connect with a fellow administrator for the purpose of proactively responding to accountability and instructional issues related to student achievement:

> I just instigated a meeting with the principal at [the High School] our kids feed into and I will be discussing with him some real concerns that I've had for years but didn't do anything about. But as principal now, I can say, "As principal of one of your feeder schools, I have these concerns so let's have a conversation" (Helen – 0 – B).

Beginning principals enacted their agency in line with the premise that leadership is also about culture building that enables educators, students and parents to be a part of a team that learns together and supports each other as an entire learning community (Sackney & Walker, 2006). They built relationships with learning community stakeholders by creating and utilizing mechanisms that fostered connection, communication and participation.

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Summary for the Exercise of Agency

The configuration and exercise of agency for beginning leaders was about making efforts to enact their educational values and shared organizational vision through the relationships and structures of their schools. Beginning principals used their knowledge and interpretation of school board policies, initiatives and school program expectations accrued as a result of prior training, as well as utilized their understandings and insights gained from previous teaching and administrative experiences, to judge the quality and viability of the organizational structures and processes in their leadership contexts. From this, they then decided where to focus their leadership efforts to stabilize and/or change organizational programs and practices. Their ability to enact their agency as the school's leader was influenced by the people and presenting challenges of their respective organizations. Whether new leaders had previous onsite experience or not, they used their current understanding of school context and organizational needs to guide their leadership efforts.

In some instances, new school leaders used the Province's school accreditation process to help guide their leadership efforts. By utilizing the accreditation process, new principals were able to gain information and insight into the strengths and challenges of their organizations. Beginning principals used the process and the data to construct a shared vision for their schools based on a common set of values, expectations and school improvement goals. Essentially, new school leaders were able to fast track their own assimilation into the position of the school's leader for improvement.

When new leaders did take immediate action to move their schools forward they focused on making corrective and value added changes for the purpose of improving the conditions for teaching and learning. Keeping the facilitation of student learning and achievement at the core of organizational purpose, new leaders utilized their agency as school leaders to build and maintain a safe, secure and predictable teaching and learning environment for school members. This included building relationships within the school and solidifying standards and protocol regarding student behaviour. By focusing on building professional and supportive relationships between staff members and facilitating positive and respectful interactions with and between students, new leaders believed that they could establish a foundation from which to invoke further change and growth for their schools.

Neophyte principals worked to increase the quality of relationships and behaviour within the school in order to develop the teamwork and member participation necessary for improving teaching and learning processes.

Beginning principals also exercised their agency to develop organizational mechanisms and protocol meant to build and fortify relationships with members of the school community including parents and educational stakeholders. They did this by devising and/or reconfiguring programs and processes designed to connect and open up communication with parents and fellow administrators concerning school programming and curriculum outcomes and expectations.

Chapter Eight

The Beginning Principalship:

Conclusions and Implications

Research Questions

The following research questions have been clarified through this research study:

1. What is the relationship between the roles, agency and practices of early-career principals? This entailed describing the perceptions of both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals regarding their understanding and enactment of their leadership roles, agency and practice.

2. How did beginning principals make connections and enact their leadership with school members? This entailed describing how newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals developed relationships and built trust with their staffs.

3. To what extent were beginning principals prepared for their role? This entailed describing the perceptions of newly appointed principals and one-year-experienced principals pertaining to their preparation experiences.

4. To what extent were beginning principals supported in their role? This entailed describing the perceptions of both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals pertaining to their induction experiences.

For the purpose of synthesizing and conceptualizing research findings, the order of discussion here begins with framing the lived reality of neophyte principals by highlighting notable research findings regarding new principals' roles, agency and practices (RQ1). The focus of discussion then moves to highlight original findings related to elements of new principals' practice in the areas of developing relationships and building trust with colleagues (RQ2). Finally, pertinent research findings regarding preparation and induction are identified and held in retrospect to the real-life world of beginning principals expressed in this study (RQ3 and RQ4). This serves as a means for determining the extent to which respondents were prepared and supported for their new leadership roles and responsibilities.

New Principals' Roles, Agency and Practices

What is the relationship between the roles, agency and practices of early-career principals? This entailed describing the perceptions of both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals regarding their understanding and enactment of their leadership roles, agency and practice.

The conclusions of this study specific to RQ1 illustrate that an interconnected and functional relationship exists between the roles, agency and practices of beginning principals which influences leader identity (figure 8.1). This adds to the conceptualization of the principalship as having a life-world characterized by the interplay of macro structure and

micro agency (Gronn, 2003). Research findings align with existing literature in two areas: the nature and roles of the principalship and the challenges associated with being a new leader. However, findings also add to the literature as the data reveal that new principals' preferred leader identities and ability to exercise their agency were affected. As a result, study findings reveal that beginning principals devised useful strategies to combat the challenges associated with early-phase school leadership in order to enact their leadership for valued ends.

<u>Figure 8.1 – Leadership Identity as Influenced by Roles, Agency and Practices</u>
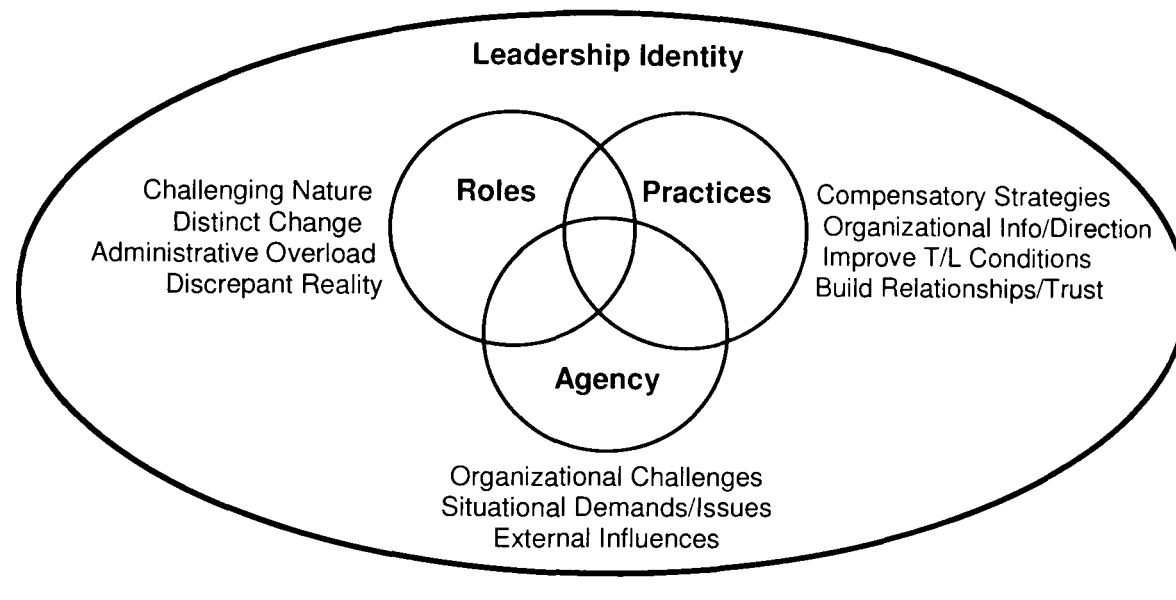
Adjusting to the Nature of New Leadership

The data show that the nature of head leadership proved to be both challenging and problematic for respondents. New leaders' transition to the principalship was distinct and decisive. The immediate shift to employing an aggregate organizational view with new found authority and full responsibility was distinctly different from their previous educational roles. Although newcomers indicated being well aware of the evolving and expanding roles of contemporary school leadership and knew that the job was multi-dimensional and required them to interact with a wide array of stakeholders and constituents (157-165; Bottery, 2007; Crow, 2006; Gronn, 2003; Shields, 2004; Vandenberghe, 2003), they expressed having difficulties adjusting to the demands, pace, and culture of head leadership which left some feeling isolated and filled with self-doubt (178-181). These difficulties and feelings expressed by new principals are common in the literature (Daresh & Male, 2000; Draper & McMichael, 1998, 2000).

Conclusions regarding the challenges of the beginning principalship support existing literature claiming that individuals who take on their first principalship are required to build on their existing professional composite to develop and utilize new knowledge, skills and understandings (161-169; Crow, 2006; Petzko, 2008; Walker & Qian, 2006). New principals were immediately immersed into learning and executing managerial and administrative practices in order to figure out organizational protocols and move forward with school operations. This included learning specialized knowledge for budgeting and as well as how to perform site-based management tasks. However, the data show that newcomers were unaware of the extent to which they would have to negotiate the paradox, ambiguity and challenges of their new leadership roles in determining when and how to take action (Daresh & Playko, 1994; Quong, 2006).

Administrative Overload

The data reveal that although beginning principals identified being subject to the comprehensive, fragmented and fluid nature of the position, they were most challenged by the compounding difficulties brought about an overwhelming administrative workload (174-177). Beginning principals felt that servicing the minutia of administrative tasks and communications distracted them from the core work of improving teaching/learning processes. These findings regarding the predominance of administrative work fortify literature suggesting that contemporary school leaders are constantly pulled in different directions as part of coalescing divergent professional and administrative tasks (Dimmock, 1996; Goldring et al., 2008, 2010; Levin, 2006; Whitaker, 2003).

Consequently, the data reveal that contradictions between new principals' ideal roles as instructional leaders and change agents, and their enacted roles as site managers and organizational administrators, were a source of perplexity and contributed to role strain and frustration (167-174). This discrepancy between intended action and lived reality was reflected in respondents' conceptions of leadership identity. New leaders in this study viewed school leadership to be about facilitating vision and goal setting, providing instructional leadership and leadership development, providing resource support and looking after staff welfare (170-172). However, the data reveal that the nature, roles and challenges of the position restricted newcomers' ability to fulfil this view of the principalship and hindered them

from engaging in new school leadership the way they wanted. The data show that missed opportunities to lead authentically were most noticeable in the area of instructional leadership (178/79). In effect, beginning principals faced difficulties attempting to actualize some of their authentic potentialities and interests they had for leadership.

New Leader Agency

An important finding of this study highlights how challenging situations presented themselves to beginning principals in many different forms which restricted their ability to exercise their leader agency. While trying to learn the rudiments and subtleties of the job, beginning principals were faced with having to address systemic, organizational and situational demands that were policy induced, role-related and people-oriented in nature. Given the variability associated with combining individual new school leaders with the situational demands related to their contextual circumstances, the challenges to new principals' ability to exercise their leader agency were of two general types; those attributable to the dynamics of their organizations and those related to external demands and influences.

Commonly identified challenges specific to contexts and situations within their organizations included active staff resistance, member incompetence and lack of commitment, disruptive relational dynamics and member conflict, as well as restrictions related to administrative design and designations. External constraints included unanticipated tensions related to downloaded extraneous policies and initiatives (189-202). These findings fit within the literature noting the types of challenges connected with new school leadership (Hobsen et al., 2003; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

Compensatory Strategies

A significant finding in this study is that in response to the numerous challenges newcomers faced, beginning principals employed strategies and compensatory measures to alleviate the pressures and reduce the tensions associated with performing multiple roles and completing numerous tasks and routines. These included using aspects of a values-driven bifocal leadership, filtering demands and prioritizing actions, utilizing time-management and organizational strategies and extending their own work hours (181-186). Although it is documented that school leaders sometimes employ creative insubordination and "workarounds" as ways to exercise their agency and enact their leadership (Gronn, 2003;

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Morris et al., 1981), findings from this study are unique to the beginning principalship concerning ways to survive the demands of the job.

New leaders continued to use these strategies and measures. One-year-experienced principals came to realize that the nature and demands of the position including the responsibilities and workload were not likely to change or subside. However, their growing understanding of events and possible outcomes enabled them to develop more secure attitudes, make decisions and enact their leadership with greater ease and certainty (183). Over time, beginning principals harnessed their experience to bolster their confidence and continued to hone the same skills and strategies they initially utilized as a means for surviving their first year in the position.

New Leader Action

The data reveal that given the challenges and new learning associated with early-phase leadership, beginning principals were able to use their authority and influence to invoke what they considered to be positive and value added changes for their schools. New principals' decisions and actions varied considerably and were based on their knowledge and understanding of their respective organizations and their perceptions of what areas needed improvement. Beginning principals used their educational values and beliefs along with their professional experience, expertise and contextual insight as a foundation for determining how best to support staff members and improve organizational structures and processes. Study findings reveal that new principals focused their use of agency and enacted their leadership practices in two specific areas: acquiring organizational information for school improvement and; improving the cultural dynamics and conditions for teaching and learning (202-214). Some used accreditation and school improvement processes for diagnosing and providing direction for their schools while others took action to build relationships within their schools and with their communities as a means of re-culturing their organizations.

These findings fall in line with literature forwarding that school leaders do find areas and spaces in which to assert their authority and exercise their agency in support of their values and what they think is important (Day et al., 2000; Gold et al., 2003; Quong, 2006). These findings also add to the leadership literature by showing that beginning principals acted in consideration of their own leadership needs and abilities to invoke useful change. They

took immediate action to incorporate processes for gaining a better grasp of their organizations as well as endeavoured to establish a safe, secure and predictable school culture for teaching and learning.

Leadership Identity

The data reveal that beginning school leaders begin a process of leadership identity formation after taking on the principalship. Upon being appointed to the post, neophyte principals relied on a number of identity resources which helped them to establish their credibility for being assigned to the post and which formed the basis for their acceptance as specific site leaders. These identity resources included their accumulated experience, expertise and accomplishments as educators, and their reputations as skilled and thoughtful professionals (139/40). Upon entering the post, however, new principals' leadership identity was determined as a result of the subjective meaning and experiences associated with three basic questions; who were they? what did they stand for? and, how should they act? (Sveningsson & Larsson, 2006). For new principals, identity work incorporated the process of securing a sense of self and self image as a school leader in response to the regulative effects of organizational and social processes.

Immediately, new principals learned that their place in the educational process was separate from their colleagues and that that they were recognized by staff members as having significant power and authority, and that they were expected to act in support of subordinates (134-136). In recognizing the nature of the position and acceding to its demands, new principals were challenged to renegotiate their professional identities. Much of what newcomers had to learn was new to them and embedded in the system within which they were immersed (116-118) and, as a result, they were required to learn, practice and execute site-based management responsibilities and related administrative duties and tasks (161-169). These findings support research literature (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Matthews & Crow, 2003) claiming that taking on the principalship precipitates a transformative process involving a role-identity transition.

New principals' professional self images as competent educators were challenged in the face of reduced self-efficacy experienced as a result of new learnings and challenges associated with enacting their new leadership roles. The data show that beginning principals

initially experienced difficulties completing many of the tasks and routines associated with the position and, as a result, many felt overwhelmed, unsure of themselves and their identities as administrators and that their work was never done (174-181). Recognizing that professional identity is derived from a person's self-perception, self image, and self-efficacy in relation to their work (Goodson & Walker, 1991; Stevenson, 2006), new principals worked to make the position their own.

In efforts to move from role-taking to role-making (Hart, 1991, 1993), new principals incorporated their aggregate views and utilized their authority to carry out leadership and management practices in keeping with their organizational visions and their own leadership values (165/66, 169-173). New principals employed a "people first, paperwork second" mentality, attempted to redirect the parochialism of recalcitrant individuals and groups within their organizations and made decisions they believed to be in the best interests of students. This supports research literature highlighting that new leaders mould professional identities and form a new sense of status and self-worth in the role by establishing values and priorities, and by acting in accordance with what one stands for (Tooms, 2003; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006).

Issues

Research findings and conclusions regarding the roles, agency and practices of beginning principals bring into highlight a number of significant issues. The formation of new principals' leadership identity and ability to lead authentically in accordance with their interests and abilities were greatly impacted by the overwhelming and delimiting nature of the position. As such, the issue of needing to find ways to reduce the culture shock, difficulties and disenchantment associated with new leadership needs to be addressed. In addition, the need to assist and support new leaders during the first stages of their role-identity transition is essential.

New principals' difficulties in working the multiplicity of roles including attending to site-based management and financial aspects of leading their organizations necessitates the need for specialized support to help them learn the components and requirements of the job in these areas including how to efficiently integrate them. The new found authority and responsibility associated with new leadership make beginning principals susceptible to the

overwhelming number of communications as everything seems important at first. Beginning

principals have not yet developed a lens for filtering critical information and communications

from less important ones. This brings into focus the issue of needing to address the reality of

incessant emails and compounding "administrivia" downloaded to newcomers.

In addition, since many of the challenges faced by new principals were specific to the

dynamics of their organizations, the issue arises as to whether or not beginning principals

could be better prepared and supported before the onset of the school year in terms of

accessing information, direction and expectations from superiors for addressing site-based

concerns.

Developing Relationships and Building Trust

How did beginning principals make connections and enact their leadership with
school members? This entailed describing how newly appointed and one-year-
experienced principals developed relationships and built trust with their staffs.

Conclusions from this study regarding RQ2 illustrate that beginning principals'

leadership practices included taking immediate action to engage staff members for the

purposes of developing trusting professional relationships. Research findings show that new

principals used specific areas of action and intent to develop relationships and attended to

multi-dimensional criteria when utilizing ways to build trust with colleagues. These unique

findings add to the literature highlighting the discernment and importance of trust for school

leadership (Bryk & Schnieder, 2002; Daresh & Playko, 1994; Davies, 2004; McNabb, 2005;

Sergiovanni, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, 2004, 2009; Wildy & Clarke, 2008).

Early-Phase Engagement Process

The data presented here show that although there were individual differences in

professional expertise and experience as well as variability in the range and selection of

specific actions taken by individual newcomers to develop relationships with their staffs, the

areas of intent remained remarkably the same. Beginning principals attended to three

specific areas of intent as part of developing relationships with their colleagues. Newcomers

initiated connections, interacted and communicated with staff members as well as utilized

collaborative measures most often in sequence. These areas of intent can be conceptualized

as part of a strategic action-based framework of engagement for beginning principals seeking

to develop relationships with their colleagues (figure 8.2). The data reveal that newcomers

developed relationships with their staffs by working through these three areas of intent either in progression, individually or concomitantly in order to support the work of their colleagues and establish their own legitimacy as school leaders (122-129).

Figure 8.2 – Framework of Engagement for Developing Relationships
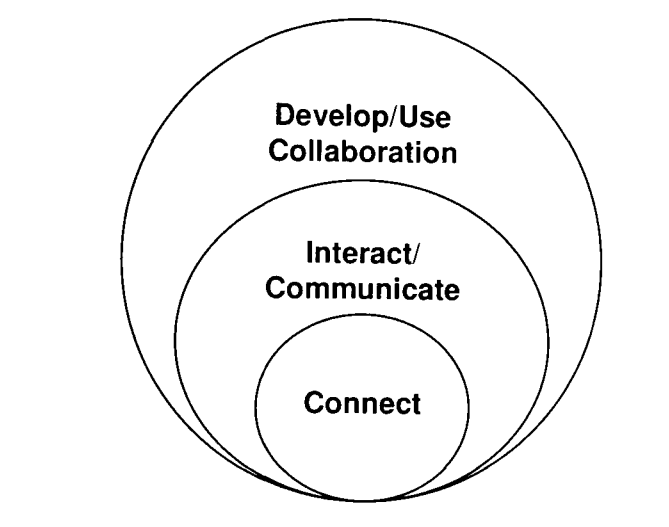
Research findings show that after the announcement of their positions, beginning principals initiated connections with staff members for a dual purpose; to acquire organizational information and insight, and to establish credibility and familiarity for acceptance. Newly appointed principals met with incumbent principals and staff members in order to gain insight and information about the people, programs and processes of their organizations from the viewpoint of becoming insiders as lead authority figures. They connected with site members because they felt they had to provide legitimacy and sound reasons for accepting them as the next school leader. Essentially, for beginning principals, leadership was a relationship and they viewed their credibility to be the foundation of their leadership.

The data presented here show that after officially taking on the position, beginning principals interacted and communicated with staff members to acquire task relevant information for leading and managing including learning about site-specific routines and protocols. This helped new principals learn and lead while on the go. Newcomers also interacted and communicated with staff members for the purposes of expressing and demonstrating their educational and leadership-related beliefs and values so as to foster trust and predictability and inspire their colleagues to give their best efforts. New principals also organized activities and events with staff members to promote a cohesive sense of team and

togetherness and to establish and reinforce a burgeoning new leader-follower dynamic (128). Whether this was contrived (Hargreaves, 1990), values-based or both, beginning principals noted that over time and with increased experience they were able to focus their leadership efforts towards developing and using collaborative mechanism for supporting their staff members and increasing the quality of teaching and learning processes and achieving organizational goals (129). This study supports literature that emphasizes the importance of leaders taking the time to develop trusting personal relationships with their staffs so that subordinates feel comfortable and secure working with them (Gabarro, 1987; Moye, Henkin & Egley, 2005).

Building Trust

Conclusions in this study specific to trust building show that new principals' actions were both a design and function of developing relationships. Beginning principals specifically identified the purpose, importance and processes involved in building trust with their colleagues. As new leaders, they had to establish credibility and gain acceptance, while at the same time garner sufficient trust for leading their colleagues in moving forward with school operations and improvement initiatives. Research findings show that new leaders attended to "three dimensional" trust criteria when configuring ways to interact and communicate with their colleagues as a means of building trust with them.

To supplement credible professional reputations already gained to the point of entry into school leadership, new leaders purposefully made overt attempts to immediately demonstrate their trustworthiness as school leaders. Newcomers felt they had to instil a sense of confidence in their leadership based on who they were as individuals including their reputation as educators as well as their ability to fulfil expectations and provide for staff members' needs (134-136, 140/41). They held that trust was something earned and not easily acquired simply because of their position or newfound authority. Beginning principals also acknowledged that building trust was never a finished product. Rather, they held that it was a process that was always in progress and one which took considerable time and effort (137-139).

This study reinforces and refines the work of research purporting that school leaders attend to specific criteria and areas of consideration when developing trust with organizational

members (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Northfield et al., 2008; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Recent educational research includes, the five "faces" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) or the

five "facets" of trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004); benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability

and competence which are in similar design and align favorably with the four "lenses" of

relational trust as surmised by Bryk and Schneider (2002); competence, respect, personal

regard and integrity.

Three Dimensional Trust

Research findings from this study reveal that beginning principals were even more

discerning in their attempts to garner trust with their colleagues than what is offered in the

current literature. The conceptualization of findings can be described as 3D Trust (Three

Dimensional Trust) whereby new principals referred to three dimensions of self-identified

criteria across two areas of ability (figure 8.3).

Figure 8.3 – Three Dimensional Trust

Task Ability

Consistency
Competence
Knowledge/Skills

Interpersonal Ability

Integrity

- be open/honest and transparent*
- take responsibility*/be forthcoming*
- follow through on promises*/actions match words
- show congruence of actions, policies, values and beliefs (APV)

Care for others	**Character**
- sacrifice self-interest/demonstrate commitment*	- be authentic/sincere*
- have positive regard for others/benevolence*	- make moral/ethical choices
- preserve other's dignity/confidentiality	

* Noted additions to Criteria of Trust as a result of research findings from this study

Beginning principals identified attempts to build trust by attending to two separate

areas of ability with each having three dimensions of action. The two areas of ability can be

grouped into *task ability* and *interpersonal ability*. The three dimensions of actions related to

task ability are knowledge/skills, competence, and consistency. Although beginning principals

were faced with acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for new role learning which

required them to take on a global perspective and execute a number of management and administrative tasks, they also felt they had to perform their duties in a competent manner and on a consistent basis to instil trust (161-169).

The three dimensions of action for *interpersonal ability* include those actions which demonstrate care, character and integrity. The dimensions of care and character set the foundation for integrity which can be demonstrated immediately but is accrued over time. The data presented here revealed that new leaders worked to build trust with their colleagues from the ground up. They did this by interacting and communicating with staff members in a number of ways (143-151) to build trust and support their staffs for the purposes of helping students and achieving organizational goals (figure 8.4).

Figure 8.4 – Purpose-Based Trust Building
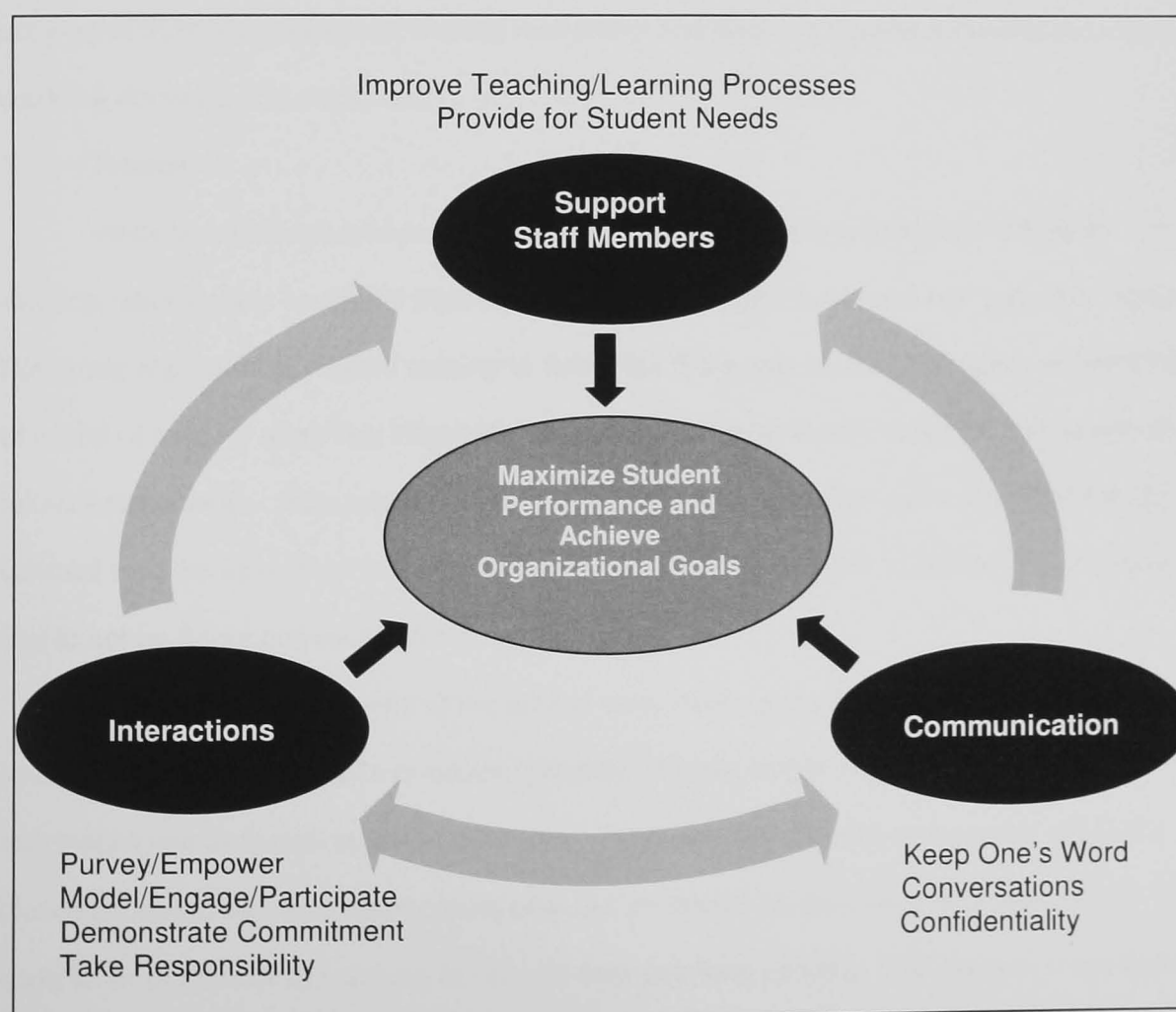
New leaders immediately acted to prove their trustworthiness professionally on an interpersonal basis. This could be because, as newcomers, they were in a deficit position with regards to needing to learn and experience the particular roles, responsibilities and tasks needed to be executed as school leaders and, as such, decided to control what they could

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with respect to how they interacted with their colleagues. This finding is supported in the literature that subordinates feel more empowered and are more likely to trust school leaders that sacrifice self-interest and demonstrate care, integrity and openness (Blake & McNeil, 1998; Rinehart et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

Over time and with more experience, beginning principals felt their trustworthiness as school leaders was judged as a result of their ability to attend to more task-based skilled means of building and maintaining trust including taking action to provide resources and empower their colleagues (142/43). Moving from concentrating on interpersonal means of fostering trust to more task-related areas was a result of having accrued more knowledge and understanding of how school processes worked and what was expected of them as site leaders. In addition, as beginning principals gained experience they were better able to figure out who to trust with regards to sharing leadership and decision making and what resources could be obtained and dispersed.

Issues

Research findings and conclusions pertaining to beginning principals' efforts to develop relationships and build trust with colleagues brings into focus a few important issues. For newly appointed principals moving to new sites there was no formal process or uniformity of action utilized for acquiring information and developing familiarity and acceptance with their future subordinates. New principals were left to their own accord to make arrangements to connect with the incumbent principal and staff members before year's end for introductions and to set up future communications.

In addition, after the end of the school year, newly appointed principals also had to track down their new school's previous principals in order to get more detailed information and insight into their new leadership venues. However, this process was usually left to the discretion, availability and good nature of exited principals as they were no longer under contract or professionally obliged to discuss their previous schools. The issue of transitioning to both the principalship and a new venue concurrently suggests the need for greater structure and support for the process.

Beginning principals noted the importance of establishing credibility, acceptance and trust in order to facilitate followership and commitment for moving forward with school

operations. However, finding the means or enough time to do this was an issue. New principals were hard pressed to learn and execute technical aspects of the job confining them to the office during early stages leaving them unable to adequately attend to relationship building. This is an issue for beginning principals as they lack the leadership experience and credibility to receive the benefit of the doubt in their absence. Newcomers need to spend significant time with staff early on in order to learn about their subordinates and foster trust and support for their leadership.

New Leader Preparation

> To what extent were beginning principals prepared for their role? This entailed describing the perceptions of newly appointed principals and one-year-experienced principals pertaining to their preparation experiences.

Conclusions in this study regarding RQ3 illustrate that beginning principals perceived they were positively influenced in their development for taking on the principalship as a result of the structural arrangement, design and content of their preparation activities. The data suggest that the separation of preparation activities and learnings between universities, school boards and the province produced worthwhile participatory and learning experiences for participants (90-96). Respondents noted that their school boards were the primary drivers for organizing preparation activities which involved them being grouped into cohorts for postgraduate studies and leadership development programs. This type of arrangement was significant for participants as they noted benefitting from key aspects of each structural component.

Effective Combination of Components

The data presented here show that postgraduate studies specific to the field of educational leadership that were taught by experienced or learned individuals positively impacted the pre-appointment learning of aspiring school leaders. Respondents benefitted when instructors and course offerings investigated leadership theory and concepts in a pragmatic fashion for purposes of helping participants understand the basis of their own emerging leadership practice at the time, either as teachers or vice-principals, as it set the foundation and contributed to their leadership practice and decision-making as new school leaders (85-88). These findings confirm claims in the literature that instruction "about" leadership as well as "how" to apply learned knowledge and skills combined with reflective

and critical analysis of educational values and beliefs are integral components of leadership learning (Begley, 2006; Dewey, 1933; Johnson, 2010; Johnson & Kruse, 2009; Schon, 1983).

The data reveal that the content, methods and structure of school board leadership development activities provided respondents with insight into leadership and framed some of the challenges and issues associated with the principalship (92/3). Monthly program meetings were relevant, responsive, technical and timely, which enabled participants to tackle leadership topics and issues directly related to their own experiential contexts within the framework of their particular school boards. Provincial modules were research based and explored policy-based topics related to school leadership and programming. This fostered an increased understanding of educational topics and issues that were concomitantly influencing and being impacted by the school systems in which they worked. As a result of experiencing these types of preparation activities, respondents' perceptions in this study run counter to research literature claiming that principal preparation programs are perceived as being slow to integrate the principal's changing responsibilities and, consequently, continue to prepare aspiring administrators for outdated roles as top down managers (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess & Kelly, 2005, 2007).

The Value of Cohorts

The most obvious lesson from this study concerning the nature and utility of preparation for respondents was the value of cohorts. Respondents from both school boards in this study indicated that being able to participate as part of a cohort was the single most important factor for their individual learning (88-90). Being able to develop a sense of trust and community with like-minded colleagues with varying degrees of educational responsibility and experiences provided a safe place to investigate and disarm educational leadership issues and problems. This supports research explicating the value of cohorts for promoting learning with and because of others in the group (Barnett et al., 2000; Walker, 1995).

However, a second important contribution of the study regarding cohort learning was how participants were able to benefit from informal networking and support for their principalships once in post. The trusting relationships and cooperative ties gained during participation in cohort activities served as personal and professional support links after taking on the principalship. The data suggest that the utilization of cohort groupings for preparation

programs whether for postgraduate or school board directed activities was a core benefit for program providers as well as individual participants. Cohorts enabled school boards to ensure structural cohesion and mutual support for participants' completion of programs whilst also aiding participants to forge meaningful and productive support networks for future school leadership practice (Barnett et al., 2000; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001; Crow & Glascock, 1995).

Leadership Experiences

This study echoes and extends the work of research exalting the importance of authentic leadership experiences and situational learning for aspiring leaders (Crow, 2007; Lave, 1991; Kolb & Boyatzis, 1999). Learning via interactions with principals and/or having participated as a member of an administrative team helped respondents to see some of the tasks and routines associated with the principalship (96/7). However, the utility of less involved preparation experiences including pre-appointment shadowing were left in question. According to respondents, although interesting, shadowing exercises served only to provide a glimpse of the principalship at best (93/4). The data reveal that it was previous vice-principal experience that served to inform respondents more fully as to the nature and responsibilities of school leadership. However, in many instances, the vice-principalship was itself separate, ambiguous and cordoned off from the totality of the principalship (Armstrong, 2005; Calebrese, 1991, Marshall, 1992). This suggests the critical importance of structuring the vice-principalship to include shared administrative functions with the work of the principal and to encourage incumbent school leaders to collaborate with and share responsibilities with vice-principals when performing administrative duties (Brien, 2005; Hartzell, 1991; Matthews & Crow, 2003).

Issues

Beginning principals identified having overwhelmingly positive preparation experiences as a result of the combination of components including the cohort structure of post graduate studies and leadership development programs. Yet, upon entering the post, newcomers experienced a distinct role change in which they expressed having difficulties in overcoming numerous challenges. This reality highlights that new leaders' preparation helped them to learn about leadership related issues and concepts along the pathway to

becoming school leaders but these activities did not necessarily provide aspirants with authentic principalship-type experiences. Also, much of what new principals learned about leadership in preparation may become more relevant and meaningful in the context of their principalships over time.

This brings forth the issue of needing to coalesce the real nature of the principalship with other educational leadership opportunities and activities prior to taking on the post. The most obvious connection is authentic administrative experience that can be gained by participating as a member of a school leadership team including the vice-principalship. However, consideration must be given to providing aspiring school leaders with insight into the social and political realities of community schooling as well as tutelage into the fiduciary and resource management responsibilities involved in performing the principalship.

Beginning Principal Induction and Support

> To what extent were beginning principals supported in their role? This entailed describing the perceptions of both newly appointed and one-year-experienced principals pertaining to their induction experiences.

Conclusions of this study specific to RQ4 regarding beginning principals' induction and support illustrate that formalized mechanisms specifically designed for new principals including real-time training, mentoring and the use of network liaisons were deemed worthwhile in helping newcomers with early-phase leadership. Research findings also highlight the propensity of new principals to devise their own informal means of support to augment system arrangements or take the place of non-existent networking and mentoring mechanisms. In addition, the data reveal that newly appointed principals were lost in transition as they failed to receive and benefit from formal support for transitioning to and through the first days of their leadership tenures.

Once newly appointed principals entered their posts, they were not only confronted with the realities of various challenges but they also began to obtain a better sense of the additional knowledge and skills needed to perform the job more effectively. This reality brought into highlight the importance of receiving real-time training. Although respondents from each of the two different school boards in this study participated in similar forms of preparation, the extent to which they received induction support was markedly different as a

result of the contrasting levels of formalized support mechanisms put in place by their respective school boards (99-111).

New Principal Real-Time Training

New principals who participated in monthly training sessions for first-year principals felt they were able to proactively address school administration issues as well as respond to neophyte-type leadership concerns as they arose (99-101). This type of group-based targeted attention and support enabled them to interact with fellow first-year leaders who were confronted with similar challenges and issues and encouraged the exchange of concerns and ideas in the safety of their new leaders' group. This is consistent with the literature advocating that professional development and support activities should be ongoing, career-staged, seamless, and built on prior learning experiences (Davis et al., 2005; Peterson, 2001).

In contrast, new principals who participated in school leader meetings once a month that included principals of all levels of experience indicated that their experiences were dominated by the inculcation of school board policies and hallmarked by their own silence as a means of saving face with their more experienced colleagues (105/6). The significance of this discrepancy illustrates that it is not enough to merely include new principals into the fold but it is also necessary to recognize their phase-related needs and concerns separately. Findings from this study indicate that beginning school leaders, who are prone to feelings of self-doubt (Parkay & Rhodes, 1992) and vulnerable to the criticism of peers and supervisors (Normore, 2004), would be best served if they were to receive school board directed "in-post training" and support that is singularly devised for new leaders.

Mentoring and Network Liaisons

The data reveal that new principals who received formal mentoring from their school boards felt they were better able to accept and confront new leadership challenges knowing that they had a well-respected, experienced and retired colleague with whom they could share their thoughts (102/3). The fact that mentors were retired principals and serving in a supportive capacity, and not a supervisory role, meant that they were able to build trusting relationships that encouraged the risk-taking and disclosures necessary for growth. For mentees, this enabled the development of "adaptive confidence" (Quinn, 2004) as a result of

being able to acquire technical information and knowledge as well as receive assurance and insights through coaching and counseling from their mentors. Notwithstanding considerations of fit and quality of mentors, these findings align with existing literature that champion the utilization of specialized support and mentoring for beginning principals (Daresh, 2010; Ehrich, Hansford & Tennent, 2004; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006).

The data show that new principals felt they benefitted from the support of senior-level school board personnel who served as liaisons for newly appointed principals (101/2, 104). Through their liaisons, new principals were able to gain system awareness and ascertain networking links with appropriate school board contacts for resource, policy and program information, as well as communicate their own leadership and school progress and voice specific concerns to be considered by school board authorities. In addition, beginning principals felt that this type of connection and interaction with school board members revealed a legitimate personalized interest in their leadership circumstance and demonstrated a commitment to their professional development by superiors. Conversely, newcomers who received limited guidance and networking support felt isolated and disconnected (116-118). These findings suggest that the time and effort spent by school boards to help new principals connect and network serves both a practical and professional purpose for both factions.

Informal Support

The data presented here reveal that, in the absence of school board support, or as a means to shore up formal support structures already available, neophyte principals devised their own informal mechanisms of support and networking to get information, insight and ideas for moving forward in leading their schools. Usually, this included dialoguing with fellow principals and school administrators, both new and experienced, who were already trusted personal friends and/or respected colleagues. In some instances this meant calling upon former cohort colleagues from postgraduate and/or leadership development programs. New principals preferred to approach former and present colleagues who they respected as educators and felt safe sharing their problems with. These findings match literature claiming that new school leaders typically harvest the insight and guidance of trusted others to learn the nuances of the principalship and combat the isolation and challenges of early-phase leadership (Barnett, 2003; Shoho & Barnett, 2006).

Lost in Transition: The Crossover Gap

The most obvious of the implications related to findings from this study regarding the induction of beginning principals centres on the importance of specialized support and mentoring for being able to help newly appointed principals transition through what can be referred to as the "crossover gap" (figure 8.5). Beginning principals in this study were "lost in transition." From the time of their announcement as a new principal for the following year up until they began their post in early August newly appointed principals had to transition themselves out of their current postings and into their new posts. Also, from the first days of their paid designation until the commencement of the new school year, newcomers continued to transition themselves to take over as the school's new leader and worked to put things into place for school start up. During this period of transition and crossover newly appointed principals noted a gap in their formalized professional support (112-115). There was a gap in support between the preparation they received prior to being announced a principal and the induction support they received after the onset of the school year.

Figure 8.5 – The Crossover Gap
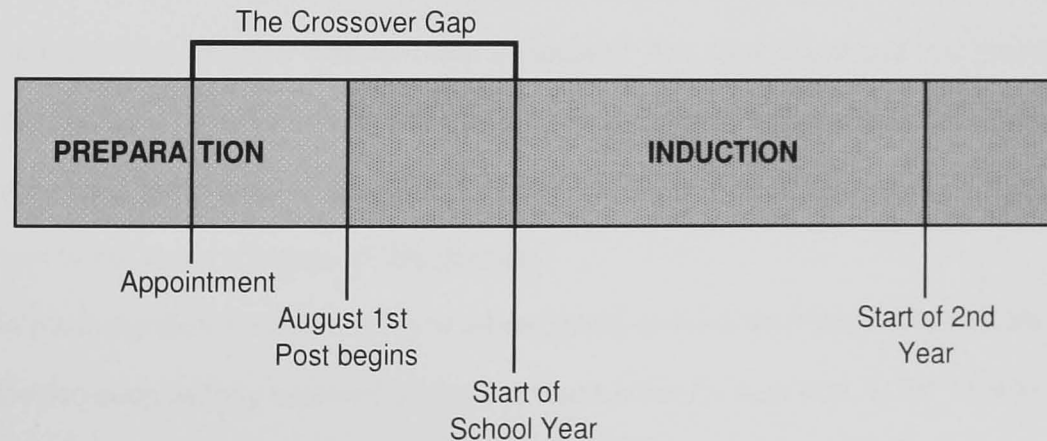
Notwithstanding the range of personal traits, leadership strengths and abilities newcomers brought to the fore, the data reveal that immediately after being announced as newly appointed principals, respondents felt unsure and unprepared in how to transition out of their existing roles and into their new leadership roles. Regardless of whether new principals were new or familiar with their school sites, they were responsible for learning about and gaining an aggregate view of the contextual, programmatic and cultural elements of their organizations as well as required to get up to speed on school board policies and leader

protocol. In some cases, newly appointed principals were asked to participate in hiring staff, school planning and goal setting before year's end. In light of this dynamic, waiting until after the job was in full swing to provide any sort of professional support and guidance for new leaders was not prudent and could be viewed as an unfortunate oversight by superiors.

Finally, while the data speak to the value of mentoring while in post they also suggest that mentoring could be utilized as a means of assisting new school leaders during the early phase of their tenure starting immediately after their announced positions. Mentors could immediately assist newly appointed principals to set up information and resource networks as well as help set things up for the start of the next school year by working through core responsibilities and concerns related to the principalship.

Issues

Since much of what new principals have to learn is realized as a result of experiencing the post itself, supporting this process is essential. The issue that many respondents in this study were left to fend for themselves during this time is troubling. Findings from this study illustrate that beginning principals from one of the school boards felt they benefitted from receiving specialized support for their new leader needs including real-time training, network liaisons and mentoring. So why abandon new principals? The literature shows that providing induction support as a cohort in continuation of support provided during preparation is part of what is known as a "wrap around" program (Davis et al., 2005). This is worthwhile. However, it is important to not leave any gaps in this process.

The most significant issue relating to all respondents involved in this study was the lack of transition support they received during the time frame characterized as the "crossover gap." For newly appointed principals, the crucial moments of transition into their new leadership roles present many time sensitive challenges and key learnings for starting their leadership tenures successfully. Given the current challenges facing educational jurisdictions regarding the attrition and retirements of current school leaders and the difficulties associated with the recruitment and retention of quality candidates, it is only prudent to find ways to fully support those invited to take on the principalship. If school boards are really interested in making special efforts to support new principals then providing individualized mentor support for newcomers including the time of transition to the post is imperative.

Agenda for Further Research

The agenda for further research extends from a number of research claims that are made in relation to the analytical findings and conclusions from this study. It is important to remember, however, that although these research claims are internally consistent within the studied group of this research endeavour they are not intended to be, nor should they be considered to be, external generalizations. Therefore, these specific research claims would definitely benefit from further investigation. The localized nature of the relatively small sample size of the study in conjunction with the fact that findings were generated from the self-reported perceptions of a specific group of participants suggests that any of the research claims mentioned below could benefit from conducting studies of an increased size while still maintaining an appropriate focus and scope. Further research studies could include incorporating longitudinal exploration and utilize multi-case comparative analysis when possible.

Major research claims warranting greater examination include the notion of the 'Crossover Gap' experienced by beginning principals during transition, and 'Three Dimensional' or '3D' Trust utilized by beginning principals as part of developing trusting relationships with colleagues immediately after their appointment to the post. Also, research claims related to preparation and induction including the participant-expressed benefits of participating in cohorts and receiving specialized support after the start of the school year may benefit from further study and analysis. In addition, the relationship between beginning principals' roles, agency and practices could be more deeply studied and analyzed for their connections to the construction and development of leadership identity.

Bridging the Crossover Gap

I used the phrase 'Lost in Transition' to describe the predicament beginning principals found themselves in after experiencing a 'Crossover Gap', noted as the absence of instruction, direction or support that could have been received during the time between the preparation they received prior to their principal appointments and the support they received after the start of the school year. Given the complexities associated with concurrently transitioning out of one post and into another for the first time, along with experiencing a heightened sense of vulnerability and uncertainty as to what may lie ahead and what needs to

be learned and executed as newly appointed principals, research exploring how to support new principals during this time period could be extremely valuable. Specifically, research may explore how best to help newly appointed principals learn about the people, processes, cultures and needs of their organizations that they are being asked to lead. However, questions arise as to whether this is best done as part of preparation or as induction after appointment? Further research into how school boards and mentors could assist newly appointed principals could be used to configure viable preparation-induction programming for aspiring and neophyte principals.

Getting Perspective on 3D Trust

Further research to dismiss, adapt, develop and/or fortify the conceptualization of Three Dimensional Trust could be conducted with a greater number of participants in a variety of school settings. Aspects regarding the structure, viability and utility of attending to such a Three Dimensional model for building trust by beginning school leaders could be examined. In fact, the research claim relating to the conceptual model regarding beginning principals' trust building can be examined in greater depth to develop or question its suitability for other populations of beginning principals. There could be inquiry into the understanding, value, use or non-use of specific 'three dimensional trust' criteria between beginning principals and different groups of school members in a multitude of educational settings.

In more general terms, future research could explore the nature and forms of trust exercised and experienced by new school leaders and their staffs. This could involve examining whether or not new principals and school members experience different levels of trust during the initiation phase of succession. Perhaps there are different types of scenarios which influence the need and/or development of trust. As suggested in this study, do beginning principals actually move from interpersonal forms of building trust to more task-based means over time and with more experience onsite? And, is the notion of 3D trust generated by beginning principals in this study really agreed to or even deemed worthwhile by trustors in this study or between beginning principals and staff members in other educational settings? The test will be to see if the concepts of trust and trust building are important to more than just the sixteen beginning principals interviewed in this study.

Cohorts and Support

An additional area for further investigation pertains to the overwhelmingly positive response of participants regarding the use of cohorts for post-graduate studies and school board directed leadership development and induction programs. This raises important questions about the efficacy of socialization processes and content and more importantly points to the primacy of how to structure preparation and support activities to better prepare beginning principals for the nature of the position. Was the experience of shared learning and networking ties gained from cohort-based preparation a positively perceived product of group-based learning related to the nature of the two school boards' leadership programs involved in this study in particular? Or, is this something that is being experienced elsewhere, or could be experienced in other venues? Also, further research could investigate the efficacy of cohort-based specialized support for first-year principals and how it is used, or could be used in other educational jurisdictions.

The "RAP" on Leadership Identity

If, as is noted by beginning principals in this study, there is an interconnected relationship between aspects of their roles, agency and practices and that they experience a distinct role change when entering the principalship, then how does this affect their professional identity? Thus, another interesting avenue for further research is the exploration of the concept of leadership identity and how this may be developed, changed or rearranged during the early phase of school leadership while neophyte principals experience role-identity transition. Also, since much of what new principals are expected to do is largely determined by educational jurisdictions and the wider policy environment, part of the exploration into newcomers' leadership identities, roles and practices could involve looking at the issue of the impact of policy change on the work of new principals and their staffs.

Overall, research claims related to the findings from each of the four research questions used in this study provide the impetus for conducting further research into aspects of the beginning principalship. Whether future forays separate or combine elements examined in this study, the emphasis should be to better understand current incarnations of early-phase school leadership in order to see and embrace future possibilities of practice.

Post Thesis Reflections

As part of reflecting upon the events and eventualities realized while conducting this study, I felt it was important to engage in a critical overview of the means, methods, difficulties and dilemmas encountered during this research endeavour. In particular, this necessitated addressing specific methodological, analytical and ethical issues. Note, however, that the issues encountered were not mutually exclusive to a particular research domain, but, rather manifest across different areas of the research process. In addition, critical reflection also involved discussing the question of how to handle what could be considered 'truths' presented by research participants in attempting to identify and represent their understandings of their experiences as beginning principals.

Methodological Concerns and Interpretive Design

In choosing an appropriate research methodology to reflect the nature of my inquiry and related research questions I decided to use an interpretive phenomenological approach within the qualitative paradigm. In related fashion, I used semi-structured interviews with participants as the method for data collection. Since two of my four research questions dealt with the examination of beginning principals' perceptions and experiences in the areas of preparation and induction, I chose to direct my study to include those school boards in Nova Scotia that I felt could be considered to be "progressive" with regards to the structure and content of preparation and support provided for aspiring and neophyte principals. In attending to the quality of data, and, more specifically, the adequacy and appropriateness of data sampling, it was important that participants in this study had something to talk about regarding their socialization experiences. This included having participants who could offer insight into the content, sources, methods and outcomes of their professional socialization. It was imperative that I had 'good informants' who experienced the phenomenon of investigation and who knew the necessary information of interest to me as the researcher of this particular study (Robson, 2011).

Issues arose as to the sample size of the study regarding the limited number of participants that could be interviewed affecting both the scope and variation of sampling used in this research study. I was only able to harness four newly appointed principals from each of the two chosen school boards and decided to include the same number of one-year-

experienced principals for the study as an even match for possible comparison sake. The study was limited to sixteen total participants and not designed for the external generalization of results. This was not problematic for me as the intent of the research was to examine the phenomenon of the beginning principalship by describing the research participants' perceptions and experiences as fairly and as faithfully as possible. Consequently, however, a major challenge for me was to carefully discern and distil the 'trustworthiness' of the data collected, analyzed and presented.

As part of an interpretive inquiry, I understood that as the researcher, I was the 'instrument' of investigation for the research process including the interpretation, analysis and the writing up of the final account for the study. I followed the principle that I should never take for granted, nor accept as self-evident, that a particular interpretation could be made from the research data. Therefore, it was important for me to be thoughtful in my attempts to utilize a thorough and self-informed process for how final interpretations were reached. This first began with the interview process itself. As an interviewer I could, to some extent, anticipate being told the 'truth' of things. However, I could not assume that I would be told the whole truth, nor the precise truth, all the time.

To cope with this challenge, I worked to establish comfortability with the study participants prior to interviewing in order to reinforce credibility for leading the research endeavour and to establish a modicum of trust important for conducting individual interviews with each person. I had to quickly build appropriate relationships with participants so that they could trust my intentions and feel at ease when discussing their own experiences and perceptions. Also, I made sure that the majority of questions included in the interview schedule originated in form as the exploration of 'concrete incidents' and experiences in order to get at the 'what' and 'how' of things. In support of this process, I asked follow-up questions and probes in order to clarify and refine responses, as well as, to increase the depth and breadth of perceptions and opinion-based responses.

As part of recognizing the progressive and cumulative nature of interpretation involved in a qualitative study I utilized aspects related to investigator sensitivity and reflexivity to frame insights and understandings developed during successive interviewing and to enhance the interpretive processes of data analysis and written presentation. This included being aware of

the many concepts being discussed by respondents in the contexts in which they were experienced as well as how these concepts and perceptions compared with relevant research literature.

On the occasions in which respondents' perceptions ran counter to those commonly found in established research literature, I made sure to check for internal consistency and determine whether or not findings were corroborated by other members within the studied groups. It was important for me to locate and establish why specific descriptions, perceptions and findings existed as they did. In one notable instance, this meant trying to figure out why almost all respondents in this study reported an overwhelming number of positive experiences regarding post-graduate studies although this was not norm expressed in recent research. Respondents in this study were able to identify a number of similar experiences and reasons as to why this was the case for their particular leadership groups which, in fact, matched documented findings related to literature outlining the positive aspects associated with group-based leadership education and training. As a result, these findings added credence to the argument for continued utilization of cohorts as part of leadership preparation and support programs for aspiring and newly appointed principals within the two school boards involved in this study.

Analytical Processes and Ethical Conventions

In keeping with practices used in qualitative research for enhancing the credibility and confirmability of the final report, I kept a copy of the raw data including transcriptions and interview notes. As part of being thorough, careful and honest in carrying out this research study, I employed a specific sequence of steps in the data analysis process for organizing, making sense of and explaining participants' perceptions and experiences. This process involved describing participants' experiences as well as what was learned from respondents regarding their perceptions pertaining to specific events and processes related to the beginning principalship. Four distinct steps were used in the analysis of interview material; coding, sorting, local integration and inclusive integration (Weiss, 1994).

During the initial coding of the data I developed conceptually-based response clustered tables to aggregate participant responses for the interview questions. This was a challenging yet useful process as interviews were conversational in nature with many

questions and associated responses provided at different times throughout the interview and rarely in the order of the interview schedule's ordered sequence. These charts and associated narratives included revealing details and specifics that readily identified participants. Although I was becoming more familiar with each of the participants through this process, this was not my intention as this is more the preferred emphasis in case study analysis.

I wanted to grasp the phenomenon of early-phase leadership and related issues experienced and perceived by respondents in this study. Therefore, I sorted data according to concepts and themes associated with my four research questions. Here, data was further interpreted and integrated into a combination of diachronic and synchronic elements (Weiss, 1994). This included describing experiences through time as exhibited by starting with preparation through transition and onto current practices as well as describing experiences and perceptions of participants at moments in time within each of the areas of analysis. The process was like funnelling from the wide to the narrow by first taking a wide angle lens to gather data and then by sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on them, salient features and themes emerged (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The goal of the analytic process was to move from description to explanation and, when and where possible, to generate theoretical consideration.

Throughout the analytic process, I refrained from providing an explicit audit trail of analytical material in the text of the thesis. This was in large part due to the nature of the text used and refined throughout the analysis and interpretation of data. This included biographical and organizational information canvassed from each participant. Also, much of the original narrative text used to situate and explain participants' responses included contextual information and references that could directly identify or be used to discern the identity of respondents and/or school boards in this study.

It was important for me that I was able to follow through on my promise and written guarantee to maintain confidentiality and anonymity through this process as best as possible, especially with regards to the finished product available for public consumption and scrutiny. It was also necessary to follow a code of conduct for the research to safeguard the interests and concerns of those taking part because participants were taking about aspects of their

work and commenting on shared experiences with colleagues and the actions of their superiors. Therefore, known perceptions, good or bad, could leave participants extremely vulnerable to the criticisms and repercussions of their workmates.

My heightened sense of awareness for carefully attending to ethical matters was greatly influenced by the difficulties and disputes previously experienced by some Nova Scotia school boards regarding ethics protocol. A number of school boards had formally expressed their displeasure with the fact that previous researchers had used telling information related to organizational contexts and participant descriptions in written reports and, as a result, they felt that their collective and individual sense of anonymity had been violated. I had entered a research environment where some senior-level school board members in the province felt that they had been betrayed citing that, in some instances, a breach of trust had occurred regarding the apparent lack of attention paid to aspects of confidentiality and anonymity involved in research projects conducted in the past.

In view of the climate of distrust towards researchers at the time, I made sure to thoroughly reassure all parties involved in this research process that matters of confidentiality and anonymity would be carefully maintained from my part. To these ends, information or parts of response extracts from participants that could in any way identify the school boards or individual respondents were omitted. Non-traceability of data was an important matter so that even with the aggregating and reassembling of data, individual responses were unknowable (Cohen et al., 2011).

Although, in some instances, providing a specific context for participants' perceptions and descriptions of their experiences can be beneficial for understanding background issues and for gaining a more complete grasp of why respondents thought and acted as they did in specific situations, I felt that any attempt to do so in the iterations leading to the final write-up of the report, beyond the confines of the categories of analysis, would seriously jeopardize the preservation of participants' anonymity. In fact, the unique demographics associated with each of the seven school boards in the province, along with how the school boards are regionally arranged, prevented me from giving even a nominal amount of information about the size and nature of the catchment areas for two school boards referred to in this study.

With regards to data reduction and the selection and refinement of exemplars from participants, I chose extracts that contributed best to the categories and themes being developed. In removing a certain amount of contextual referencing from participant extracts and the analytic narrative I knew that I had to guard against a sanitized and thin description of participants' perceptions and experiences. As such, I utilized extracts that were easily identifiable as examples of the particular issue being discussed. However, I knew that I had to provide more than just well placed data. As such, extracts were embedded within an analytic narrative that illustrated the connections being made about the data. My analytic narrative provided how data related to each other while also identifying their connections to concepts in research literature. From this, the analysis and interpretation of data was well explained within the categories and themes of investigation. As a result, I was able to make specific arguments about the findings related to the research questions of the study.

Letter of Information and Request to Conduct Research

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY
ANTIGONISH. NOVA SCOTIA. CANADA

School of Education   **Date**

Name
Superintendent
Address

Dear _____,

Re: Ph.D Research on Principal Preparation and Induction Processes

My name is Shawn Northfield and I teach at the School of Education at St. Francis Xavier University. I am enrolled in a Doctoral program in educational administration at the University of Nottingham, England, under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Day. When I discussed the focus of my doctoral research with _____, he suggested that I contact you for assistance. Because the _____ School Board is recognized as progressive in the professional development of its leaders, I would like to conduct my research in your board by examining what you have done in the field of leadership development. I am particularly interested in exploring the contexts, purpose, and effects of new principal preparation and induction.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the nature and effects of principal preparation and induction practices in the process of school leadership. This involves exploring the perceptions and experiences of beginning principals. The research study will be conducted in two phases and commence just prior to or at the very beginning of the upcoming school year. Phase 1 is designed to start as soon as possible and consists of interviewing the school board leadership coordinator and four individuals who are newly appointed principals. Phase 2 consists of interviewing four early-career principals who are considered to have one year of experience. The interviews should take approximately one hour and will be scheduled at times that are convenient for the interviewees.

I am prepared to discuss any findings and recommendations with you and your board once the study is completed. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Shawn Northfield, M.Ed
School of Education
902 867 5158
email: snorthfi@stfx.ca

cc: _____

Notice of Invitation to Participate in Research

My name is Shawn Northfield and I teach at the School of Education at St. Francis Xavier University. I am enrolled in a Doctoral program in educational administration at the University of Nottingham, England, under the supervision of Dr. Christopher Day. I invite you to participate in research about the perceptions and experiences of the beginning principalship. I am interviewing both newly appointed as well as one-year-experienced principals. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be conducted at a time and place that is convenient for you. During the interviews, I will use open-ended questions to allow for optimum flexibility, clarity and probing of responses. This research study has been approved by the superintendent and leadership coordinator for your school board. Your participation will not result in any missed school or work.

The purpose of this research is to explore the nature and effects of principal preparation and induction practices in the process of school leadership. Findings from this research will enable new principals, teachers, school districts and government policy advisors to better understand the needs and concerns of new principals during their early years of practice and how to best meet their needs in preparation and induction processes.

It is hoped that an increased understanding into the related complexities of preparation and induction for new principals can assist in the coordination and development of effective ongoing professional development and support mechanisms for beginning principals.

Regards,

Shawn Northfield, M.Ed
School of Education
902 867 5158
email: snorthfi@stfx.ca

Invitation to Participate and Consent Form

Project Title: Learning to Lead: An Investigation into the Roles and Practices of Beginning
Principals – A Canadian Study

Researcher: Shawn Northfield, University of Nottingham, England.

Contact Information:

Shawn Northfield
School of Education
St. Francis Xavier University
P.O. Box 5000
B2G 2W5
(902) 867 5158
snorthfi@stfx.ca

Professor Christopher Day (Supervisor)
University of Nottingham
School of Education
Jubilee Campus
NGB 1BB
tel: +44 (0) 115 951 4423 (int 14423)
christopher.day@nottingham.ac.uk

I invite you to participate in research about the perceptions and experiences of the beginning principalship. The interview will last approximately one hour. Individual, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with participants. During the interviews, I will use open-ended questions to allow for optimum flexibility, clarity and probing of responses. The interviews will be taped and transcribed, with the data then reduced and analyzed inductively. Research participation will not result in any missed school or work. The purpose of this research is to explore the nature and effects of principal preparation and induction practices in the process of school leadership. Findings from this research will enable new principals, teachers, school districts and government policy advisors to better understand the needs and concerns of new principals during their early years of practice and how to best meet their needs in preparation and induction processes. It is hoped that an increased understanding into the related complexities of preparation and induction for new principals can assist in the coordination and development of effective ongoing professional development and support mechanisms for beginning principals.

The information from this research will be used in partial fulfilment of Ph.D. requirements including the completion of a research thesis. I have received permission from the School Board to invite you to be interviewed.

Please read the following carefully. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form on the following page.

As a participant in this audio tape interview, I understand:

- That I am free to refuse to answer any questions posed.
- That at any time during the interview, I may ask to have the audio tape recorder shut off and to have my responses deleted from the transcript.
- That I may withdraw from participating at anytime by contacting you by phone at (902) 867 5158 or email at snorthfi@stfx.ca. Upon choosing to withdraw, I understand that all information and data collected to that point may be kept.
- That I understand that there is no known harm associated with my participation in this research.
- That the audio taped interview will be transcribed by the researcher and/or the transcriber and the information kept confidential.
- That the transcript will not be identified with my name, but will be coded with an identification number. My identity and number will be kept confidential by the researcher and transcriber.
- That the audio tape and the transcript will be kept in a secure location (locked filing cabinet in a locked office) at the place of my employment or home residence.
- That only the researcher and his assistants will hear the audio tapes and/or view the data.
- That I will not be identified as the source of any quotation as only pseudonyms will be used as identifiers.

- That my name, the name of the school, school board or other designation that could identify the participant will not be attached to any document or report.
- That the participants in this study may not be anonymous to each other and may form perceptions after reading the final thesis in which the data will be presented only in aggregate form.
- That all data collected will be destroyed after all avenues of research have been exhausted.
- That two copies of the consent form must be signed, one for my own records and one for the researcher's records.

I understand that the data collected are to be used strictly for analytical research and educational purposes. I give permission for release of the data in the public domain within the confidentiality guidelines outlined above, including use of the data in written reports and educational conference contexts. I realize that my name will not appear in these reports unless I give explicit written permission and that I have read the report in which my name will appear before the report is released. If I have any questions regarding this research, I can contact Shawn Northfield at snorthfi@stfx.ca any time and by phone at (902) 867 5158 between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm.

I hereby give my consent to participate in this research.

Name (Please print) _____

Signature _____

Researcher_____   Date_____

Guiding Interview Questions for Newly Appointed Principals

<u>Background</u>

- How many years have you been an educator and in what capacity?
- When did you decide to become a principal? Why did you want to become a principal? What inspired you to become a principal? Was there a critical incident that caused you to pursue administration? Who or what was the greatest influence on your decision to become a principal?

<u>Personal Socialization</u>

- In general, what do you perceive the *role* of the principal to be? And how have you learned this?
- Has the *role* of principal changed over the years and if so, how?
- What *knowledge* should be emphasized for those entering the principalship? Why?
- Based on your personal knowledge and observation of principals to this point, what *skills* should be emphasized for those *entering* the principalship? Why?
- What personal qualities/traits do you have that you think will help you as a principal? How so?
- As a principal how do you see your role as a *manager*?
- As a principal how do you see your role as a *leader*? Is there a difference?
- What is your *leadership philosophy*? (beliefs about how one should lead)
- What experiences have helped to shape your leadership philosophy?
- What is your leadership "*style*" and how do you perceive it will help you as a principal?
- What core values and beliefs about education and teaching guide your leadership philosophies and practices?
- What *experiences* have led you to these values and beliefs?
- In your first year of the principalship, what do you *look forward to doing the most*? What will be the most rewarding part of the job of being a principal?
- What do you think you will *spend most of your time doing*?
- What is the role you will have with *students* in your job?
- In general, what do you think will be some of the biggest *challenges* facing you in your first principalship?

<u>Professional Socialization</u>

- How were you *selected* to become a candidate for a principalship?
- Describe the *educational* and *formal training* activities that you have experienced in preparation for the principalship. Which ones have been prescribed and which ones have you accessed on your own?
- Which of these experiences have been *most worthwhile* and meaningful for you and why?
- What *information or skills* that you have *gained* from formal preparation do you think will be of most importance to you as a principal?
- How have your leadership philosophies and practices been *influenced*, changed or impacted by your participation in formal preparation programs or informal educational experiences?
- How have your *prior experiences*, values and personal characteristics been used to learn your new role as principal?
- What *informal experiences* have you had that will help you with the principalship? How so?
- In *preparing* for the principalship what have been your *biggest challenges*? Why?
- In your upcoming year as principal, what are the greatest areas of concern that you have? Why? In what ways have you or could you have been prepared to address these concerns?

- In what areas do you feel you could benefit from more time, support or formal preparation?
- How have you been or will you be *supported* as a principal? (What types of induction programs exist? Mentoring?).
- To what or to whom do you look forward to for support during your first year of principalship? Do you have an informal system of support? If so, describe and explain this informal support system.
- By what *accountability* measures or outcomes will your job performance be evaluated and judged and by whom?

Organizational Socialization

- When does or when did the principalship officially *start* for you?
- Since your appointment, how have you been supported in "*transition*" to your role and responsibilities of being principal?
- What types of things did you do to *become familiar with your school*? What experience or activity has been the *most beneficial* for you in this respect and why?
- Describe where you see the school now.
- What is your *vision* for the school? Where do you want the school to be in one year/ three/five years?
- How will you develop *relationships* with your staff?
- How will you instil a sense of *trust* with your staff?
- What expectations do you think the teachers, community and supervisor have of you in your new role of principal?
- Do you have any sense of the *formal and informal power structures* of the school system in which you operate? Can you describe them for me?
- How do you think these structures will help or hinder you in performing your service as a principal?
- How do you think your *leadership practices* will *impact* the school? The work of teachers? Student achievement?
- Describe what you would consider an *ideal day* for you as principal.

Wrap up
- If you were in charge of preparing people for the principalship, is there anything you would add, delete or do differently than what is currently being done?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- What final summary comments would you like to make?

Guiding Interview Questions for One-Year-Experienced Principals

<u>Background</u>

- How many years have you been an educator and in what capacity?
- When did you decide to become a principal? Why did you want to become a principal? What inspired you to become a principal? Was there a critical incident that caused you to pursue administration? Who or what was the greatest influence on your decision to become a principal?

<u>Personal Socialization</u>

- In general, what do you perceive the *role* of the principal to be? And how have you learned this?
- Has the *role* of principal changed over the years and if so, how?
- What *knowledge* should be emphasized for those entering the principalship? Why?
- Based on your personal knowledge and observation of principals to this point, what *skills* should be emphasized for those *entering* the principalship? Why?
- What *personal qualities/traits* do you have that you think will help you as a principal? How so?
- As a principal how do you see your role as a *manager*?
- As a principal how do you see your role as a *leader*? Is there a difference?
- What is your *leadership philosophy*? (beliefs about how one should lead)
- What experiences have helped to shape your leadership philosophy?
- What is your leadership "*style*" and how do you perceive it has helped or hindered you as principal?
- What core values and beliefs about education and teaching guide your leadership philosophies and practices?
- What *experiences* have led you to these values and beliefs?
- In your first year of the principalship, what did you *look forward to doing the most*? What was the most rewarding part of the job of being a principal?
- What did you *spend most of your time* doing last year? – What about this year?
- What was the role you had with *students* in your job? – What about this year upcoming?
- In general, what were some of the biggest *challenges* you faced in your first principalship?

<u>Professional Socialization</u>

- How were you *selected* to become a candidate for a principalship?
- Describe the *educational* and *formal training* activities that you have experienced in preparation for the principalship. Which ones have been prescribed and which ones have you accessed on your own?
- Which of these experiences have been *most worthwhile* and meaningful for you and why?
- What *information or skills* that you have *gained* from formal preparation that seem to be of most importance to you as a principal?
- How have your leadership philosophies and practices been *influenced*, changed or impacted by your participation in formal preparation programs or informal educational experiences?
- How have your *prior experiences*, values and personal characteristics been used to learn your new role as principal?
- What *informal experiences* have you had that helped you with the principalship? How so?
- In *preparing* for the principalship what were your *biggest challenges*? Why?

- In your previous year as principal, what were the greatest areas of concern that you had? Why? In what ways were you or could you have been prepared to address these concerns?
- In what areas do you feel you could benefit from more time, support or formal preparation?
- How have you been or will you be *supported* as principal? (What types of induction programs exist? Mentoring?).
- To what or to whom did you look forward to support during your first year of principalship? What about this year? Do you have an informal system of support? If so, describe and explain this informal support system.
- By what *accountability* measures or outcomes has or will your job performance be evaluated and judged and by whom?

Organizational Socialization

- When did the principalship officially *start* for you?
- Since your appointment, how have you been supported in "*transition*" to your role and responsibilities of being principal?
- What types of things did you do to *become familiar with your school*? What experience or activity has been the *most beneficial* for you in this respect and why?
- Describe where you see the school now.
- What is your *vision* for the school? Where do you want the school to be next year/ three/five years?
- How have and do you develop *relationships* with your staff?
- How did you and do you instil a sense of *trust* with your staff?
- What would you like to know more about the school? How do you propose to gain this information?
- Do you have any sense of the *formal and informal power structures* of the school system in which you operate? Can you describe them for me?
- How do you think these structures will help or hinder you in performing your service as a principal?
- How do you think your *leadership practices have impacted* the school? The work of teachers? Student achievement?
- Describe what you would consider an *ideal day* for you as principal.

Wrap up

- If you were in charge of preparing people for the principalship, is there anything you would add, delete or do differently than what is currently being done?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- What final summary comments would you like to make?

PRINCIPALS

Functions and Duties

38 (1) The principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for the school, including teachers and other staff.

(2) It is the duty of a principal to

(a) ensure that the public school program and curricula are implemented;

(b) keep attendance records respecting every student enrolled at the school and report thereon to the school board, as required by the school board;

(c) take all reasonable steps to secure full and regular attendance at school of the students enrolled in the school in accordance with policies established by the school board;

(d) communicate regularly with the parents of the students;

(e) ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, orderly, positive and effective learning environment;

(f) ensure that provincial and school board policies are followed;

(g) identify the staffing needs of the school;

(h) assist the school board with the selection of staff for the school;

(i) evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff of the school;

(j) assist the school board in the development and implementation of professional-development programs;

(k) encourage teachers and other staff of the school, students and parents to participate in school decision-making through representation on school advisory councils and committees;

(l) participate in the establishment and operation of a school council;

(m) assist the school advisory council in the development of school improvement plans and, upon approval by the school board, co-ordinate their implementation;

(n) assist the school advisory council in the preparation of its annual report;

(o) account to the school board for money received from the school board or any other source;

(p) account to the school board, through the superintendent, for the performance of the school;

(q) co-operate with the staff of other departments and agencies of the Government to better meet the needs of the students in the school; and

(r) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations or assigned by the superintendent. *1995-96, c. 1, s. 38* .

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