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Introduction

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has ever been devoid of instructional aspects. Still other leaders in the field suggest that leaders should lead and allow those who instruct to do what they do best. At the heart of this argument is the often unspoken concern that being a leader and also being responsible for instruction is yet one more thing that an already overburdened administrator must add to his or her already over-full plate of duties and responsibilities. Conversely, curriculum and instruction experts have contended that leaders should be responsible for leading the school into the light, rather than taking on more responsibility for things that they may not be expert in. Still others expect their leaders to be proficient in all aspects of leadership, including instructional leadership.

After collecting a multiplicity of perspectives on the topic of instruction and leadership, questions followed about what is the nature of instruction, what is the nature of leadership and, above all, what is the nature of instructional leadership? Depending on how these terms are defined, there are a variety of permutations of instructional leadership that are contested or agreed upon along an entire continuum of perspectives. Also at point are not merely the definitional aspects of the term but also what it is that is expected of the instructional leader. In short, how is the role preformed, enacted and evidenced in schools across the nation and beyond?

To add to this complexity, we also wonder

Viewing instruction through the lens of leadership provides a perspective that differs from viewing leadership through the lens of instruction. In the first instance, it is leadership that provides the focal point, whereas in the second instance, it is instruction that offers a focus for leadership. Instructional leadership has often been viewed as a “top-down,” or hierarchical, initiative, while its inverse, leadership by instructors may be viewed as a “bottom-up” or “grass roots” strategy. This special issue on instructional leadership attempts to provide a perspective on both of these permutations of leadership and instruction.

Let us begin by viewing instructional leadership as a viable leadership paradigm in its own right. This is a far from uncontested concept. Academics in the field of educational leadership have questioned whether leadership

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Robert E. White began his teaching career in 1972 and has taught extensively in public school systems across Canada. He is currently an associate professor at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. Research interests include critical pedagogy, leadership, globalization and social justice issues. He has numerous journal publications, as well as seven books on topics relating to critical literacy, pedagogy, leadership, globalization in education, and qualitative research. Robert has received four tri-council research grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. His most recent books include *Qualitative research in the postmodern era: Contexts of qualitative research*. (2012), and *Democracy and its discontents: Critical literacy across global contexts*. (2015). He is also assistant editor for the *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. In 2013, Robert was awarded the President's Research Award for St. Francis Xavier University. He was also awarded the Critics' Choice Book Award for *Qualitative research in the postmodern era* by the American Education Studies Association.

about not merely how one operationalizes instructional leadership, but also what the term itself uncovers or covers up. For example, if one is considered to be an instructional leader, is (s)he always and only an instructional leader? To be sure, this would be an onerous task for any administrator. Realistically, however, it is clear that instructional leadership must be considered along with other forms of leadership. While one may be an instructional leader for much of his or her teaching day, there are other types of leadership that also must be introduced from time to time.

Unfortunately, this is often an issue with leadership of any kind. It seems to be easily viewed as a unique and all-encompassing label that is not open to interpretation, mutation or expansion. Even wide-ranging terms such as distributed leadership have parameters that would suggest at some point that not everything that the leader does is distributed. It is much the same with instructional leadership. While it may be studied *in situ*, it is not always evident in every setting. Perhaps, instructional leadership is like many other forms of leadership in that it functions as part of a larger group of skill sets that may be a part of what the effective leader does on a day to day basis without being the sum total of

what that leader is expected to accomplish.

This special issue is not aimed at settling the score once and for all about what is meant by "instructional leadership" and what it means to be an instructional leader. Rather, this issue offers a thoughtful discussion of a number of aspects of this topic. First, Dean Fink takes a look at the term instructional leadership and notes that instructional leadership "is consistent with a production model of education" that tends to reduce teaching and learning to technocratic terms. In developing his ideas about effective teaching and learning through benevolent leadership, Dr. Fink discusses the importance of trust issues in all that we do as teachers and leaders of teachers.

Bruce Sheppard follows with an article that questions whether school principals, as instructional leaders, represent a viable concept or if it is merely a construct that has already passed its due date, even though it has maintained considerable currency, as principals continue to be held increasingly accountable for the achievement of their students. Professor Sheppard reviews current iterations of instructional leadership and challenges representations of it as an inspectorial, hierarchical leadership approach in which the principal is sole leader and an expert

teacher who ensures that all teachers follow his or her lead.

Stephen Anderson, Joelle Rodway and Anna Yashkina follow with an empirical study of the Ontario government's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), which is charged with evaluating the academic achievement of students across Ontario, Canada. Results of these standardized assessments are meant to assist instructional leaders identify needs, goals and plans for improving student learning, as well as to inform the public regarding factors affecting school quality. The study summarized here was contracted by EQAO and carried out during the 2010-2011 school year.

In the next article, Valerie Kinloch addresses questions directly related to teachers as instructional leaders in their own right. For Professor Kinloch, such questions include what it means to teach for social justice, and how we can take an effective stand against racism, violence, and homophobia in schools and communities. She asks important questions about care and compassion and how instructional teacher leaders can co-construct classroom spaces and positive experiences with schools in arriving at a re-imagining of the world within which students might want to live.

Patrick Jenlink anchors this special issue

by outlining a three-tiered approach to instructional leadership that incorporates not only the instructional leader's duty to those within the educational setting and to society, but also the instructional leader's obligation to consider personal ethical values and commitments. In arguing for the importance of "ethical self" and "duty to self," Professor Jenlink examines the instructional leader's work in providing an environment that sustains conditions for ethical learning as a defining element of the purpose of schooling.

Although framed through differing perspectives and viewed from different angles, contributors to this special issue on instructional leadership examine and discuss a contested landscape, in turns geographic, intellectual and value-laden. It is a landscape interspersed with issues of productivity, professionalism and policies. Instructional leadership is a relatively new face of educational leadership, and the contributors to this issue present remarkable and thoughtful insights. Of great importance to each of these authors are issues of what it means to be an instructional leader and how this is put into practice while ensuring that students continue to be well served through their educational experiences. An implicit theme, at times explicitly stated, that runs through all of these contributions is the underlying concern with social issues that relate to leadership and instruction in schools across the nation and around the world. We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed working with our contributors in bringing this volume to fruition

– Stephanie Chitpin &
Robert E. White

Dean Fink

Dean Fink is an international consultant and 'best selling' author. He is a former superintendent and principal with the Halton Board of Education in Ontario Canada. In the past 19 years, Dean has made presentations or conducted workshops in 31 different countries. He has published numerous book chapters and articles on topics related to organizational effectiveness, leadership and change. Dean is the author or co-author of *Changing our schools* (McGraw-Hill, 1996) with Louise Stoll (University of London in England), *Good schools/real schools; Why school reform doesn't last* (Teachers College Press, 2000), and *It's about learning and it's about time* (Taylor Francis, 2003) with Louise Stoll and Lorna Earl of the University of Toronto, *Sustainable leadership* with Andy Hargreaves of Boston College for Jossey Bass (2006), and *Leadership for mortals: Developing and sustaining leaders of learning for Corwin* (2006) and *The succession challenge: Building and sustaining leadership capacity through succession management* (Corwin, 2010). His most recent book is *Trust and verify: The real keys to school improvement* (IOE Press, in press). His books have been published in over 15 languages.

Trusting leaders: How leaders of learning give and earn trust

DEAN FINK

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Abstract

This article contends that the much-publicized concept of instructional leadership – the strong charismatic, hands-on leader who orchestrates all aspects of a school's operation and continuously monitors teaching – reflects an out-of-date view of educational leadership. Over time, instructional leadership has broadened into educational leaders as leaders of learning. Today it includes leadership practices aimed at enhancing teachers' professional learning and growth through the development of social capital that builds bonds of trust between and among staff members, students, and the larger community. There is an increasingly rich body of evidence that shows the importance of trust in educational growth and development and may well be the key ingredient of sustainable school improvement. Leaders of learning at all levels of the educational enterprise build strong bonds of professional trust, but not blind trust or 'look the other way trust.'

Leaders of learning are trusting leaders, but they trust consciously, deliberately and purposefully. It was American President

Ronald Reagan in his dealing with Mikhail Gorbachev who made the phrase, "trust but verify" famous. It is natural and sensible to distrust or at least withhold trust from some people, institutions and situations. Trust is given, withheld, or abrogated. The challenge for leaders of learning is to know when to 'give' their trust and when to verify that the risks they take are appropriate. Based on extensive research in three school districts from across Canada, this article provides guidance for leaders to assess issues of trust and distrust.

Introduction

I have never have felt comfortable with the term "instructional leadership." To me it smacks of a directive, instrumental, "leader knows best" style of leadership that has more to do with the military and the Ford assembly line than with schools. In a world where the popularity of a concept is more important than its substance, instructional leadership is consistent with a production model of education that considers the school leader to be the foreman¹ ensuring that the workers do what they are supposed to do by following the best practices *du jour*. The

¹ I have chosen this word consciously. It reflects the tone of the production model as masculine and in ways misogynist. It is interesting that policy makers who are overwhelmingly male in many states of the U.S. have attacked teachers who are overwhelmingly female.

purpose of schools is student learning, and leading teaching for learning is the leader's job. This notion is a deeply conservative perspective and a somewhat contrarian view of accepted leadership dogma that the system is about higher test scores. In my view, instruction is merely a technocratic term for teaching and that is why this article addresses teaching and learning and the leader's responsibility for both.

In a my long career in education,² I have always responded best to leaders who created a setting that brought out the best in me as a professional teacher and school leader by trusting me to do everything in my power to help my students to grow academically, socially and personally, and being there for me when I needed help or encouragement. As a leader, I never saw myself narrowly as an instructional leader, a mere intellectual accountant, but rather as a leader of learning. In my travels over the past 20 years, I have observed many different leaders in many different settings and these contacts have reinforced my view that leaders of learning are "ordinary people who through extraordinary commitment, effort, and determination have become exceptional and have made the people around them exceptional (Fink, 2005, xviii). We're not talking about heroes and heroines or charismatic visionaries but, rather, real people who possess the potential we all have within us to inspire greatness in others.

As Finnish researcher Petri Salo and his colleagues have written:

The concept (of instructional leadership) reflects an out-of-date view on leadership; a strong, directive hands-on principal using his/her authority to supervise teachers in classrooms (Hallinger, 2003, 329–335; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012, 627–628). Over time, the configuration of instructional leadership has broadened. Today it includes leadership practices aimed at enhancing teachers' professional learning and growth (talking and collegial dialogues) and various mediating educational and organizational practices (missions,

goals, school climate, curriculum, etc.) by which principals are to support successful teaching practices and share the responsibilities of instruction (Robinson et al., 2008, 638–639; Southworth, 2002, 76–86).

Leaders today are caught between two competing paradigms of educational policy. In countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, and incrementally in some Canadian provinces like Ontario and British Columbia, a production model built around audits, markets, test scores, and narrow managerial conceptions of leadership drive educational policy. Within this model, school leaders are increasingly pressured to be instructional leaders and, somehow, magically raise test scores. As one Ontario principal confided to me, "all my superintendent is interested in are my school's scores on EQAO (Educational Quality and Accountability Office). He asks about nothing else. If for some reason, like an influx of special education students, my scores are down, I am told 'get them up.' If they are at or above the board's average he wants them higher. Absolutely nothing else matters."

A second orientation is a professional model of education that still exists to a greater or lesser extent in most Canadian provinces, and Nordic countries, particularly Finland. As Salo and his colleagues explain:

Today, principals find themselves at the centre of professional crossfire, between, on one hand, management practices built on efficiency, accountability and consumer orientation and, on the other, a collegial culture of trust and professional traditions built on ideals of democratic citizenship (2014, p.5).

Policy makers are justifiably preoccupied with What Works? If one compares the production model, as exemplified by the U.S. and U.K, and the professional model, that still infuses Canadian and Finnish educational systems, and uses the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a metric technocrat's love, clearly systems built on traditions of

trust and professionalism "work."

For example, if we examine the U.K. educational system and the present U.S. system as exemplars of a production model, and Finland and Canada as examples of professional models and use the results of the 2009 PISA, we can conclude that professional, high trust systems produce far superior student achievement. Canada and Finland significantly outperformed the United States and United Kingdom in reading, mathematics and science (OECD, 2010 b). Canadian and Finnish students are more resilient students. "Resilient students are those who come from a disadvantaged socio-economic background and perform much higher than would be predicted by their background" (OECD 2010 a, p. 62). Canada and Finland are well above the OECD average while the United States and the United Kingdom are well below that average (OECD, 2010 a, pp. 61-62). Similarly Canada and Finland get more equitable results. The percentage of variance in student performance explained by socio economic status in Finland is 7.8%, Canada, 8.6 %, the United Kingdom, 13.7% and the United States 16.8 %, (OECD, 2010 a) and greater efficiency in terms of money and time. Finland and Canada spend 3.6% and 3.5% percent of GDP respectively on non-tertiary education, whereas the United States and the United Kingdom spend 4.0% and 4.4% respectively (OECD, 2008). Both Finland and, particularly, Canada have responded to changing immigration patterns significantly more effectively and more quickly than either the United States or the United Kingdom (OECD (2010a). Interestingly, both Finland and Canada rate among the most trusted countries in the world (Transparency International, 2010).

There is an increasingly rich body of evidence that shows the importance of trust in educational growth and development. Well-regarded researchers Alan Daly

²I spent 34 years as a practitioner, teacher, principal and superintendent in Ontario Canada. In the past 20 years I have travelled to 31 different countries and written 7 books, numerous articles and book chapters.

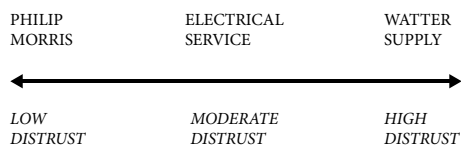
and Janet Crispeels have concluded that, “Empirical evidence has ... shown that several aspects of trust – benevolence, reliability, competence, integrity, openness, and respect - are strongly connected with school performance and student outcomes” (2008, p. 30). Similarly, in their much referenced work, Bryk and Schneider state that “we have learned, based on school reform in Chicago that a broad base of trust across a school community lubricates much of a school’s day to day functioning and is a critical resource as local leaders embark on ambitious school improvement plans” (2002, p. 40). New Zealand’s Viviane Robinson concludes, after her analysis of the change literature, that “there is compelling evidence that the level of trust among the members of a school community makes an important difference to the way they work together and to the social and academic progress of students” (2011, p.34). Additionally, there is a burgeoning business literature that ties levels of trust to corporate success (Covey, 2012; Hurley, 2011). In summary, leaders of learning, as I have defined them at all levels of the educational enterprise, build strong bonds of professional trust, but not blind trust or “look the other way trust.”

Leaders of learning are trusting leaders, but they trust consciously, deliberately and purposefully. It was American President Ronald Reagan in his dealings with Mikhail Gorbachev who made the phrase, “trust but verify,” famous. It is natural and sensible to distrust or, at least, withhold trust from some people, institutions and situations. Trust is given, withheld, or abrogated. The challenge for leaders of learning is to know when to ‘give’ their trust and when to verify that the risks they take are appropriate. Leaders of learning, however, understand their context and learn to determine which people, institutions and organizations to trust and which to distrust. Consider the following example of institutional trust and the interplay of trust and distrust.

Institutional Trust

Have you ever thought about how much we blindly trust people and institutions we

don’t know and probably will never encounter? Just for a moment, mentally retrace your steps this morning from the time you got up to your arrival at your workplace. If you are like me, the first thing you did after waking is to turn on the light, then head to the bathroom to take care of nature’s call, have a shower or bath, then you dress, and have breakfast before you drive to work. Each step of the way you trusted faceless people to ensure your accommodation had electrical power for lights and hot water, other nameless souls who made sure the water was there when you turned it on and the sewers worked to eliminate waste. You dressed in clothes made in many places around the world by anonymous people, and then sat down for breakfast or picked up something at a fast food stop on your way to work. Regardless, at breakfast you are obliged to trust one of a few major international corporations such as, Nestles, Nabisco, Kraft, General Foods, or Kellogg’s, a local (in some cases like Wal-Mart, international) supermarket chain or a fast food franchise. You have to trust that your government’s regulatory schedule and enforcement ensures quality and, hopefully, nourishing food, to say nothing of its backing the currency you used. Once in your car, you have to trust that other drivers follow the rules of the road, that your car operates according to the manufacturer’s specifications, and that your country’s distribution system has sufficient reasonably priced gasoline (petrol) available to keep your car on the road. While you may trust all these institutions, you probably trust some more than others. For example I have high trust in our water system, only modest trust in our electrical system because we frequently have experienced both black outs and brown outs, and I have very low trust in the companies who make processed foods, especially those owned by the cigarette manufacturer, Philip Morris. I would diagram my levels of trust this way:



Now let us continue to think about our morning. As I drive to work, I am always conscious that some drivers are not as cautious as I am. While I’m not paranoid, I drive with a certain amount of distrust in the skills of my fellow drivers. As I pass a gasoline (petrol) station, I notice the price has gone up significantly overnight. Since this is the beginning of a long weekend, I suspect the petroleum industry is out to make a swift windfall profit. I am hugely distrustful of the monopolistic practices of this industry. When I arrive at work, sitting on my desk is a report on education by a Rupert Murdoch newspaper. Since it will be predictably critical of publically supported education and manage, even in its news reports, to suggest that most public services should be privatized, I will read the news report with a certain amount of skepticism and distrust. I would diagram my levels of distrust this way:



My purpose in describing these little vignettes is to suggest that trust and distrust are not opposite ends of a single continuum – trust is good and distrust is bad – but two different yet interconnected constructs that guide our behaviour in daily life and have application in our understanding of educational leadership and change strategies.

Moreover, there is an impressive body of evidence from multiple disciplines to suggest that institutions that extend trust to their employees unleash their initiative, creativity, and innovation. At the same time, it would be naïve to suggest that all teachers, principals, or senior officials are sufficiently competent, motivated, or energetic to create optimum learning environments for all students. Distrust, therefore, becomes a logical and, perhaps, necessary aspect of policy making at all levels of the educational enterprise, and manifests itself in verification systems

like standardized tests, various reporting procedures, and state inspections of schools and teachers.

Trust/Distrust Matrix

Definitions of trust abound in the literature on the topic but almost all seem to have threads of three fundamental concepts, honesty, reliability and caring (Kutsyuruba, et al. 2010; Tshannen-Moran, 2004). Another word that also permeates the trust literature is “vulnerability.” In trusting, one makes oneself vulnerable to other people, organizations, institutions, or even to an idea or ideology. The more one trusts, the more one has confidence in the other, and the more vulnerable one becomes if trust is betrayed. Conversely, distrust reflects a lack of confidence in the “other,” and the more one distrusts the less vulnerable one becomes.

Roy Lewicki and his colleagues (1998) define trust in terms of “confident positive expectations regarding another’s conduct, and distrust in terms of confident negative expectations regarding another’s conduct.” They use the term, “another’s conduct,” in a very specific but encompassing sense, addressing another’s words, actions, and decisions (what another says and does and how he or she makes decisions). By “confident positive expectations,” we mean a belief in, a propensity to attribute virtuous intentions to, and a willingness to act on the basis of another’s conduct. Conversely, by “confident negative expectations” (p. 439), we mean a fear of, a propensity to attribute sinister intentions to, and a desire to buffer oneself from the effects of another’s conduct

At one end of the trust continuum, high trust is almost “blind” trust in another person, organization or institution such as my trust in the water supply. From this stance, people have total confidence in the “other” and they have made themselves totally vulnerable to their intentions. If, for some reason, my water supply became contaminated, I’d feel a real sense of betrayal; whereas, if my electrical power went off, I would feel less vulnerable because I have

flashlights (torches), candles and portable radios stashed in accessible places. At the other extreme, low trust, a person has little reason to trust and has no expectations for positive results from the relationship and limited vulnerability. I don’t expect much from most processed foods so I try as best I can to avoid them.

Similarly, high distrust is a stance in which a people feel totally vulnerable to the other and have absolutely no confidence in the good will or intentions of the other and must take every precaution to protect themselves. Canada, where I live, is a “car culture.” Our train system is quite underdeveloped compared to most European countries and we are very dependent and, indeed, wedded to our automobiles for transportation and are, therefore, quite vulnerable to the whims and wiles of the petroleum industry. In a low distrust stance people anticipate no “sinister intentions” directed at them and feel only mildly vulnerable, if at all, to the conduct of the other. I know my fellow drivers are not “out to get me” and I’m confident that, if I stay alert and act with caution, I should be able to avoid any trouble on our roads.

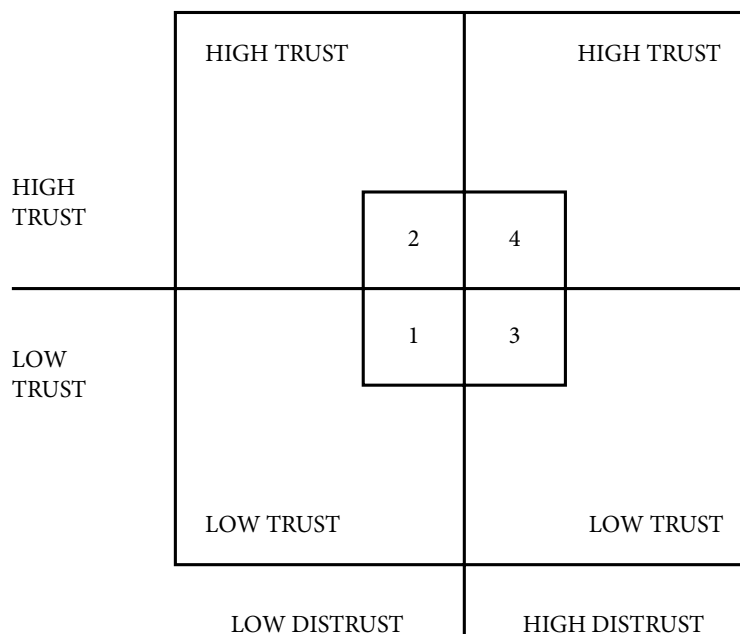
When combined, the two concepts, trust and distrust produce the following matrix that provides a useful way to describe diverse contexts and complex conditions internationally:

The Quadrants

Each of the quadrants in this matrix describes a theoretical stance that reflects the interactions of the two constructs, trust and distrust. Depending on the issue and context, a person may find him- or her-self operating from all four positions simultaneously. I may operate in quadrant 1 with my local government, quadrant 2 with my wife, my physician and best friend, quadrant 3 with my telephone and lawn care companies, and quadrant 4 with my grandson’s school.

Quadrant 1

Low trust/low distrust describes relationships that are characterized by limited interdependence. In this quadrant, there is little anticipation of positive relationships but, at the same time, little concern that the relationship can be harmful. It is, in a sense, an “arm’s length” relationship. For example, a school might have infrequent and distant connections to a private contractor of psychological services, but the service will be bound to provide appropriate services based upon society’s ethical and legal requirements. Rousseau and his colleagues (Rousseau et al., 1998) call this *deterrence-based trust* because it “emphasizes utilitarian considerations that enable one party to believe that another will be trustworthy, because the costly sanctions in place for



breach of trust exceeds any potential benefits from opportunistic behavior” (398). Relationships in this quadrant require leaders to be *vigilant* to determine whether continuation of the relationship is advantageous to the leader’s organization.

Quadrant 2

High trust/low distrust is what a person would aim for in any relationship, whether personal or institutional. *Identification trust* is what Rousseau and his colleagues (1998) call “relational trust” that derives from:

...repeated interactions over time between trustor and trustee. Information available to the trustor from within the relationship itself forms the basis of relational trust. Reliability and dependability in previous interactions with the trustor give rise to positive expectations about the trustee’s intentions. Emotion enters into the relationship between the parties because frequent, longer term interaction leads to the formation of attachments based upon reciprocated interpersonal care and concern (p. 399).

Failure to maintain trust can, in the extreme, result in deep feelings of betrayal by trustees and relationships redefined in terms of distrust. Relationships that fit into this quadrant oblige leaders to be *facilitating and empowering and empathetic* to maintain and strengthen the connections.

Quadrant 3

Low trust/high distrust can be described as *security-based trust*. In situations of this nature, sensible people avoid engagement with others with whom they not only anticipate no positive outcome of the relationship (low trust) but actually fear negative consequences (high distrust). Relationships are often based on what Solomon and Flores describe as ‘cordial hypocrisy’ – the strong tendency of people in organizations, because of loyalty or fear, to pretend that there is trust when there is none, being polite in the name of harmony when cynicism and distrust are active

poisons, eating away at the every existence of the organization (2001). There are times, however, that engaging with individuals or institutions that fit this description is not an alternative. Anyone who has been audited by their country’s revenues services, or negotiated a contract with an aggressive and adversarial organization or individual will understand. As Lewicki and his colleagues explain, “If they must interact, distrusting parties may devote significant resources to monitoring the other’s behavior, preparing for the other’s distrusting actions, and attending to potential vulnerabilities that might be exploited” (1998, 446). The present negotiations between western countries and Iran would fit this description. It is impossible to ignore Iran; so, western nations must enter into some kind of relationship with it. Recognizing past history, however, suggests that Iran is a country that is difficult to trust. Lewicki and his colleagues add that, “We see cell 3 as an uncomfortable condition for sustained working relationships” (446). When the parties have low trust and high distrust, but are interdependent nevertheless, they must find some way to manage their distrust. Leaders who deal with relationships in this quadrant become *gatekeepers*, admitting policies, practices and procedures that fit with the organization’s mission and goals and actively opposing or failing those that subvert or are destructive of important school values.

Quadrant 4

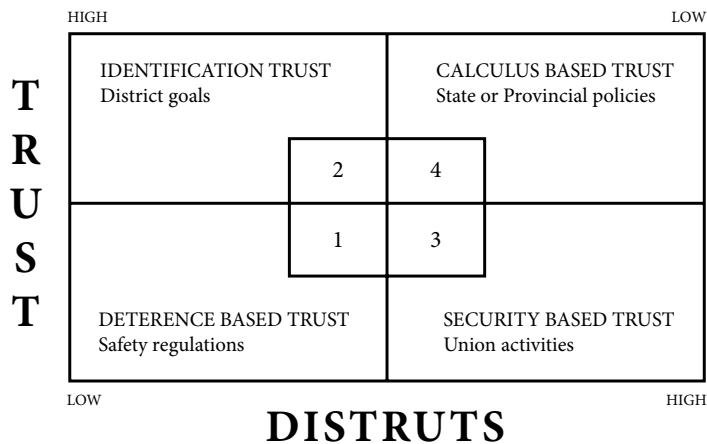
High trust/ high distrust might be described as “Let’s make a deal” or *calculus-based trust*. This form of trust relationship is based on rational choice. Trust emerges when the trustor perceives that the trustee intends to perform an action that is beneficial. The perceived positive intentions in calculus-based trust derive not only from the existence of deterrence but because of credible information such as certification or references from reliable sources regarding the intentions or competence of another. “Such ‘proof sources’ signal that the trustee’s claims of trustworthiness are true” (Lewicki

et al., 1998, 399). A principal’s hiring of a teacher to a school is but one example of calculative based trust. “Trust and verify” might be the motto of leaders who operate in this quadrant. Leaders who extend trust to others must also do their *due diligence* to ensure that their trust is extended appropriately.

Both quadrants 1 and 4 have a calculative dimension to them. In each case, a person makes a rational decision to remain aloof from another person or institution in quadrant 1 or stay involved in quadrant 4. Conversely quadrants 2 and 3 have a heavy emotive quality because people feel deeply and have a heavy investment in trust in quadrant 2, and deep feelings of distrust that are hard to change in quadrant 3. Let me illustrate the applicability of this matrix to school leadership by looking at institutional trust.

Institutional trust refers to the degree to which an organization’s various constituencies continue to have confidence in its competence, integrity, and sustainability. A school leader, for example, might identify totally with the vision and directions of the school’s district (quadrant 2), agree in general with the government’s educational directions but with significant reservations and caveats (quadrant 4), profoundly disagree and distrust the efforts of the teachers’ union to assume important management rights that the leader believes will undermine the leadership of the school (quadrant 3) while remaining observant of change in safety regulations that might have some relevance to the leader’s school (quadrant 1). The leader’s trust or distrust and feelings of vulnerability in each scenario will determine his or her leadership strategies. For example, the leader may become an active member of a regional committee to achieve district goals, while getting involved with a state or provincial principals’ (or heads’) association to negotiate with the government about the implementation of its policies. At the same time, the leader at the local level may actively confront the union’s representatives while remaining observant but not actively

involved in the process of safety regulation changes. Our matrix with the preceding examples now looks as follows:



Now let's look at the matrix from the perspective of a policy maker. Whether at a national, state, district or school levels, leaders initiate policies intended to improve the quality of education. Policy makers have two big problems: how do they get the policy implemented in ways they intend and how do they verify that the policy(s) has been implemented, and does what it is intended to do. Rather than a blanket approach that focuses on one quadrant or another, policy makers who want to achieve the purposes of their policy need to devise at least four separate but related strategies to engage the policy implementers in each quadrant. Typically 20% (Peshwaria, 2013) of a group will support and trust a change initiative. This suggests that the overall strategy must proceed in ways that maintain the trust of those who identify with the change by supporting their efforts and developing verification systems that provide information on efficacy while promoting creativity and innovation.

A significant percentage of a population, perhaps as high as 60%, charged with implementing a change, will assess the change based on their own values and experience, consider the trustworthiness of the policy developers, and 'calculate' whether the policy or direction is something worth supporting, investing their time and energy, and discretionary commitment. Maintaining

or developing trust, timely, reliable and credible information concerning the change, and verification systems that enhance rather

than inhibit the policy's implementation are essential strategies to attracting the support of this group. The American approach of connecting salary and other benefits to a verification system, test scores which are seen as inherently unfair, for example, has little chance of convincing the 60%, and no chance of attracting the remaining 20% who are either indifferent (quadrant 1) or viscerally opposed (quadrant 3).

While trust building and information sharing may influence some individuals or organizations that remain somewhat indifferent to the proposed direction, it is probably a waste of time and energy to persevere on quadrant 1. Powerful individuals or adversarial organizations, such as unions, parents' organizations, political groups or community agencies, in quadrant 3, however, are a different story. They will not be mollified by anything short of surrender. While they might engage in "cordial hypocrisy" and pretend to support a policy and direction, they can undermine or even sabotage any change efforts. This is where political processes of negotiation and coalition building "kick in," and the parties involved move from the more relational contracting in quadrants 2 and 4 to a classical contracting. A long-term classical contract is a formal arrangement, usually involving lawyers, in which the participating parties specify

in considerable legal detail the rights and duties of each party and what will happen in all envisaged contingencies, as defined within the contract. Conversely, a relational contract, such as in quadrants 2 and 4, is one in which many of these factors are left implicit. The mechanism of enforcement is not recourse to the contract or the courts. It is the need that each party has to go on dealing with each other (Kay, 1991).

Relational Trust

While a leader's understanding of institutional trust is important, a leader of learning must build strong bonds of relational trust with those the leader purports to lead. Without relational trust among the various players in educational systems, all the grand designs, restructuring, guidelines, policies, mandates and directives are hollow and unsustainable. The only way I know for leaders to build trust is to become absolutely trustworthy. Trustworthiness is like love; it must be earned – it can't be forced, compelled or mandated. Just as leaders have the choice to trust or distrust, potential followers have choices about trusting leaders. Victor Frankl, in his powerful little book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, described his experiences in a Nazi death camp captured this way,

The experiences of camp life show that a man (or woman) does have a choice of action... Man can preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in conditions of psychic and physical stress... everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way (Frankl, 1984, p. 86).

There does appear to be a clear pattern on admittedly flawed measures that suggests that high trust countries produce higher student achievement and more equitable student results within reasonable public expenditures. Similarly, schools that have a high trust leadership achieve beyond what one might expect, given their socio

economic make-up (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson, 2008). To prove this conclusively was beyond our resources, since we are self-funded and beholden to no government, institution, foundation or agency. However, we were sufficiently intrigued to try, in each of our countries, to understand the trust dynamic and how it affected student and teacher performance at a much deeper level. To do this, each member of our team surveyed samples of principals and teachers using the same 30-item, five scale survey, developed jointly and translated for non-English speaking nations. With these results, each country's researcher(s) conducted interviews and focus groups with teachers and principals, using a few generic questions on trust and distrust and, then, more specific questions arising from survey results. As part of a seven-nation study on trust and distrust, 380 teachers, who represented eastern, central and western Canada, responded to a 30-item survey entitled, *The Trust Connection*. The purpose of this research, that involves Australia, Canada, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, the United Kingdom (England) and the United States, is to examine the connections between trust and school improvement. From this survey and a series of follow up on-line interviews, teachers told us what it takes to become a trustworthy leader.

Almost every teacher agreed that their trust was "conditional on the leaders' competence." An experienced elementary teacher described a principal who inspired her best work this way:

I have worked with several different principals over the years; the best principal that I had worked "with" me. He was always visible in the building and knew what was going on. He would address issues directly with teachers and ask how he could help if he could see you may need assistance with anything. He was friendly, yet demanding and you didn't mind going above and beyond to do extra because he always encouraged you and you just wanted to. He was easy to respect and gave respect back;

he was thoughtful and would leave you encouraging letters and notes. He knew all of the students and interacted with all of them. He would walk through your classroom on a regular basis just to check in. He would encourage you to grow professionally, and was always inviting teachers to get involved in professional development of some kind.

Equally important was a leader's "*personal concern for a teacher's personal circumstance.*" Another experienced elementary teacher, who suffered from chronic headaches and debilitating fatigue, contrasted her treatment by two different principals:

I had been suffering some ongoing health issues but was dealing with them privately and quietly. I had not used the yearly allotment of sick days by any means but certainly had used more than usual. I had gone to specialists, doctors, and my dentist many times and was told there was nothing wrong or given antibiotics, which helped for a short duration. One day, I was asked by the new principal if I "had a minute." Thinking he wanted to talk about the recent PD session I had provided for the staff, I entered his office. Then I found out he wanted to discuss my absences. I listened as he recited the number and asked me why. I honestly answered, but I sensed the tone was changing as paperwork was produced that showed a history of the staff absences for the school from head office. At some point, he turned his back on me and I realized that the discussion was ended. I was confused. The next day, in my mailbox, was a formal note mentioning the number of absences and suggesting I use the board's psychological services in my own time.... Over the summer, after seeing various specialists and finally getting an MRI, the issue was diagnosed. Our previous principal had left to go to a new school and we got another principal. Although I did not know this new principal, I felt more comfortable to let her know what

was going on. I figured the previous principal had probably put me on her radar for absences and I wanted to be pro-active in dealing with this rather than re-active. Another staff member who had recently been diagnosed with MS had told me that this new principal was so much more human in her dealing with health issues than our previous one had been. So, with that in mind, when I knew details of operations and had doctors' notes, I went and met with her. She was very understanding, and actually quite concerned for my welfare. For the first time in a long time, I felt valued, supported and understood. We talked about how we could navigate the now board wide issue of "attendance management." However, this principal worked with me rather than against me to figure out ways to work doctors' visits and operations so as not to "set off" the attendance management controls. Now that I am better, I realized how important a supportive principal can help in health recovery.

Over 75 % of respondents believed that a trustworthy leader must "*act with integrity,*" be open and above board and, in a word, transparent. A secondary teachers explains:

Trust is lost when transparency turns opaque. Changes have been made throughout this year to the courses that I teach, without a single word of collaboration or forewarning. It's been a long year of being the "last to know" regarding changes that affect me greatly. Now, I understand that it's hard to make everyone happy from an administrator's standpoint; but I know for a fact that gathering information prior to decision-making makes for a more collegial and professional atmosphere.

The same percentage trusted leaders of learning who were "*knowledgeable about effective teaching practices and contemporary learning theories.*" A female elementary teacher in Ontario explained that:

If a principal "protects the good teachers" and supports or provides

support to weaker teachers, then, ultimately the pupils will benefit in the end. I have had great principals that support in seemingly invisible ways, e.g., tell you a story of how they screwed up and how they fixed it so you can use that experience to further your own situation OR I have had a principal come into my room and micro-manage e.g., have spelling texts removed from my class room when I wasn't there because he deemed them "old school;" however, I was keeping a few for English second language students who find those texts easier to learn from.... However, I wasn't given a chance to explain...they were just removed. I also think pupils can sense your ease or uneasiness. Some principals are very visible in the classroom and others are not. However, good principals seem to know what is going on even if they aren't in your room all the time.

A secondary teacher pulls these themes together, but adds another high priority for teachers, *the leader as gatekeeper*. Over 70 % agreed that "school leaders must act as gatekeepers to protect teachers from the negative effects of some district and/or provincial policies.

I think that some of the most challenging obstacles that hinder the trust process are the constant turnover of administrative staff and/or the constant shifting of initiatives brought to the table by the provincial government.... To me, trust must be earned. A principal must show his/her staff that they understand their role, and are consistent in filling it. They should be knowledgeable when it comes to policy and/or legal matters, and they should show backbone. Weakness and "flip flopping" with decision making in a principal is like blood in the water. It all boils down to perception.... It is in my opinion that trust is becoming much more difficult as policies change, and staff are expected to keep losing/gaining momentum with the "flavour of the month" being presented by the

politicians to ensure that the votes keep pouring in for them. Sometimes principals take the brunt of these changes, despite the fact that there is often little that they can do. Perhaps this is why so many administrators chose to leave their positions of responsibility this year.

Shared decision making, which has generated an entire genre of educational writing, was mentioned by 68% of respondents and 55% felt a trustworthy leader "*addressed poor teacher practice promptly and effectively.*" Interestingly, over half of the teacher respondents placed more blame on unions for protecting the less competent than on school leaders. A secondary teacher declared that:

[The union] supports weak and incompetent teachers and threatens and challenges any administrators who treat their individual staff members according to their skill level and dedication. The union erroneously supports a system where all are expected to work to the lowest common denominator and persecutes any leader who challenges that thinking. Teaching is more challenging now and many young teachers feel isolated and unsupported. Turning this tide and developing a culture of trust will require strong leaders with clearly articulated values. Even then, the strength of such leaders may be undermined by the union and some of the superintendents and school board members. It is my hope that the leaders are strong enough to make the required changes and therefore support and inspire the next generation of teachers.

In a second set of questions, we asked teachers to determine whether they agreed that schools and districts met their expectations. The greatest differential between ideal and real was whether teachers believed leaders act expeditiously on poor teacher practices. While 55% agreed it was important, only 28% believed that it happened in their setting. Only half of the

teachers felt that school leaders acted with integrity and were honest and transparent in their dealings, and interceded as gatekeepers to balance the multiplicity of top down initiatives experienced in the three provinces surveyed. Well known researcher, Douglas Reeves, has argued that trustworthy leaders maintain a "focus" on a few high leverage initiatives to prevent "initiative fatigue" among their colleagues (2011, p. 1). Leaders gain trust by courageously and sometimes cleverly gate keeping and helping the staff to maintain its focus on students' learning. While our research is still in process, early examination of data from other countries suggest that these findings are consistent across nations and cultures.

Conclusion

The title for this article is purposefully ambiguous. Trusting leaders can mean leaders who trust other people or institutions, or others trusting leaders to act with integrity and purpose. Trust is given but trustworthiness is earned. I have argued that leaders of learning develop trusting relationships as a prerequisite to educational improvement. In the discussion of institutional trust, I attempted to illustrate how trust plays a significant part in our daily lives, yet is often hidden from our consciousness. Similarly, distrust plays a role in our lives. From the time that our parents told us not to talk to strangers, we learn to distrust aspects of our daily lives. From this awareness of trust and distrust, I have indicated that Lewicki's trust-distrust model can help us, as educational systems and school leaders, understand the complexity of educational change and policy implementation at all levels of the educational enterprise. One size fits all approaches to educational change are unsustainable. The production model that has captured the imaginations of politicians internationally is all about verification and distrust. While it may effect short-term gains such as the British literacy and numeracy strategy, it usually has a short shelf life. The key to educational change then is to find that "sweet spot" between trust and verification

that encourages policy implementers to create and innovate while ensuring the public that the system is productive and its resources used appropriately. Policy makers, and I include school leaders, need to move beyond just developing a policy; they need to consider their various audiences and their motivations, and build the kind of trust that leads to speedy implementation and sustainable change.

But more importantly, leaders of learning must be seen by those they wish to lead as trustworthy. In order of importance, Canadian teachers said that leaders who earned their trust,

- demonstrate competence in the management and operation of their school,
- show personal concern for a teacher's personal circumstances,
- act with integrity, honesty and transparency,
- stay knowledgeable about effective teaching practices and contemporary learning theories,
- act as gatekeeper to control pressures from outside and ensure a focus on student learning,
- share decision making,
- address poor teacher practices promptly and effectively.

As the other articles in this journal suggest, leading learning is not reducible to a grocery list of "to dos," but I would suggest that giving trust and earning trust are essential for every school leader who aspires to become exceptional and make the people around them exceptional (Fink, 2005; Hargreaves and Fink, 2006).

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School principals as instructional leaders: A viable theory or dying construct

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Abstract

Instructional leadership was particularly prominent in the scholarly literature during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Although scholarly interest waned in subsequent years, instructional leadership has maintained considerable currency in practice, as school principals have been held increasingly accountable for student learning outcomes. In spite of its durability as a theoretical framework and its continued widespread use in schools and school systems, its application to practice has varied between two distinct approaches - the narrow (primarily inspectorial) and the broad (all leadership activities that impact student learning). This review offers some clarity relating to current iterations of instructional leadership, and challenges of it as an inspectorial, hierarchical leadership approach, whereby the principal is perceived to be the sole leader and an expert teacher who must ensure that all teachers in the school follow his/her lead.

Introduction

The study of leadership can be traced back to the classical era through the study of Greek, Egyptian and Chinese classics (Bass,

1981). In spite of this historical prominence and despite voluminous publications and multiple theories, leadership in specific organizational and societal contexts (e.g., differing time periods and locations) is still not well understood (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). This absence of clarity surrounding leadership in organizations applies to public schools, as well. Having conducted an extensive review of the academic literature, Leithwood et al. (1999) identified six common approaches to school leadership: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial and contingent leadership. During the same period of time (at the turn of this century), many scholars of school leadership began to focus on the role of formal and informal leaders in fostering organizational learning in schools (Fullan, 1995; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Senge, Roberts, Ross & Kleiner, 1994; Sheppard & Brown, 2000a, 2000b). This latter focus on organizational learning gave rise to increasing interest in determining the leadership role of teachers and other potential insiders that resulted in the use of terms such as "team leadership" and "collaborative leadership" (Brown & Sheppard, 1999; Sheppard & Brown 2000c). In the past decade or so, there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in distributed leadership (Harris, 2009; Spillane et al., 2004). Despite the consideration of the above-mentioned varied school leadership approaches over recent decades, it appears that instructional leadership has been the

most enduring (Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Neumerski, 2013).

Differing Views of Instructional Leadership

In spite of the longevity of instructional leadership as a theoretical framework, there remains considerable equivocation surrounding both the theory and its application to practice. As a matter of fact, it was in the context of this ambiguity that Sheppard (1993, 1996) acknowledged that there were essentially two distinct approaches to instructional leadership, the narrow and the broad. In the narrow view, instructional leadership is primarily inspectorial and is focused on direct classroom supervision. In the broad view, on the other hand, instructional leadership is perceived to entail all leadership activities that impact upon student learning, and it is assumed that routine managerial behaviors may contribute as much as, or more than, direct classroom supervision to improved teaching and learning. It appears, unfortunately, that this equivocality between the narrow view (Townsend, Acker-Hocevar, Ballenger & Place, 2013) and broad view of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008; Sheppard, 1996) still exists. The focus of this work, therefore, is to provide a review of the relevant scholarly (peer reviewed) literature relating to instructional leadership. It is anticipated that this review will bring additional clarity relating to its current iterations and thereby challenge apparent naïve, misguided representations of it as an inspectorial, hierarchical leadership approach whereby the school principal is the lone leader and an expert teacher who ensures that all other teachers in the school follow his/her lead.

Hallinger (2005) observes that, during the 1980's and early 1990's, there was a great deal of scholarly interest in instructional leadership. Although some interest remained in subsequent years, scholars increasingly perceived that it overemphasized the role of the school principal as an "expert" teacher and they,

therefore, eschewed it as overly hierarchical (Sheppard, 1996). As a consequence, the primary focus among many scholars and researchers in the field of educational leadership shifted to other leadership approaches, such as transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005); collaborative and/or team leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith & Kleiner, 1994; Sheppard & Brown, 2000a, 2000b), and distributed leadership (Harris, 2009; Spillane Halverson & Diamond, 2001).

Although there are specific differences between each of the previously noted approaches, there are also elements of overlap, as descriptions of each underline the importance of the school principal as the formal leader. It is particularly noteworthy that, in recent published research, scholars have placed an increased emphasis on the important leadership role of various constituents beyond the school principal. For instance, Hallinger (2011) observes that the term "leadership for learning" has subsumed some of the terminology relating to leadership, making note that, "while the term 'instructional leadership' originally focused on the role of the principal, 'leadership for learning' suggests a broader conceptualization that incorporates both a wider range of leadership sources as well as additional foci for action" (p. 126).

Although I have no major quarrel with Hallinger's "leadership for learning terminology," I believe it lacks specificity. In my view, the term "distributed instructional leadership" underlines a more clearly defined conceptualization of leadership for learning that is also inclusive of various leaders and the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, distributed instructional leadership is built upon the rich knowledge base of the "broad" interpretation of instructional leadership (e.g., Marks & Printy, 2003; Neumerski, 2013; Portin, Atesoglu-Russell, Samuelson, & Knapp, 2013; Printy, Marks & Bowers, 2009; Sheppard, 1996; Sheppard, Brown & Dibbon, 2009). Within this broad conceptualization of instructional leadership, it is expected

that formal leaders assume responsibility for developing leadership capacity among varied constituents (internal and external) with the goal of optimizing student learning generally. As well, I have chosen the use of this nomenclature as I believe, similar to Leithwood and Jantzi's (2005) perspective relating to the study of transformational leadership, "expanding and refining conceptions of [instructional] leadership seems likely to be more productive than adopting an excessively narrow conception of such leadership...only to claim that we might be approaching the end of the [instructional] leadership era." (p. 194). Furthermore, I fully concur with Leithwood and Jantzi's claim that seeking to explore yet another conception of leadership, "discourages the accumulation of evidence about effective leadership and feeds a cyclical, unproductive search for a new 'silver bullet'" (p. 194).

Instructional Leadership: A Passing Fancy?

In a 2005 publication, Hallinger referred to instructional leadership as "a passing fancy that refuses to fade away" (p. 221). Six years later, Neumerski (2013) observed that "more than 30 years ago, Ronald Edmonds's landmark study provided an empirical foundation for what many knew intuitively: effective schools almost always have leaders focused on instruction" [i.e., instructional leaders] (p. 311). To that effect, instructional leadership has maintained its currency in practice over time, and has become the center of renewed interest in school leadership as governments in many countries become increasingly focused on student performance indicators (Bredeson & Kelly, 2013; CSSO, 2014; Hallinger, 2011; Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012; Le Fevre & Robinson, 2014; Paulsen & Moos, 2014). Le Fevre and Robinson (2014) observe, for instance, that throughout the majority of the member countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, there has been a renewed emphasis on instructional leadership – an approach that has an impact on "the most

powerful school based determinants of student achievement – namely, the quality of teaching and the curriculum” (p. 2). They acknowledge, however, that there are many barriers to good quality instructional leadership, among which is the amount of time available to school principals after they attend to the required administrative tasks, the adequacy of their content knowledge relating to effective teaching and learning practices, and their leadership skills in being able to facilitate a culture of professional learning within their respective schools. Similarly, Townsend et al. (2013) observe that, since the introduction of the national policy framework identified by the No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation in the US, “much of the leadership of schools [in that country] has been aligned with... practices associated with” Hallinger and Murphy’s (1985) instructional leadership framework¹. Their view of this framework and the national policy direction, however, is not a positive one. They contend that the Hallinger framework is “essentially hierarchical and managerial and lends itself to the view that the school leader is the single person to oversee local implementation of decisions designed to maximize student learning and to improve the school in doing so” (p. 68). Interestingly, eight years prior to the Townsend et al. critique of this framework, Hallinger (2005) declared that, if we perceive instructional leadership within narrow terms as solely direct classroom supervision,

...the resources devoted towards the development of principals as instructional leaders would appear to have been a failure.... Classroom doors appear to remain as impermeable as a boundary line for principals in 2005 as in 1980, or indeed in 1960, 1940, or 1920. [However], if we define instructional leadership more broadly, ...the picture is somewhat different” (p. 230).

Toward a Broader Conceptualization of Instructional Leadership

It is remarkable that the above noted

concerns expressed by Townsend et al. (2013) are quite similar to those expressed over two decades ago, as various researchers began to conclude that the effects of school principals on various effectiveness measures, including student outcomes did not result from direct classroom supervision, but were primarily indirect (Blank, 1987; Hoy, Tarter & Bliss, 1990; Kleine-Kracht, 1993; Sheppard, 1993). As a result of Sheppard’s (1993) research of the instructional leadership behaviors of 58 school principals in one Canadian province, for instance, he concluded that, although the Hallinger and Murphy’s framework has been applied in a “top-down” inspectorial manner, it is not an inherent aspect of it. In fact, having assessed the impact of principals’ instructional leadership activities on teachers’ commitment to student learning, their professional involvement in the school, and their focus on innovation, Sheppard found that, when teachers perceive the principal’s instructional leadership behaviours to be contextually appropriate, the teachers have transformational effects on the extent to which they are committed to student learning, professionally involved in their school and innovative in their teaching practices.

On the strength of these aforementioned findings, Sheppard (1996) has argued that the Hallinger and Murphy instructional leadership framework should be viewed more inclusively to include “all leadership activities that affect student learning, [with an acknowledgement that] routine managerial behaviours contribute as much as direct instructional behaviours to improved teaching and learning” (p. 326). Additionally, he concludes similar to others (e.g., Angus, 1989; Blase 1993; Blase & Blase, 1999; Burch & Spillane, 2003; Foster, 1989; Lord & Maher, 1990; Marks & Printy, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1995) that, “when leadership functions are perceived [more broadly] as interactive between followers and leaders, [whereby] perceptions of followers are considered important...[the leader will] more likely...gain support of

teachers and, thus, be transformational” (Sheppard, 1996, p. 329).

Clearly, Sheppard’s previous conclusion suggests that instructional leadership should not be envisioned as the task of a lone principal. As a matter of fact, the confluence of evidence suggests, “the task of instructional leadership is far too complex for any one person to reasonably handle” (Bredeson, 2013, p. 364). Furthermore, it has been largely acknowledged that the effects of formal school leaders such as school principals are, for the most part, indirect (Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2009; Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010), as the schools they lead are complex adaptive social systems (Sheppard et al., 2009):

Given the complex, systemic nature of the multiple factors that impact student learning, ...it is readily apparent that any expectation that any one [instructional leader], group or agency can identify and impose solutions to mitigate the impact of all of those factors is unrealistic and naïve.... [M]eaningful sustained educational reform will occur in schools only through collaborative leadership and organizational learning that is systemic and adaptive and that engages the multiple sources of leadership of each of the interrelated subsystems in purposeful interaction focused on improving student learning (p. 104).

In like manner, Hallinger and Heck (2009) contend that focusing on the impact of the formal school leader on student learning to the exclusion of the contributions of other important stakeholders might have contributed to “some of the ‘nagging problems’ that have

¹ Instructional Leadership Behaviours: framing school goals, communicating school goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985)

accompanied studies of school leadership effects” (p. 113).

Correspondingly, Printy, Marks & Bowers (2009) assert that, irrespective of any specific label that scholars might assign, “leadership in schools can be understood as a shared property [that] depends on the direction and support of the principal and both the influence and engagement of competent teachers” (p. 511). Within that context, they perceive that both the instructional and the transformational leadership frameworks complement one another:

[Both] are consistent with the notion that leadership emerges from all levels of the school organization. Principals practicing instructional leadership in effective schools mobilize teachers’ concerted efforts toward improvement through collegial action.... Teachers’ influence – whether formal or informal, individual or collective – establishes professional norms for all teachers’ work and creates a common culture inviting teacher leaders to step forward. Because transformational leaders seek to engage all organizational members in setting organizational goals and continuously improving practices, they tap the expertise and leadership of teachers, whose influence subsequently extends throughout the faculty, inspiring and sustaining the best efforts of teaching colleagues (Printy et al., 2009, pp. 510-511).

Undoubtedly, in recent years, there has emerged a confluence of evidence supportive of a conclusion that school principals alone cannot meet the demands imposed on them to be both instructional leaders and school managers (e.g. Kelley & Salisbury, 2013, Neumerski, 2013). Neumerski, for instance, asserts that, if the principal is considered to be the lone instructional leader, “it is unlikely that our schools will make the improvements our policy climate mandates” (p. 314). She contends that distributed leadership should be incorporated into the instructional

leadership framework, and “a failure to expand our conceptualization of instructional leadership to account for this shared work seriously constrains our understanding” (p. 314).

Additionally, Neumerski argues that, through the application of a distributed lens, researchers from various perspectives (e.g., teaching and learning, and leadership studies) could “get at the ‘how’ of leadership” by combining heretofore separate bodies of knowledge relating to teaching and learning, and educational leadership in order to “capture instructional leaders in interaction with one another, their followers, and context around the work of teaching and learning” (Neumerski, p. 324). Consistent with the previous perspectives, Lee et al. (2012) observe that, although leadership research over the past 30 years has largely been centered on two dominant foci (“the relationship between school leadership and student learning [and] a more recent focus on how leadership practices are distributed among members of the school), these [foci] have converged...on what scholars have termed shared or distributed instructional leadership” (p. 665).

Distributed Instructional Leadership

Notwithstanding an apparent growing convergence of scholarly evidence in support of distributed instructional leadership, it is apparent that it may not be all that common in practice. For instance, Rigby (2014) contends that, although recent scholarship relating to instructional leadership includes “broader definitions of the principalship as a whole, including specific leadership actions that count as ‘instructional leadership,’ ...there is [still] no one taken for granted definition of the concept” (p.635) and some continue to perceive it from a narrow perspective. She observes, for instance, that the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (Council of Chief State Officers [CSSO]) (1996, 2008), adopted by at least 43 states in the US, have been largely influenced by a somewhat narrow interpretation of Hallinger’s (2005) Principal Instructional

Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) that identifies essential components of a school principal’s role as an instructional leader. Additionally, she reports that some US states have redesigned their principal training programs and evaluations to align with those standards. She notes, as well, that since the growth of the accountability movement, analysis of student achievement data has become a huge component of the instructional leaders’ role:

This set of ideas is promoted through ample literature on instructional leadership that describes how principals must spend much more time receiving, understanding, analyzing, and sharing results with all levels of their community.... Principals must also know how to support their teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge and instruction, and how to use data to inform this work.... For school leaders, teachers are the primary focus of teaching and learning in the prevailing logic (Rigby, p. 622).

The apparent emphasis on teachers’ content knowledge and instructional practices that is noted in the previous quotation suggests a sustained strong reliance on the *narrow* aspects of instructional leadership, whereby the school principal is perceived to be the lead teacher whose chief responsibility is to oversee the teaching and learning processes to ensure optimized student learning. Rigby argues that, in addition to the aforesaid prevailing conception of instructional leadership that is centered primarily on student learning outcomes, researchers and school practitioners should consider two alternate logics, the entrepreneurial logic (“focused on altering inequitable outcomes” [p. 618]) and the social justice logic (“focused on raising the academic achievement of all students” [p. 618]).

In the context of Rigby’s alternate logics, it is particularly disturbing that the prevailing notion of instructional leadership continues to demonstrate an apparent single-minded focus on how

school principals can improve their schools' overall test scores while ignoring any consideration of the well-established empirical evidence that student and family background may "account for more than 50% of the variance in student achievement outcomes" (Sheppard et al., 2009). In truth, the measure of successful instructional leadership in the prevailing model (Rigby, 2014) is more likely to be a measure of the socioeconomic status of the greater school community, rather than of leadership or teaching effectiveness (Sheppard, 2012; Sheppard et al., 2009). Such a flawed notion of instructional leadership, whereby centralized government agencies hold principals and teachers accountable for narrowly defined student test scores, appears to perpetuate social injustice, thereby inhibiting progress toward the development of a more enlightened socially-just democratic society.

To that effect, as previously noted, Sheppard et al. assert that, for meaningful, sustained improvement to occur in schools and school systems, there must be "recognition that schools are just one component of a complex adaptive learning system... [that influences] student learning" (p. 102). Sheppard and Dibbon (2011) described this learning system as follows:

In an adaptive system, provincial and school district leadership, policies, and practices interact with one another to exert a direct influence on how teaching and learning is manifested in classrooms, schools, and districts. Classroom practices are also impacted by such things as the professional learning experiences of school administrators and teachers, as well as the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of other constituent groups (e.g., unions, professional associations, parents, the community, business groups, researchers, and the media). Even though school leadership provided by both formal leaders (e.g., school administrators) and informal professional leaders (i.e., teachers) helps shape the nature of the school learning

environment, other variables such as school and classroom conditions, along with student/family background conditions, have a major influence on both the learning conditions and on student learning (Sheppard & Dibbon, pp. 126-127).

Utilizing this learning system framework, Sheppard and Dibbon (2011) sought to determine the effects of the following constituent groups on the extent to which schools focus on student learning: provincial, district and school formal leaders, and informal leaders including teachers, parents and other community members. They found that the engagement of formal school leaders (principal and vice-principal) as collaborative leaders had a large positive effect on the extent to which their school focused on student learning. They found, as well, that the engagement of teachers, school district personnel, parents, community members and the department of education in leadership for student learning had positive and meaningful effects on the extent to which schools maintained a focus on student learning. On the basis of these aforementioned findings, Sheppard and Dibbon (2011) concluded that "attempting to improve student learning through accountability mandates focused on only one or two sources of leadership [e.g. school principal or department heads] is likely to lead to disappointment" (pp. 135-136). Interestingly, this conclusion is somewhat supportive of Sheppard's (1996) previously noted research findings that school principals' engagement as instructional leaders (broadly defined) led to increased leadership capacity within individual schools as teachers became more professionally involved and more committed to exploring innovative approaches to improve student learning.

Similar to others as previously reported, Kelley and Salisbury (2013) observed that the typical work of many school principals and department heads in large urban high schools "center[s] on management and bureaucratic tasks related to keeping their departments [or school in the case

of principals] running smoothly" (p. 310) that make it nigh impossible for them to engage as instructional leaders. They found, however, that when the role of the department chairs was redefined to exclude the managerial tasks, the department chairs "were surprisingly engaged and energized by the redefinition of their role as instructional leaders" (p. 310). Bredeson and Kose (2007) found a similar mismatch between the realities of superintendents' daily work and "recent reform policy mandates and initiatives" (p. 16). They conclude that although superintendents of education are acutely aware of the shift in their accountability focus from management and community/public relations to their being instructional leaders, like school principals and department heads, "the daily realities of their work often subvert even the most committed professional" (p. 16). The question remains: How can formal leaders be successful administrators and instructional leaders?

The findings of studies such as the above noted (e.g., Kelly & Salisbury, 2013; Sheppard & Dibbon, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2009) suggest that instructional leadership can be successfully distributed among groups within and across schools. Alternatively, however, this same evidence indicates that it is both naive and wrongheaded to assume that specific individuals who hold formal administrative and management roles in education (e.g., school department heads, lead teachers, school principals or school district superintendents) can assume responsibility for the provision of instructional leadership at the exclusion of other essential aspects of their respective roles and responsibilities (Bredeson and Kose, 2007; Devine & Alger, 2011; Harris, 2009; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Sheppard & Dibbon, 2011; Spillane et al., 2004).

Having reached a similar conclusion to the previously expressed, Higgins and Bonne (2011) observed, "the function of the leadership tasks, along with the positioning of the leader in the school hierarchy, can have a constraining or enabling impact on

the leadership enactment” (p. 806). They contend that the power-centric leader-follower dualism is no longer a viable leadership approach, at least not in complex, specialized environments such as schools. Moreover, they argue that, even in contexts where leadership is distributed, “the assigning of ...[specific] categories [such as leader-follower] implies a dichotomous relationship that belies the complexity of their enactments in a school setting” (p. 806). In light of such observations, they “suggest that Gronn’s notion of hybridity may be a way to unpack the complexities of these leadership enactments ...[as it acknowledges] the entanglement of hierarchical and heterarchical leadership configurations (Higgins & Bonne, p. 806). Furthermore, they conclude:

...in building understanding of the complexity of school-based leadership, it is important to employ analytical lenses that have the potential to capture leadership across the interactions of all members of a school staff, not just those in designated leadership positions. Looking through a hierarchical and heterarchical lens allowed us to examine more closely how these leadership functions are enacted in a school, sometimes fusing in hybrid forms (p. 821).

In the context of the previous conclusions, they highlight the importance of both hierarchical and distributed leadership while acknowledging, at the same time, the accuracy of Leithwood et al.’s (2004) assertion that “some leadership functions need to be performed by those in particular positions or with special expertise, not just anyone in the organization” (p. 57).

Correspondingly, having completed a detailed study of the instructional leadership role of three school principals in Australia, Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2007) concluded,

Leadership that makes a difference is both position-based (principal)

and distributive (administrative team and teachers). But both are only indirectly related to student outcomes. [Furthermore], organisational learning (OL)... supported by appropriate and ongoing professional development is the important intervening variable between leadership and teacher work and then student outcomes. That is, leadership contributes to OL, which in turn influences what happens in the core business of the school – the teaching and learning. It influences the way students perceive teachers organise and conduct their instruction, and their educational interactions with, and expectations for, their students (pp. 20-21).

Halverson and Clifford (2013) observed, similarly, that “knowing who acts as a leader is the first step of a distributed leadership analysis; [but they add], knowing what leaders do and, more important, how they shape (and are shaped by) the context of practice completes the picture...” (p. 390). They describe the reshaping activity as happening at two levels: Level 1: “the leadership environment of practice...against which leadership unfolds.... [i.e.], how school contexts enable, constrain, and afford leadership action.” Level 2: “the learning environment of the school—the object of leadership practice.” They observe that,

...the work of school leaders is to establish learning environments for improved teaching and learning in schools. In this sense, leaders establish learning environments in which other people (teachers and students) work [and they] draw on resources and expertise from the leadership environment to construct the situations of practice that enable, constrain, and afford environments for teaching and learning. Successful school leaders must master both the leading environment and the learning environment. They must navigate and shape the school level context to reform the teaching and learning context (p. 391).

Clearly, Halverson and Clifford acknowledge that instructional leadership is much more than simply the supervision of individual teacher’s classroom practices. In final analysis, only individual classroom teachers can alter or improve classroom practices (Hoy & Hoy, 2009); consequently, there is little doubt that the articulated “ideal” of an individual, charismatic instructional leader single-handedly initiating and leading sustainable school improvement has been exposed as unrealistic and deeply flawed (Sheppard, 2012; Timperley, 2005).

Toward a Theory of Action

While I acknowledge the promise of distributed instructional leadership as “a more realistic and sustainable” approach to successfully leading improvement in public schools (Timperley, p. 4), my optimism is somewhat tempered in the context of the existing transnational corporate managerial agenda that is focused on holding schools accountable for student achievement on standardized tests. Considerable evidence already exists that such a focus on standardized testing is misguided, as it has been found to limit the impact of well-informed distributed instructional leadership on effective teaching and learning practices and the facilitation of authentic student learning (McCann, 2012; Paulson & Moos, 2014; Sheppard, 2012; Zhao, 2014).

The previous concerns aside, I am encouraged by the continued scholarly exploration of instructional leadership and by Leithwood’s (1994) acknowledgement more than two decades ago that the “broad” images of instructional leadership contain central dimensions of transformational leadership. Although I fully agree that “expanding and refining transformational conceptions of leadership seems likely to be more productive than adopting an excessively narrow conception of such leadership, only to suggest it then needs to have elements of other models glued on” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 294), I suggest that neither the instructional nor

transformational leadership framework will complete the full continuum of school leadership. In my view, drawing upon the already well-developed theories of transformational, instructional and distributed leadership, irrespective of nomenclature, shows much more promise than the continued search for yet another one best theory. As a matter of fact, my colleagues and I (Sheppard et al., 2009) have described school leadership “as an organizational quality that is systemic and distributed throughout the organization” (p. 15). We contend that formal leaders must be both transformational and instructional leaders, and they must be able to facilitate distributed leadership, as well. As we perceive it, leadership should not be considered within the context of a bureaucratic hierarchy where rational planning is supreme. Rather, leadership must be inherently collaborative whereby

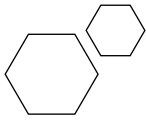
...there are two categories of leaders – formal leaders and informal leaders (constituents)... In this approach to leadership, teachers are viewed as partners, rather than followers, and leadership is defined through the interaction of leaders, constituents, and situation... Both formal leaders and constituents have an important, yet distinct leadership role to play (Sheppard et al., p. 15).

Given that both the instructional and transformational leadership theoretical frameworks are, arguably, among the most robust and most widely studied in the field of educational leadership studies, it is reasonable to ponder if it might be wiser to acknowledge the potential of more fully developing both as a means of contributing to a fuller understanding of educational leadership practice irrespective of the nomenclature.

Furthermore, it is now widely acknowledged that successful leadership is a distributed phenomenon; therefore, it can be assumed that attempts to expand or refine either instructional or transformational leadership without consideration of its

distribution among various internal and external leadership sources would be limiting. At this point in time, it should be amply clear that the narrow interpretation of instructional leadership that assumes the school principal can function as the “head” expert teacher in typically configured public schools is naïve and ill-founded. As well, it appears that although the accumulated evidence surrounding transformational leadership, instructional leadership and distributed leadership shows a great deal of promise in support of student learning, there is a huge theory-practice divide, particularly in the context of the commonly accepted standardized testing agenda in many countries. As a result of this agenda, school leadership in some jurisdictions is limited to classroom inspection whereby the principal is assumed to be an expert teacher and his/her effectiveness is assessed on the basis of students’ achievement on standardized tests – a narrow interpretation of instructional leadership. In such a context, it is nigh impossible to legitimately study the effects of transformational, instructional, or distributed leadership on authentic student learning. Notwithstanding the previous, the confluence of existing evidence suggests that school principals and superintendents of education who have a rich understanding of the previously noted theoretical frameworks and apply them to their leadership practice will most likely make a difference to student learning in the schools for which they are responsible.

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Stephen Anderson is a professor in the Education Leadership and Policy program of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and Director of the Comparative, International and Development Education Centre and Program at OISE/UT. His research and consulting focuses on education policy and program change, school improvement, in-service teacher development, and education leadership in Canada, the United States, East Africa, Pakistan, and Latin America. His scholarly publications appear in such journals as *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, the *International Journal of Educational Development*, *Curriculum Inquiry*, the *Canadian Journal of Education*, the *Journal of School Leadership, Leadership and Policy in Schools*, the *Journal of Staff Development* and the *Journal of Educational Change*. He has contributed to books on school improvement in international contexts, on whole school reform, and on national studies of leadership and improvement in the U.S.

Principal Leadership and School Effectiveness: Variability and Convergence in Practice

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regardless of variations in jurisdiction, prior performance and school community characteristics. Teacher and principal interview findings, however, revealed differences in the capacity and ability of school leaders to mobilize, orchestrate and provide direction for school improvement over time within the parameters of the common array of leadership practices.

is reported here, was contracted by EQAO and carried out during the 2010-2011 school year.¹

The main purpose of the original study was to gain a better understanding of factors within and outside a school that help explain differences between schools with higher student performance on EQAO assessments and schools with below average student performance, where the schools have similar contextual settings. The focus was on identifying and describing factors that have contributed to the success of schools with varying demographic characteristics, as well as the challenges and impediments to success faced by other schools in similar contexts. In this paper, we focus specifically on findings that relate to the ways in which a school's core instructional leadership practices (setting directions, developing people, structuring the workplace, and managing the instructional program) are associated with these differences.

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Introduction

Since its inception in 1996, the Ontario government's Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) has been charged with the responsibility of evaluating the academic achievement of students across Ontario. This occurs primarily through the annual administration of standardized assessments aligned with the Ontario curriculum content and performance standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the Primary (Grade 3) and Junior (Grade 6) divisions, as well as at the end of Grade 9 mathematics. EQAO also administers the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) at the end of Grade 10, the satisfactory completion of which is a high school graduation requirement. The results of these assessments are intended to assist school system personnel at the school and board levels with the identification of needs, goals and plans for improvement in student learning, and to inform the public about the status of school performance. EQAO also has a mandate to undertake research and report on factors affecting school quality. The study, from which the data and analysis

Unpacking Instructional Leadership

The significance of principal leadership for the quality and improvement of student

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Abstract

This article reports findings from a multi-method investigation of school effectiveness characteristics in 22 Ontario elementary schools selected for variation in prior performance and school community characteristics. The analysis here focuses on findings related to similarities and differences in the instructional leadership practices of principals, conceptualized and assessed in terms of research-based claims about effective leadership. Teacher survey results showed a high degree of similarity across the schools in school leadership practices consistent with current images of the actions of effective principals,

¹ The research that provides the basis for this paper was commissioned and funded by the Ontario government's Education Quality and Accountability Office. The findings and conclusions presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not represent the official positions or policies of the funder or of the researchers' educational institution. The full technical report (Anderson et al., 2013) can be accessed at http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cidec/Research/Elementary_School_Success_Study.html.

Joelle Rodway

Joelle Rodway is a PhD candidate at OISE/University of Toronto who will defend her dissertation in August 2015. A former classroom teacher and department head, Joelle approaches her academic work from a practitioner-scholar's point of view. Her primary area of research focuses on the role of social capital in educational change. Specifically, Joelle examines the ways that educators' social networks mediate the ways in which they develop, understand, and implement education policy, and ultimately, how these processes affect the desired outcomes of school improvement initiatives.

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learning is widely accepted. Based on a meta-analysis of research on the relationship between principal leadership and student academic outcomes, Leithwood and his associates (Leithwood et al., 2004) claimed that principal leadership is second only to the instructional practices of teachers among in-school factors influencing student learning. Robinson et al.'s (2009) best evidence synthesis of principal leadership actions that affect student learning lends support to this claim. That said, it is also widely acknowledged that the combined influence of within-school factors, such as those listed as effective schools' correlates on student academic achievement is modest in comparison to external factors associated with student and community socio-economic characteristics. Here we attempt to identify common patterns of principal leadership behaviour across our sample of schools, as well as any salient patterns that might distinguish high from low performing schools in differing SES contexts across the sample.

Leithwood et al. (2004; cf Leithwood et al., 2006) reviewed the research evidence on successful school leadership practices that influence student learning, and defined four core leadership practices: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional (teaching and learning) program. *Setting directions* includes goal setting processes, articulating and communicating school goals to staff and other stakeholders (e.g., parents), reinforcing and rewarding progress towards accomplishment of school goals and influencing the alignment of teachers' individual goals and goals for school improvement. *Developing people* includes providing individualized support to teachers for professional learning; offering

intellectual stimulation by promoting professional growth, sharing information about promising practices, challenging the status quo and encouraging innovation; leading professional development activities; modeling professional learning by engaging in (but not directing) professional learning experiences with teachers and mentoring prospective leaders. The core leadership practice *designing or restructuring the workplace* to align with efforts to accomplish school goals encompasses four broad areas: building a collaborative culture, (re) structuring the organization to facilitate goal attainment, relations with parents and connecting the school to the wider professional environment. *Managing the instructional program* is the fourth core practice associated with successful school leadership according to Leithwood et al (*ibid*). The sub-practices associated with managing the instructional program included providing general support to teachers for implementation of the instructional program (e.g., resources, timetabling, curriculum coordination), staffing, monitoring student learning and teacher implementation of expected programs and instructional practices, and buffering teachers from distractions to the core work of teaching and learning (e.g., screening multiple demands on their time, student discipline).

This model of successful leadership practices was the foundation for the Ontario Ministry of Education Leadership Framework (Institute for Education Leadership, 2010). The Ministry added a fifth "core practice" which they called "securing accountability." We used the Leithwood et al. (2004, 2006) schema as a theoretically and research grounded schema for organizing and discussing the findings. Since "Managing the instructional program"

includes monitoring the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning through the purposeful use of data, we do not address "securing accountability" as a separate core practice.

Methodology

In this study, we employed a convergent parallel mixed methods design: qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and the findings from each were merged during the interpretation of the data (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Details on sample selection, data collection and analysis procedures are provided in the following subsections and are summarized in **Table 1**.

Sample Selection

First, a socio-economic composite indicator derived from parent education and the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) data obtained from Statistics Canada 2006 census data was used to classify schools by socioeconomic status (SES). A regression equation was generated for predicting achievement from parent education and LICO, from which the beta weights were used to determine a demographic marker (high/low SES) for each school. Second, levels of school performance were classified by results on EQAO assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics. The criterion for identifying schools with high and low achievement was that they had higher or lower achievement than most of the forty schools in the province that were most similar to them with respect to socioeconomic status. Schools with consistently high or low results across the primary and junior reading, writing, and mathematics assessments were selected for inclusion in the study. The average percentage of students at Levels 3 or 4 across the three

Table 1. Overview of data collection and analysis procedure.

Data collection instrument	Sample	Data analysis
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all Kindergarten to grade 6 teachers in all schools (Response rate = 90%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) <i>t</i>-tests (using Welch correction where necessary) <i>d</i> statistics to calculate effect sizes
Individual interviews	At each school site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> principal two primary teachers (K- Gr. 3) two junior teachers (Gr. 4-6) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Generated a report of all interview data tagged to a specific code for all schools within a school sample category Inductively generated a set of thematic categories that reflect salient findings within that coded topic Generated assertions that describe findings for each major topic aligned with the themes and consistent with matrix analysis for a school group Compared findings across school groups in order to identify patterns of similarity and differences in findings associated with sample characteristics
Focus group interviews	At each school site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> teachers (specify - 5-6) parents grades 5 & 6 students 	

Table 2. Average demographic data for schools in each category.

Category	Demographic Marker	LICO	Parent Education	Average Family Income
High SES High Performance	67.8	14%	52%	\$110 867
High SES Low Performance	64.9	16%	49%	\$94 825
Low SES High Performance	23.2	30%	24%	\$62 970
Low SES Low Performance	26.2	31%	31%	\$56 627

Table 3. School sample description.

Board Type	High Performing		Low Performing		Total Schools
	High SES	Low SES	High SES	Low SES	
English Public (n=2)	2	3	3	3	11
English Catholic (n=1)	1	1	1	1	4
French Catholic (n=5)	2	2	2	1	7
Total Schools	5	6	6	5	22

subjects and two grades in 2010 was 93% for high performing, high SES schools and 78% for high performing, low SES schools. Low-achieving schools had lower achievement than most of the 40 schools in the province that were most similar to them with respect to the demographic marker. The average percentage of students at Levels 3 or 4 across the three subjects and two grades in 2010 was 59% for low-achieving, high SES schools and 37% for low-achieving, low SES schools. Achievement results for schools identified through this process were examined, and schools with consistently high results across reading, writing and mathematics on the Primary and Junior assessments were selected. **Table 2** provides

the average demographic data for schools in each category.

The aim was to recruit six schools (four English, two French) in each of four categories of schools: 1) high SES, high performance; 2) high SES, low performance; 3) low SES, high performance; and 4) low SES, low performance. Although schools from across all four categories within particular school boards were sought, it was not entirely possible. The final sample of twenty-two schools is described in terms of the sampling frame in **Table 3**.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected during two 3-day

school visits. Data collection involved administering a questionnaire to all K-6 teachers, an interview with the principal, a focus group with 4-6 teachers, and an observation during the literacy block of two primary and two junior teachers, followed by individual interviews. Data collection in French language schools was conducted by French speaking EQAO and OISE/UT team members.

Teacher Survey

The survey included two scaled sets of items adopted from surveys of principal leadership by Leithwood in prior investigations (e.g., Louis et al., 2010). The first set of items asks teachers to rate

on a 6-point scale the extent to which they agree or disagree that their principal enacts specific practices associated with three of the four core transformational leadership practices defined by Leithwood et al. (*ibid*): setting directions, developing people and redesigning the workplace. We included a separate scale for managing the instructional program that was adopted from a survey used by Leithwood and colleagues in a study of school leadership in the United States (Louis et al., 2010; Leithwood & Louis, 2012). The items in this scale were designed to measure the frequency with which principals perform seven instructional leadership practices, which are outlined later in this paper.

The surveys (developed in both English and French) were piloted in two English language schools and one French language school that were not included in the main study. We used the feedback provided by the participating teachers in these schools, regarding the clarity of the questions, to revise items as needed. Ultimately, we surveyed all JK/K-Grade 6 teachers in each school.

Interview Guides

Standardized semi-structured interview protocols were developed for each interview and focus group. These guides were designed to respond to the core research questions and also to correspond to the key effective school correlates relating to leadership, such as strong and effective principal leadership, school climate, developing staff skills, and using student data. The topics covered during the interviews included the work of the principal and other school leaders, school improvement goals and strategies, teacher learning and collaboration, as well as monitoring teachers' instructional practice, and the district's role in school improvement (Principal and teacher interview guides are accessible in the appendices of the final report at http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cidec/Research/Elementary_School_Success_Study.html).

Like the survey, the interview protocols

were piloted in the same English and French language schools, and revisions were made based on the feedback received during the pilot process. The interviewers took notes of interviewee responses, but also digitally recorded the interviews to verify and complete the notes as needed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures are summarized in Table 1 and are elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

Teacher Survey Data

Overall, we received surveys from 349 teachers across 20 schools (ranging from 9 to 45 teachers, average 18 teachers per school), with an overall return rate of 90%. One school did not respond to repeated requests for completed surveys after the site visit and was thus excluded from analysis. Another was excluded because only four surveys were returned. The survey sample characteristics for the 20 included schools are reported in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Teacher survey sample characteristics.

Sample characteristics	Frequency Survey Responses	Percent Survey Responses
Board type		
• Public	179	51.3%
• Catholic	170	48.7%
<i>Total</i>	349	100%
Language		
• English	224	64.2%
• French	125	35.8%
<i>Total</i>	349	100%
School category		
• High Achieving High SES	80	22.9%
• High Achieving Low SES	134	38.4%
• Low Achieving High SES	56	16.0%
• Low Achieving Low SES	79	22.6%
<i>Total</i>	349	100%
Teaching position		
Primary (JK/K-3)	162	47.2%
Junior (4-6)	99	28.9%
Specialist	82	23.9%
<i>Total</i>	343*	100%

The internal reliability of the survey scales was determined using Cronbach's alphas (see Table 5); all leadership scales had alpha values greater than .7, proving them

to be statistically reliable (Nunnally, 1978). To investigate the differences between high and low performing schools, descriptive statistics, *t*-tests and effect sizes (*d* statistic) were computed for high performance and low performance groups for all variables in the survey. We computed Student's *t*-test statistic for all the cases where the homogeneity of variance assumption was not violated and the Welch correction of Student's *t*-test statistic where it was. For the effect sizes, we computed a *d* statistic and followed Cohen's (1988) recommendation regarding its interpretation (0.20 is considered a 'small' effect, 0.50 a 'medium' effect and 0.80 a 'large' effect).

Table 5. Teacher Survey Scale Reliability Values

Scale	α	Number of Items
Transformational leadership	0.95	13
Setting directions	0.86	4
Developing people	0.85	5
Redesigning organization	0.87	
Instructional leadership	0.85	7

Interview and Focus Group Data

Interviewers created notes (digital files), which paraphrased responses to questions in point form or short phrases, from the

individual and focus group interviews. The digital files were entered into NVIVO for analysis. We created a coding structure and manual with operational definitions for each code to systematize and standardize the coding process. The interviews were coded by the Principal Investigator and two assistants (proficient in French and English) who participated in data collection. The four steps of analysis of the combined interview/focus group data are described in Table 1; this procedure was replicated for all coded data.

Provincial Context

An understanding of school effectiveness and improvement in Ontario elementary schools must take into account the provincial government's efforts to improve the quality of student and school performance over the past decade and a half. Key elements of the provincial context for school effectiveness and improvement include the following:

- A common outcomes-based curriculum and curriculum performance standards by subject and grade level.
- A system of annual standardized assessments of student performance aligned with the curriculum performance standards in literacy and numeracy at Grades 3 and 6.
- Provincial targets for student performance on the standardized EQAO assessments as goals for improvement (e.g., 75% of students provincially and, at the school level, achieving at Levels 3 or higher on the literacy and numeracy assessments).
- Intensive assistance to schools identified as under-performing on EQAO assessments by the Ministry of Education's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (2010) in collaboration with school districts and other agencies, e.g., the EQAO and the Ontario Principal's Council.
- Support for the adoption and implementation of particular instructional

practices considered to be high yield in terms of their effects on student performance on the EQAO assessments, aligned with the provincial curriculum and standards.

- Development of curriculum, instruction and assessment materials aligned with provincial curriculum standards by commercial publishers and sources within the public education sector (e.g., Ministry, school district offices, professional associations).
- Administrative and technical support (time, resources, expertise) for the use of data from EQAO and other curriculum-aligned assessments of student learning for instructional decision making at the school and classroom levels.
- Administrative support for teacher teamwork within and between schools on goals and plans for improvement in student learning through Teaching Learning Critical Pathways (TLCP),² collaborative inquiry and other forms of professional collaboration activity.
- Continuous monitoring of progress in student performance in order to refine goals and target support for improvement in teaching and learning through the use of EQAO and classroom assessments, principal supervision, and school improvement planning.
- Development of provincial standards for school and district leadership practice (Ontario Leadership Framework-OLF) and expectations for use of the standards in principal development, hiring and appraisal.
- Development of provincial standards for school effectiveness (School Effectiveness Framework-SEF) and expectations for use of the SEF as a school improvement evaluation and planning tool in periodic district reviews of school performance

(Ontario Ministry of Education 2010).

The combined effect of these components of the Provincial government's plan for continuous system-wide improvement in student achievement in Ontario elementary schools is a multi-dimensional press for alignment and coherence in goals, and support for improvement in student learning within the parameters of provincially defined goals. In theory, if all these components are well implemented and well aligned at the school and classroom levels, high levels of student performance in literacy and numeracy as defined in the curriculum and as measured on EQAO assessments should be achieved.

Findings

Before discussing findings, we note that there are factors that complicated the analysis. One such factor is principal turnover; 12 of the 22 principals were in their first or second year as principals in their schools. These cases were evenly distributed across the four categories of schools. The second confounding factor was the incidence of recently amalgamated schools. In every school category there was at least one school that had recently been amalgamated from two schools. School amalgamation creates at least a temporary need for greater principal attention to community building, which may divert attention from other concerns. Bearing these factors in mind, we present the findings from the surveys and the interviews in the following sections, organized by the core leadership practices. In each section, we begin with findings that are common across all schools and then move on to

²In TLCP groups (known as *des parcours* in French language schools), teachers meet by grade or by division to identify explicit goals for improvement in student learning associated with EQAO literacy and numeracy results, to diagnose students' baseline performance, to plan common instructional interventions, to design formative and summative assessments and to track and analyze student progress over a six to eight week cycle (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat 2008).

Table 6. Teacher survey responses: Transformational leadership practices of principals

My school's principal...	High performance		Low performance		Effect Size
	M	SD	M	SD	d
Sets directions					
1. Gives staff a sense of overall purpose.	5.09	0.92	4.90	1.23	0.17
2. Helps clarify the reasons for the school improvement initiatives.	5.16	0.99	5.15	0.99	0.01
3. Provides useful assistance to me for setting short-term goals for teaching and learning.	4.61	1.10	4.50	1.26	0.09
4. Demonstrates high expectations for my work with students.	5.32	0.75	5.18	0.98	0.16
Develops people					
5. Gives me individual support to help me improve my teaching practices.	4.54	1.18	4.51	1.42	0.02
6. Encourages me to consider new ideas for my teaching.	4.86	0.95	4.88	1.21	-0.02
7. Models a high level of professional practice.	5.24	0.99	5.19	1.05	0.05
8. Encourages an atmosphere of caring and trust.	5.36*	1.00	5.06	1.31	0.26
Redesigns the organization					
9. Promotes leadership development among teachers.	5.05	0.99	4.89	1.18	0.15
10. Encourages collaborative work among staff.	5.47*	0.87	5.26	1.00	0.22
11. Ensures wide participation in decisions about school improvement.	5.21	0.94	5.06	1.21	0.14
12. Engages parents in building community support for the school's improvement efforts.	4.96*	0.87	4.67	1.07	0.30
13. Is effective in building parental support for the school's improvement efforts.	4.90*	0.9	4.45	1.15	0.44
TOTAL ($\alpha=.95$)	5.07	0.71	4.88	0.97	0.22

*statistically significant to $p < .05$ level

present differences between high and low performing schools.

Setting Directions

The survey asked teachers about their school principal's actions related to setting directions (see Table 6). Across all schools, teachers agreed their principal gave the staff a sense of overall purpose, helped clarify the reasons for the school improvement initiatives, provided useful assistance to them for setting short-term goals for teaching and learning, and demonstrated high expectations for their work with students. There were no significant differences between higher and low performing schools. In the interviews, all principals reported that school goals for improvement were grounded in an analysis

of EQAO and related assessment data while, at the same time, being responsive to school board level directions for improvement. The principal and teacher interview data also revealed differences in goal characteristics and in how goal setting was carried out that relate to principal leadership as explained below. We summarize findings regarding setting directions from the teacher survey and principal, teacher and parent interviews below.

Differences between High Performing and Low Performing Schools

In high performing schools, principals and teachers were more likely to emphasize higher order learning skills and learning for all students (not just those performing below provincial standards) as goals for

improvement. They were also more likely to mention widespread participation in data analysis and decision-making, as well as a more systematic use of data for goal setting.

Conversely, reports of systematic data use for goal setting were less consistently reported among low performing schools, particularly among high SES low performing schools. Teachers were more likely to report that school goals and plans were set by principals and school improvement committees. This may contribute to the greater frequency across low performing schools for teachers to say that they were unclear about school goals and how they were established. Teachers from two high SES and one low SES low performing schools described principal leadership as

weak overall, including decision-making about school goals. All three of these principals were recently appointed, which raises questions about board level decision-making regarding principal succession in low performing schools.

Principals and teachers in low SES low performing schools were more likely to emphasize moving school performance closer to provincial goals for EQAO assessment results. This was not mentioned in high SES low performing schools. This is possibly because these schools (as defined and selected for this study) are only low performing in relation to other schools serving students with similar SES profiles, but still qualify as average schools overall.

Developing People

Overall, teachers showed agreement with the statements about principal support (see Tables 6 & 7). While there were no significant differences in teacher responses from high and low performing schools, it is noteworthy that the average frequency of principal interaction with teachers was consistently lower for these items than for instructional leadership practices that are less directly focused on teacher development (i.e., encouraging teacher collaboration, providing resources, encouraging data use, attending teacher planning meetings).

Principals and teachers in all schools referred to indirect principal actions that facilitate teachers’ professional learning through the provision of release time and funding to take part in external professional development (PD) events (board workshops, conferences) or providing time for teachers to work and learn together in teams (see structuring the workplace below). Another potential way that principals practice “developing people” is by frequent informal classroom visits, conventionally referred to as “walk-throughs,” coupled with the provision of feedback and advice to teachers based on their classroom observations. The practice of principal walk-throughs was quite common across our school sample; however, not all principals reportedly provided teachers with feedback on their observations. Overall, we note that informal classroom observation and intervention by principals is less common in the French language schools (regardless of school performance). Principals in the French language system make greater use of central office instructional coaches for this kind of instructional support.

Differences between High Performing and Low Performing Schools

In high performing schools, principals

and teachers were more likely to talk about support for teacher development in relation to school and district priorities for improvement in teaching and learning rather than in terms of teachers’ personal professional interests. These two focuses of support may coincide in schools where there is strong consensus on needs and goals. In these schools, principal leadership for PD was described in the following three ways: (1) setting directions for PD; (2) acting as PD providers and (3) participating in PD along with teachers. With regards to setting directions for PD, explicit expectations for instructional practice were more characteristic of leadership in schools in the French language system, although this was also mentioned in the English system. In terms of principals acting as PD providers, only two of the 11 principals from high performing schools were described as experts who personally delivered PD activities. According to teachers, principals in most high performing schools do regular classroom walkthroughs but only some offer pedagogical feedback (mostly group feedback) to teachers based on their observations. Two of these principals reportedly provided individual feedback to teachers in the classroom, as well. In sum, these principals did not all claim to be pedagogical experts; many organized

Table 7. Teacher survey responses: Instructional leadership practices of principals.

How often in this school year has your principal...	High performance		Low performance		Effect Size
	M	SD	M	SD	d
1. Discussed instructional issues with you?	2.59	1.23	2.7	1.13	-0.09
2. Encouraged collaborative work among staff?	4.16	1.04	3.98	1.13	0.17
3. Provided or located resources to help staff improve their instruction?	3.02	1.11	3.13	1.15	-0.10
4. Observed your classroom instruction?	2.61	1.28	2.56	1.27	0.04
5. Encouraged data use in planning for individual student needs?	3.06	1.13	3.02	1.23	0.03
6. Attended teacher planning meetings?	3.29	1.23	3.12	1.37	0.13
7. Given you specific ideas for how to improve your instruction?	2.46	1.16	2.62	1.20	-0.14
TOTAL ($\alpha=.85$)	3.05	0.83	3.01	0.9	0.05

for others (including teachers themselves) to share their expertise on professional learning topics. Finally, a majority of principals in the high performing schools demonstrated leadership for professional learning by participating in school supported professional learning activities. Principals framed their participation as modeling their commitment to ongoing professional learning related to school goals, and in terms of their desire to understand the expectations for instructional practice.

In the low performing schools, principals and teachers talked more commonly about principal support for teacher development in response to teachers' personal professional interests than about principal intervention focused on teacher learning related to school-wide expectations for instructional practice, in contrast to high performing schools. Educators in low performing schools also mentioned principals "walk-throughs." In five of the eleven low performing schools, teachers described principals who actively visited classrooms and provided instructional advice to teachers on particular goals for instruction. This included principals or vice-principals from the three French language schools, and two principals from the low SES low performing English schools. Teachers from four of six high SES and one low SES low performing schools (all English) said their principals never or rarely stopped by their classrooms.

In sum, the highest concentration of principals who combine classroom monitoring with direct intervention to guide and support instructional practice was in low performing schools, particularly those serving low SES school communities. Thus, direct instructional leadership actions of this sort are not necessarily associated with higher student achievement levels. It may be that school district authorities are simply more likely to appoint principals who have these skills in low performing schools serving high poverty communities. Paradoxically, we find higher concentrations of principals at both the high and low extremes of instructional

leadership behavior in regards to classroom visits in the low performing schools. In the remaining schools, principals commonly drop by classrooms for regular informal visits but limit communication on their observations to group settings, such as staff meetings, teacher team meetings and/or principal memos to all teaching staff. Based on their observations, they are more likely to facilitate teacher access to expertise from other teachers (classroom, resource) or board instructional coaches than to provide this kind of pedagogical advice and support on their own.

Designing or (Re)Structuring the Workplace

The teacher survey did not yield significant differences in the responses of teachers from higher and low performing schools for items related to these leadership practices that address the structure of the workplace (Tables 6 and 7), except for building parental support for school improvement efforts and, to a lesser degree, principal encouragement of teacher teamwork (low effect size).

A dominant theme that emerged from interviews from across all schools was the emphasis that principals gave to facilitating teacher sharing and teamwork through formal structures such as Pathways/*parcours* groups, collaborative inquiry projects and shared planning time for teachers at the same grade level. The principals' actions centered on ensuring time for these team activities, influencing grouping arrangements, ensuring alignment of collaborative work with school improvement goals and participating in the activities as observers and team members (i.e., co-learners).

Differences between High Performing and Low Performing Schools

Principals of some high performing schools said they had less access to additional funding from the Ministry or from their boards due to their status as high performing schools. Thus, they tried to implement formal structures for

teamwork within existing organizational structures (e.g., staff, division, grade level team meetings; in-school Professional Activity Days). Administrative provisions for teacher teamwork in professional learning communities (*des communaute de apprentissage professionnelles* in French language schools) and in Pathway/*parcours* meetings were more uniform across the high performing French language schools. English schools were more likely to report organizing shared planning time for teachers at the same grade level. The comparatively small size of many French language schools inhibits grade level teamwork.

In low performing schools, teachers and principals talked less consistently about principal actions to provide structured time for teacher teamwork, sharing and joint professional development (except in French language schools). In one instance where the principal did structure formal teamwork, teacher descriptions of the use of that time did not make any explicit links to school priorities for improvement (e.g., teachers discussing common themes, such as "learning animal sounds"). In sum, in comparison to the high performing schools as a group, the principals in low performing English schools, with two exceptions, were not described as strategically leveraging and structuring time for teacher teamwork and professional learning as actively and consistently as principals in the high performing schools.

Managing the Instructional Program

The instructional leadership scale in the survey included several items related to managing the instructional program (Table 7); the results yielded no significant differences, overall, between higher and low performing schools. In their interviews, teachers in both higher and low performing schools commonly described their principals as supportive in terms of providing adequate resources for their instructional programs and being responsive to individual teacher requests for material or professional assistance. In terms of data use, principals

were more often described as enablers and facilitators of data use than expert leaders, per se. Apart from formal teacher appraisal visits, both principals and teachers commented on the frequency and purposes of informal classroom walkthroughs as a component of managing the instruction program. Principals and teachers in both higher and low performing schools seldom emphasized what principals did to buffer and protect teachers from distractions to the core work of teaching and learning, and the reasons for its mention were different, as explained below.

Teachers reported variability in the kinds of feedback provided by principals, based on informal classroom visits. While teachers in some schools reported that they received no feedback on teaching and learning from principals' classroom visits, teachers in other schools reported that their principals provided both positive and challenging group feedback during staff meetings and/or in teacher teams or in other forms of communication. Principals who provided individual feedback and suggestions were typically recognized and valued by their staff for their expertise in related areas of curriculum and instruction (e.g., literacy, math). A more common strategy reported by principals is to facilitate teacher access to external instructional coaches or to in-school expertise. It was mostly principals in French language schools that identified central office instructional resource teachers as providing PD. In contrast, stakeholders in English schools rarely mentioned the presence and interventions of central office instructional resource personnel. When mentioned, their involvement was described as voluntary and by invitation, even in low performing schools where more of their participation might be expected.

Differences between High Performing and Low Performing Schools

In high performing schools, principals and teachers emphasized the collection and use of EQAO and other assessment data to inform instructional decision-making at the school and classroom levels, and

principal monitoring through the practice of informal classroom walk-throughs and participation in teacher team activities focused on analyzing data, setting short term goals, planning interventions and tracking student learning progress in PLC/CAP and Pathway/*parcours* cycles. The overall impression communicated was that data analysis and use was an ongoing norm at the school. In French language schools, principals relied on external expertise to aid in data analysis and, in English schools, they relied more on in-school resource teachers and division team leaders. In sum, principals were making sure that data use was happening, although they varied in their personal involvement in the analysis of data.

In low performing schools, it seemed that data was used less systematically (although there were some exceptions in a couple of English schools, and in French language schools in general, where data use is managed more routinely). We argue that the use of data tools beyond the administration of EQAO assessments (e.g., common formative assessments, data walls, and moderated marking) was not as deeply or uniformly institutionalized in professional norms and practices of teachers in lower performing schools. There was a lack of teacher compliance in some of these schools with administrative expectations for data use, lower teacher participation in the analysis of data at the level of school goal setting and less consistent principal support for implementation of Teaching Learning Critical Pathways in English schools, which are key contexts for teacher use of diagnostic and formative assessment data for short term instructional planning and intervention.

Principals in the high performing schools did engage in the currently popular practice of classroom walk-throughs, as noted above in our review of findings related to teacher development. That said, most of them reportedly did this mainly as an informal means of monitoring teaching and learning and classroom climate and to demonstrate their visibility by "popping in" to say "hello" or "*bonjour*," with little or

no interaction. In only a few schools did teachers report that principals actively stayed to observe the teaching and learning process and perhaps to ask questions to students about what they were learning. This occurred most often when teachers invited them to come observe for one reason or another (e.g., creative uses of technology). Teachers in the high performing schools uniformly said that they experienced walk-throughs as positive demonstrations of administrator interest and support for teaching and learning and for relations with students and teachers. Among four English language schools that had experienced recent principal turnover, teachers reported an increase in the frequency of principal walk-throughs in two schools and a reduction in the other two.

Principals in a slight majority (6/11) of the low performing schools reportedly implement classroom walkthroughs on a regular basis for the combined purposes of monitoring teaching and learning and the use of expected instructional practices, building relationships with teachers and students, and providing instructional advice (in five of the six schools) to teachers. The incidence of principals doing more than "popping in" and saying "*bonjour*" distinguished these schools from the prevalent informal monitoring reported in many of the high performing schools. The striking difference among the low performing schools in comparison to the high performing schools was that, in nearly half the low performing schools (5/11), monitoring of teaching and learning in the classroom through the practice of principal walk-throughs was reportedly not happening at all or only on an occasional basis in response to teacher invitations.

Principals may also monitor and perhaps contribute to teacher teamwork discussions and planning related to student learning and interventions in the context of organized team meetings. Among the low performing schools, this form of principal monitoring behaviour was only highlighted by principals and teachers in the three French language schools and

one low SES English language school. In the high performing schools, principal participation in these meetings was mainly limited to the low SES schools. Principals in neither higher nor low performing schools generally emphasized what they did to protect or buffer teachers from distractions or demands that negatively affect teaching and learning. Where they did, this was mainly limited to principals in the high performing, low SES schools. In high performing schools, the inference from these findings is not that principals, overall, do not actively engage in protecting teachers from these kinds of distractions; rather that the need to do so is not perceived as a major issue, particularly in the high SES settings. Two principals talked about filtering out or prioritizing external demands that they perceived as interfering with the school focus on student achievement. Conversely, in low performing schools, when teachers mention this issue, it was typically to highlight what school leaders were not doing or not doing effectively in some schools to protect them from distractions to their teaching (e.g., managing student discipline, health and safety problems, and avoiding disruptions to instructional time in classrooms).

Conclusions

In our analysis of findings from this study, we repeatedly observed a high degree of similarity across the schools in school improvement focuses and processes at the school and classroom levels, regardless of variations in jurisdiction, prior performance and school community characteristics. We attribute this, in large part, to the pervasive influence of the Provincial government's direction and support for school effectiveness, as summarized in the introductory section on Provincial Context, in this article. This finding prompted us to wonder, "if everybody is doing the same things," why do we continue to see substantial gaps in student performance between schools? In particular, why are some schools persistently under-performing in absolute

terms and in comparison to schools serving similar student populations? We hypothesize that the explanation can be found less in the variety of actions enacted by school personnel than in (1) the skill with which they are implementing school improvement-related actions; (2) the degree of integration and coherence among those actions; (3) the intensity of school improvement efforts over time and (4) the capacity and ability of school leaders to mobilize, orchestrate and provide direction for school improvement over time.

Our findings affirm the claim that school leadership is key. When we compared the actions of principals in high and low performing schools we found, for example, that many principals in lower performing schools appeared to be less effective in using data, involving teachers and generating consensus around goals for improvement in student learning. We found that principal direction and support for teachers' collective learning and teamwork concerning student progress and the implementation of common expectations for instructional practice was manifested more strongly and consistently across the high performing schools than the low performing schools. We also found exceptions to these broad generalizations about principal leadership. In several of the low performing schools, for example, the principals were clearly demonstrating leadership in line with the core practices of successful leadership, as identified in research and policy. However, it was typically the case that these principals were relatively new to their schools. The effects of productive leadership on turning around traditional indicators of low performance in those schools simply may not have had sufficient time to yield significant impact. We also encountered a few examples of less intensive leadership in some high performing schools. Norms of professional collaboration among teachers regarding the use of student assessment data for instructional planning, team planning and learning together about common teaching and learning practices appeared deeply

institutionalized in the schools' professional culture. There may have been less need for principal direction than support for continuation of what teachers were doing together to improve and sustain the quality of teaching and learning in these settings.

There has been much talk about the need for principals to act as instructional leaders who effectively direct and focus efforts on developing the quality of teaching and learning and effectively mobilize and coordinate resources and professional and moral support to that end. Our findings do not dispute that view; however, they do illustrate variability in how principals enact instructional leadership. A key source of variability concerns the extent to which principals themselves have and are recognized by their teachers as having professional expertise related to the various aspects of improvement in teaching and learning in their schools. It seems impractical to expect all principals to be instructional experts in literacy, numeracy and other curriculum areas that might be a focus for improvement in schools. At a minimum, however, they need to have sufficient understanding of effective teaching and learning practices to be able to support teacher learning and implementation. The number of principals in our study who self-identified and who teachers described as instructional leaders was small and typically limited to principals who communicated clear expectations for instructional practices, who personally led professional development activities in the school and who were able to advise teachers on instructional practices. These principals were not limited to high performing schools. In fact, they were concentrated more in schools in challenging socio-economic circumstances, both high and low performing. Another group of principals enacted instructional leadership less through demonstrations of their personal pedagogical expertise than through their capabilities as effective managers of continuous improvement through the establishment of clear goals, use of data, enabling support for teacher

learning and collaboration and monitoring and leveraging pedagogical expertise from outside the school (e.g., board consultants) and inside the schools (e.g., resource teachers and other leaders). The incidence of this managerial approach to instructional leadership was notably consistent among the French language schools in our study and appeared to reflect consensus across the French language system regarding the organization and distribution of leadership for school improvement between principals and central office resource personnel.

A third group of principals appeared to be comparatively less effective in the enactment of instructional leadership through either of these approaches. They were also more concentrated in that group of schools which were classified in our study as low performing, and more particularly in the low performing, high SES schools. The low performing, high SES schools in this study repeatedly stood out in our findings and analysis as settings where key elements of school improvement practice are not working particularly well. These were the schools, for example, where teachers reported that their principals rarely visited their classrooms and engaged them in discussions about their teaching and learning practices. These were the schools where principals were reportedly more likely to emphasize support for teacher development aligned with teachers' personal professional interests than with school goals for improvement in teaching and learning. Teachers among these schools were more likely to describe their principals as *laissez faire* in relation to school improvement, or even ineffective in the basic administration of the school. At the same time, we note that, while their school results are persistently low relative to other high SES community schools, the results are sufficiently high that these schools have not necessarily been identified as targets for improvement and for receipt of additional resources and organized support from the Ministry and their local school boards equivalent to that provided to schools in the government's turnaround school

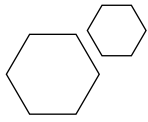
programs. Additionally, we found that while the incidence of principal turnover was no greater in the low performing high SES schools, central office authorities were not necessarily replacing principals who were previously ineffective in mobilizing improvement in student learning outcomes with principals who were more productive instructional leaders. It would be inappropriate to infer from these comments that the principals and teachers in these schools are not well intentioned. However, our findings do suggest that school leaders in this group of schools, overall, have been less effective in leading and supporting the implementation and coordination of the key elements of school improvement investigated in this study – i.e., goal setting and planning for improvement in teaching and learning; the use of EQAO and other student assessment data for instructionally-focused decision making at the school and classroom levels; professional teamwork amongst teachers focused on school goals and plans for improvement; shared professional learning and implementation of common expectations for instruction; mobilization of expertise for improvement in literacy and numeracy, and monitoring classroom practice to understand and to provide follow-up support to teachers in the accomplishment of school goals for improvement in teaching and learning.

The original conceptual and analytical framework for investigating school leadership for improvement was grounded in contemporary models of principal effectiveness drawn from research (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006; Robinson et al., 2009) and reflected in the provincial government's Ontario Leadership Framework (Institute for Education Leadership, 2010). This proved useful as a template for describing current principal practices and pinpointing areas of variability in the nature and extent of implementation of specific components of practice. It was less useful as a basis for comparing and characterizing variability in principal leadership more holistically. Interestingly, our empirical analysis as synthesized in this

conclusion led us back to traditional notions of variability in principal leadership styles that capture and convey images of overall approaches to leadership practice, for example the typology of change facilitator styles (Initiators, Managers, Responders), identified and described by the developers of the Concerns Based Adoption Model in the mid-1980s (Hall et al 1984; cf Hall & Hord, 2015).

Overall, we were impressed with the similarities across schools in what principals and teachers said are happening to create and sustain effective schools. We puzzled over and probed our data about how to explain the persistence of variability in school performance, despite the lack of obvious and consistent variability in what school personnel say they are doing to create effective schools. Our conclusion, as articulated in this final section, is that the differences are associated with and influenced by the skill and persistence of school leaders in the enactment and coordination of core conditions and a common array of practices associated with school effectiveness which reflect more integrative conceptions of overall differences in principal leadership styles as related to school improvement.

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Critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership as projects in humanization

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Respecting students is key...we all human. Start with that, then teach and lead. – Ms. L.

I want students questioning everything...have consciousness. That's teaching. – Ms. Moore.

Yet the eager teachers do appear and reappear—teachers who provoke learners to pose their own questions, to teach themselves, to go at their own pace, to name their worlds.

— Greene (2000, p. 11)

Abstract

In this article, I examine how two public school teachers in the United States – Ms. L at Harlem High School and Ms. Moore at Truth High School – engage in critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership. This examination, grounded in a discussion of critically conscious research as connected to culturally relevant perspectives and cultural modeling, describes moments from their teaching and instructional leadership that are relevant, responsive, purposeful, and humanizing. I argue that the two teachers' critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership represent Projects in Humanization (PiH), which are “experiences we have *with* people

that are directed by the desires for social, political, and educational change that can only happen if relationships are forged in light of, and because of, human differences” (Kinloch and San Pedro, 2014, p. 28). This framing supports the overarching research questions: How do critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership – as Projects in Humanization (PiH) – look in Ms. L's and Ms. Moore's classrooms? What can other teachers and instructional leaders learn from them?

Introduction

In my research collaborations with K-12 public school teachers and instructional leaders in the United States, we regularly address a range of questions on critically conscious teaching, effective leadership, social justice, and educational equity. Some of our questions include: How can we love, teach, and respect “other people's children” (Delpit, 1995), as if they are our own children? What does it mean to teach for social justice? How do we actively stand against racism, violence, and homophobia in schools and communities? Is there space in schools and the curricula for us to demonstrate care and compassion? How can students be invited to co-construct classroom spaces and the experiences within, as they imagine the type of people they want to be, and the type of world in which they want to live? What does it mean to be critically conscious teachers and instructional leaders who understand

education, in the words of bell hooks (1994), as “the practice of freedom?” And, what might critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership—as Projects in Humanization—look like?

For Ms. L., a Black high school English teacher (grades 9-12) in an urban community in the Northeastern region of the United States, respect is integral to how she sees herself as a classroom teacher and an instructional leader. She believes teachers and leaders must respect students, their literacies, their lives, and the communities and families with which they belong. Her respect for students shows itself through her instructional approaches, reflective of how and what she teaches, and how she listens to, interacts with, and responds to the needs of students.

Similarly, Ms. Moore, a Black high school English teacher (grades 9-12) in an urban district in the U.S. Midwest, believes that to be a critically conscious teacher and instructional leader, she must collaborate with students to raise their awareness of sociopolitical, economic, and educational structures that attempt to limit their capacities for greatness. In this way, she encourages students to participate in “difficult dialogues” (Kinloch, 2013) that ask them to question, debate, and consider how and why their and their peers' epistemological and ideological stances might align or conflict. Ms. Moore and Ms. L engage in critically conscious

teaching and instructional leadership by reflecting on their professional practices, and by encouraging students to build consciousness, co-construct classroom spaces, and respect their peers' learning processes. In so doing, they "appear and reappear" in ways that have the strong potential to motivate students to do what Maxine Greene (2000) advises, "pose their own questions, to teach themselves, to go at their own pace, to name their worlds" (p. 11).

Ms. L. and Ms. Moore are well aware of how students – particularly Black students in U.S. urban, public schools – are negatively portrayed in mass media, popular culture, and society writ large. Their awareness is the stimulus for their commitment to work in urban schools and to care about the lives of students. In their individual classrooms, they collaborate with students to uncover and address social inequalities and educational inequities, and to critique narratives of failure that are too often placed upon them. Their instructional approaches emphasize Geneva Gay's (2000) conceptualization of culturally responsive teaching that is "*validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory*" (pp. 31-37). Simultaneously, their instruction is grounded in what Arlette Willis and her co-authors (2008) refer to as critically conscious research that "honor[s] and respect[s] humankind and the multiple cultures, knowledges, languages, and literacies of learners" (p. 49).

In this article, I examine some of the ways Ms. L. and Ms. Moore engage in critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership, as evidenced by how they talk with, listen to, and see students as collaborators in teaching and learning. To do this, I ground my discussion in literature on critically conscious research (Willis et al., 2008) as connected to culturally relevant perspectives (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and cultural modeling (Lee et al., 2004). This allows me to discuss specific moments from their teaching and instructional leadership that point to how

critically conscious approaches are relevant, responsive, purposeful, and humanizing. Then, I argue that critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership, as taken up by Ms. L. and Ms. Moore, represent Projects in Humanization (PiH). According to Kinloch and San Pedro (2014), PiH are "experiences we have *with* people that are directed by the desires for social, political, and educational change that can only happen if relationships are forged in light of, and because of, human differences." They continue: "PiH are framed within a discourse of care (Greene, 2000; Noddings, 1993) and listening (Bakhtin, 1981, 1990) as relationships with people are created, as conversations among those people are exchanged, and as interactions rooted in difference, conflict, vulnerabilities, and respect are forged" (p. 28).

With these things in mind, I inquire: How do critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership – as Projects in Humanization (PiH) – look in Ms. L.'s and Ms. Moore's classrooms? What can other teachers and instructional leaders learn from them?

Critically Conscious Research

According to Willis and her co-authors (2008), critically conscious research is "a commitment to equity, social justice, and the valuing of multiple languages and literacies" (p. 130). It requires researchers to utilize theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches that are "appropriate and complex," that recognize "intersecting systems of domination," and that have the potential to "transform and revolutionize critically conscious language and literacy research" (p. 130). For critically conscious research to be transformative, instructive and revolutionary, it must include multiple voices, perspectives, and lived experiences; be grounded in social justice; and "advocate for valuing, respecting, appreciating, and validating the systems of meaning-making and communicating used by all people" (p. 13). Important in this framing of critically conscious research is the acknowledgement that, because "there is no singular critical

history, theory, method, methodology, or praxis," critical theorizing is situated within an expansive history of ideas and "critical consciousness is unbound by time and geography" (p. xi).

Furthermore, critically conscious research interrogates injustices and dominant ideologies, and connects theory with praxis. For Willis et al. (2008), critically conscious research "challenge[s] power, inequality, social injustice, and the reproduction of the ideas and values of dominant groups" (p. 127). For Kincheloe (1998), critical research "assumes that the inequalities of contemporary society need to be addressed and that the world would be a better place if such unjust realities could be changed" (p. 1191). Various theoretical models exist that seek to change "unjust realities," or monolingual and monocultural expectations. Some of these models are: critical pedagogy (McLaren, 1994), culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Gay, 2000), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2013), and Critical Race Theory (Delgado, 1995; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). An overarching aim of these models is "to humanize the educational process and enable both students and teachers to work toward breaking away from their unspoken antagonism and negative beliefs about each other" (Bartolome, 1994, p. 177).

Ladson-Billings' (1994) conceptualization of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) promotes sophisticated approaches to working with students, particularly racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse students marginalized by systematic inequalities. She writes that CRP "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp.17-18). Building on the premise that teachers – and, I would argue, instructional leaders and educational support staff – should encourage students to employ prior knowledge to make sense of educational requirements, CRP can increase students' connectedness to learning and teachers' knowledge of students' cultural identities.

In fact, CRP is guided by components that inform teaching and learning, such as teachers and instructional leaders having high expectations for students, utilizing critical pedagogical methods, and being facilitators of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Those who rely on CRP inspire students to succeed academically and to enhance their cultural competence.

Relatedly, Lee and colleagues' (2004) Cultural Modeling (CM) framework is important for how I understand critically conscious research in relation to teaching and instructional leadership. CM "facilitate[s] students' learning generative concepts in academic subject matters by helping them to make connections between the target knowledge and forms of knowledge they have constructed from their home and community practices" (p. 42). It establishes analogues between students' funds of knowledge and disciplinary constructs (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). According to Orellana and Eksner (2006), it also helps teachers and instructional leaders "make decisions about points of connections to students' social, conceptual, and linguistic lives outside of school" (p. 54). Both CM and CRP point to teaching and instructional leadership that promote justice, equity, and humanizing practices.

CM and CRP afford opportunities for me to consider what makes Ms. L. and Ms. Moore critically conscious teachers and instructional leaders. According to Blase and Blase (2000), teacher reflection and professional growth are "two major dimensions of effective instructional leadership" (p. 137). Regularly, Ms. L. and Ms. Moore reflected on what worked and did not work with their classroom practices in terms of student learning. They sought opportunities for professional growth (e.g., consulting with other teachers, taking university courses, attending teaching workshops) to enhance their instruction. The instructional choices they made were not "restrictive and intimidating approaches," and did not provoke "dog and pony shows" based on a narrow

definition of teaching" (Blase & Blase, 2000, p. 137). Instead, their choices point to how instructional leadership "*integrates collaboration,*" "*inquiry,*" and "*reflective discussion*" (p. 137, original emphasis) to support conversations about learning among teachers, instructional leaders, and students. In these ways, instructional leadership, as well as critically conscious teaching, can be relevant, purposeful, collaborative, and humanizing for all involved.

Critically Conscious Teaching and Instructional Leadership as Projects in Humanization

Critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership, guided by CM and CRP, lead me to Projects in Humanization (PiH). I conceptualize PiH as life projects that value listening, knowledge co-construction, vulnerability, agency, and multiple perspectives. As life projects, PiH move us closer to learning deeply about the complexities of our humanity in relation to other peoples' lived conditions, and in light of what it means to teach, learn, and live in the world. In terms of teaching and instructional leadership, PiH encourage "practices that provide students with opportunities to openly engage in meaning-making processes, draw on lived experiences, and critique existing educational structures and scripted curricula" (Kinloch, 2013, p. 112). Ms. L. and Ms. Moore take up PiH in their instruction by motivating students to experience learning as reciprocal, collaborative, complex, active, and rooted in mutual exchanges. In this view of learning, they provide students with access to understanding and participating in a diverse community of learners. Dialogic engagements are central to their teaching and instructional leadership.

In terms of living in the world, PiH encourage people to understand that teaching and learning happen everywhere – in schools and communities, in silence and talk – and that a goal of such projects is to engage in justice and equity work.

For example, Ms. L. and Ms. Moore are actively engaged in local communities. From volunteering with community groups, mentoring students, to participating in a network of women activists concerned with social justice in urban neighborhoods, their sociopolitical involvements are grounded in reciprocity. In fact, PiH as life projects, as critically conscious teaching, and as effective instructional leadership represent their commitment to participate in collaborations "*with people that are directed by the desires for social, political, and educational change that can only happen if relationships are forged in light of, and because of, human differences*" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 28).

Specifically, PiH as critically conscious teaching and effective instructional leadership:

- *Are grounded in a discourse of care and compassion:* For Ms. L., this discourse is central to how she "show[s] students I *really* care about them in class and outta class. I want them to know that, and I always want to operate like that."
- *Advocate for justice and equity:* For Ms. Moore, justice and equity are at the heart of her instruction. From my observations of her in the classroom and community, I have noted that she sees connections among *teaching for justice, instructional leadership that promotes collaboration, and living a life of integrity.*
- *Understand education as a social process:* Ms. L. and Ms. Moore believe this, and their classrooms are structured to encourage students to move, talk, and interact with each other. They also believe that education is not limited to the classroom; thus, they promote group (students, teachers, and community partners) and individual (their own) involvements in the community.
- *Recognize the act of listening as an important factor in learning:* "How we

gonna learn if we not listening?” is a question Ms. L asks students. She believes we learn with (and from) one another when we are listening, or what I call being intentional about being present as we listen to learn, and learn to listen. She asks this question of students just as much as she asks it of other teachers, instructional leaders, and administrators at staff meetings and planning sessions at the school.

- *Support multiple and diverse ways to collaborate for meaningful change:* A group of cross-grade level students collaborated with Ms. Moore and community members to cultivate an urban garden. Located on the property of a church, the garden brings people of different ages and racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, and sexual identities together to address a community concern—how to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the area. Through this collaboration, students, teachers, instructional leaders, and community members have learned to work together, listen to/talk with one another, and address negative assumptions they had of each other as they engage in meaningful community change.
- *See vulnerabilities as authentic reactions in one’s teaching and instructional leadership:* “If you could change anything in the world, then what would it be, and why?” was a writing prompt to which Ms. Moore invited students to respond. One student, Derek, opened with, “If I could change anything I wanted to change, I would change my attitude and behavior toward my peers, the staff at my school, and most importantly, my family.” He closed with, “My man Gandhi once said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” If I could live up to this quote, then I would, but I feel like something is holding me back.” Derek’s writing revealed a level of vulnerability

that was not judged negatively, but affirmed positively, by Ms. Moore and his peers. Vulnerability is a part of teaching, learning, and living. As a critically conscious teacher and an effective instructional leader, Ms. Moore encouraged Derek to write about a vulnerable moment and, in so doing, she opened space for him to begin to see himself as a change agent.

- *View language as what people do and create, and as who people are:* One year, I gave Ms. L. a copy of Toni Morrison’s *The Nobel Lecture in Literature* (1993), and she said she liked the part about doing language. Ms. L. described the doing of language as living. She was referring to the passage, “We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives” (p. 22). This passage speaks volumes to how she relies on humanizing, critically conscious practices that encourage students to see language as what we do and create, and that we *are* language inside and outside school.
- *Construct knowledge as shared and relational across temporal-spatial conditions:* Ms. Moore and Ms. L. insist on the co-construction of knowledge in, and across, a variety of contexts. For them, this co-construction speaks to what it means to engage in critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership as PiH that motivate people to learn from (and about) multiple perspectives.
- Collectively, the aforementioned components are central to framing PiH as life projects, and as critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership. Not only do they speak to the important roles of meaning making and relationship-building in teaching and learning, but also to the significance of advocating for justice and equity in how we live *with* other people in the world.

In the remainder of this article, I tease out some of the components of PiH in order to describe specific moments from the instructional practices of Ms. L. and Ms. Moore that point to relevant, purposeful, and humanizing classroom engagements.

Ms. L., Ms. Moore, and Critically Conscious Teaching and Instructional Leadership

To focus on how Ms. L’s and Ms. Moore’s teaching and instructional leadership represent Projects in Humanization, I rely on multiple data sources from separate studies across two high schools – Harlem High School in the U.S. Northeast, and Truth High School in the U.S. Midwest. Both schools are Title 1 schools, which means that they receive supplemental funding from the U.S. Department of Education to support “low-performing” students living in or close to poverty. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Title 1 seeks “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (see <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html>). As Title 1 schools, teachers and instructional leaders at Harlem High and Truth High schools are invested in raising students’ academic standing and further developing their cultural competences.

At the time of this study, Harlem High School – an open admissions school for 9th-12th grade students – employed 37 certified teachers and enrolled 550 students, most of whom qualified for the free lunch program. Of the student population, 54% identified as Black, 45% as Latin@, 2% as White, and 1% as Asian. The majority of students lived in (or very close to) the historically Black community where the school was located. On the other hand, Truth High School employed 47 certified teachers and enrolled upwards of 800 students across 9th-12th grades. More than 81% of the student population identified as Black, 11.5% identified as White, 5% as

Hispanic, and 1% as Asian. Additionally, nearly 20% of the students were classified as “physically disabled.” Truth High is located in a White, working-class residential community that is home to some, but definitely not to all, students.

In terms of data sources, I relied on: journals and other written artifacts from students, lesson plans from teachers, classroom and community observations, and individual and small group interviews. In my observations of, and interactions with, teachers and students in both sites, I paid attention to their language practices and literacy engagements. Insofar as Ms. L. and Ms. Moore are concerned, I particularly noted how they engaged and talked with students, and how they sought to co-create classroom spaces guided by humanizing practices. My explicit focus here on Ms. L. and Ms. Moore allowed me to center my ethnographic and narrative analysis on how they interacted with students, the type of language they used to talk with and about students, and the ways their practices reflected aspects of critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership. The two phases of analysis and the triangulation of data led me to my research questions: How do critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership – as Projects in Humanization (PiH) – look in Ms. L.’s and Ms. Moore’s classrooms? What can other teachers and instructional leaders learn from them?

Teaching and Leading as Relevant, Responsive, and Purposeful

For Ms. L. and Ms. Moore, critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership reflect humanizing ways to engage with students, structure classroom environments, and plan curricula. The *hows, whats, and whys* of their instructional practices point to their desires to have students tell their own stories as they build consciousness. Their practices connect to bell hooks’ (1990) rejection of the idea that there is “no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear

your voice. Only tell me your pain” (p. 343). Instead, Ms. L. and Ms. Moore encourage students to tell their own stories and “speak in a voice of resistance” (p. 343). In so doing, students examine power structures and write about educational inequities and social injustices. They consider questions such as: “Is there a way to end racism” (Ms. L.) and “How do we respond to violence toward Black kids” (Ms. Moore)? All along, they invite students to work side-by-side with their peers to co-construct knowledge, facilitate discussions, and create environments conducive to critical learning.

In these ways, critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership mean that everyone (Ms. L., Ms. Moore, and students) is responsible for what happens in classrooms, from the stories that are exchanged, the responses that are disseminated, to the ways students and teachers talk with each other. This type of approach is relevant and purposeful, and is guided by care and compassion. Ms. L. and Ms. Moore care about students; thus, they view them as leaders, collaborators, thinkers, activists, and human beings. For example, during an interview session with Ms. L., I asked her to talk about her decision to teach *Assata: An Autobiography* by Assata Shakur (1987) in her eleventh grade English class. She said, “Why not teach it? I mean, it’s about power, racism... everything.” Ms. L. continued, “We read some *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and a student asked if we were gonna read *Assata*, and everybody was like ‘yeah, let’s do *Assata*. We wanna know about *Assata*.’ They really wanted to read it, so we did.” Then, Ms. L. talked about the responsibility she has to ensure students are included in the curricula decision-making process: “I listen and rethink what we’re doing. They gotta be part of the process and, by including them in decisions, I’m listening.” I added, “and you care...how you teach shows how you care.” She agreed, and explained that teaching is effective when teachers demonstrate they care about students and want the very best for them. She continued:

Respecting students is key to what we can accomplish in class. We have opinions about the world because we are all human. Start with that, then teach and lead. When I talk about teaching, I mean facilitate with students what needs to get done...work toward academic success. When I talk about leading, I’m talking about, like, ensuring everyone is included and valued. I teach and lead from a place of respect and a desire for collaboration.

Ms. L.’s sentiments reiterate a point made by Gay (2002) that teachers should care about students and work with them to achieve success. They also speak to Blase and Blase’s belief (2000) that instructional leadership should “promote teamwork, collaboration, innovation and continual growth, trust in staff and students, and caring and respect to enhance teacher efficacy” (p. 138).

Listening to and caring about students are important components in Ms. L.’s critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership just as much as they are for Ms. Moore. During one of my observations of Ms. Moore’s eleventh grade English class, students were participating in a whole group discussion about the different purposes of writing. That is, how writing is a means of expression, a way to make sense of the human condition, a technique by which to heal from pain, and a call to engage in action to change the world. When one student asked, “Writing can change the world?” Ms. Moore retorted, “We’ve studied *what* this year...oppression, ability? Any of those writings helped change the world? Or, how we treat people?” A second student added, “Do something positive is what I take, making change.” Ms. Moore replied, “Maybe what people write gets us considering changes to make in the world,” to which the first student said, “OK. Writing is teaching...that’s how you teach, Ms. [Moore]. You teach us to change the world. That’s teaching.” Other students nodded in agreement.

As the aforementioned exchange

happened, I jotted down, “You teach us to change the world,” and “That’s teaching.” I wanted to know more about how writing is about changing the world and “writing is teaching.” A few days later, Ms. Moore and I had the following exchange:

- Valerie:** I’m thinking about “writing is teaching.” How do you feel about that?
- Ms. Moore:** I *teach*. Not by talking at [students], but caring. Listening to what they say. Connect it to writing. I want students to *write*, not just put something on paper, but care about what they write...I care about them and what they write.
- Valerie:** You a teacher-leader. And it’s all about care. I know it’s about teaching, but...
- Ms. Moore:** [She pauses to consider my phrase, “teacher-leader,” then smiles]. Yes, care. I teach because I care. This is my 15th year. You can’t stop caring. I want them to care about what they do, write, say, how they treat people.
- Valerie:** OK.
- Ms. Moore:** I like how you named me, teacher-leader.
- Valerie:** That’s what you are. I think that’s what you do.
- Ms. Moore:** Teaching and leading, but with my students. [Silence]
- Valerie:** When a student said, “You teach us to change the world. That’s teaching...”
- Ms. Moore:** Powerful! I teach by hearing what they say. Students can change the world. Make sure they know that. They know racism, they know struggle. We talk about it ‘cause they, we, wanna change the world.
- Valerie:** Wow.
- Ms. Moore:** Yeah... and “writing is teaching” and teaching students “to change the world,” students see this class as somewhere to talk and learn... build consciousness. Now, I’m gonna think about how I might be doing both, teaching and leading.

I believe, for Ms. Moore and her students, “Writing is teaching” is about the type of consciousness that is gained from

participating in a humanizing classroom environment, one in which the teacher is an instructional leader who listens to and collaborates with students. Ms. Moore and Ms. L. encourage students to question the curricula, and to see the classroom as a space of discovery where meaning is made and relationships are fostered. For them, critically conscious teaching and, by extension, instructional leadership, are relevant and responsive, purposeful and intentional, and guided by a discourse of care, compassion, and collaboration. Critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership are about humanization.

Living as Relevant, Responsive, and Purposeful

Ms. L. and Ms. Moore understand that students enter into schools already possessing voice and agency; thus, they are purposeful in extending to students invitations into learning. I have had opportunities to witness some of their invitations to students. Ms. L., for instance, gives students colored paper, notecards, and/or poster sheets, and asks that they write down what they seek to accomplish in class: “What do you want to learn? What do you want to teach us [Ms. L. and their peers]? We’ll use that to come up with goals.” Similarly, Ms. Moore encourages students to be engaged scholars, indicative of her invitation for them to co-facilitate class discussions, and take the lead on sponsoring school- and community-wide events (e.g., disability awareness campaigns, visits to an adult assisted living facility, etc.).

Additionally, Ms. L.’s and Ms. Moore’s invitations into learning are also marked by how they encourage students to use their own available, familial, and familiar languages inside classrooms to make meaning of academic content and assignments. For example, Khaleeq, a Black male student from Ms. L.’s class, talked about how he daily uses Black English and Dominant American English. In an interview, he explained, “I use both languages every day. I am aware of it. Others who use both are aware of it...I

have to keep what I know as I improve on what I need to know. Right? She [Ms. L.] don’t have any problem with it. It helps me learn.” Ms. L. and Ms. Moore do not judge students for relying on available language to understand, as Freire and Macedo (1987) write, “the word and the world.” In this way, their pedagogical practices represent critically conscious teaching, effective instructional leadership, and ways of living with other people in the world that are relevant and purposeful. Both Ms. L. and Ms. Moore *critically* and *consciously* extend invitations and create openings into learning that reject monolingualism and, in the words of Ms. L., that get students to “use what they know in a class that cares about who they are.” In their classrooms, there is no room for hatred and linguistic oppression, given the explicit attention on *teaching* for justice, *leading* for change, and *living* for justice.

According to Ms. L., “I teach how I live...I love teaching, I love living. Put ‘em together and you’ve got teaching that speaks to living.” For Ms. Moore, teaching to “build consciousness” is crucial for how students see other people and see themselves, and for how they decide to live in the world. Ms. L. and Ms. Moore motivate students to use their languages, literacies, and funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) in classrooms to co-create assignments, participate in conversations about course readings, debate current events, and work toward the type of school, society, and lives they desire. For Shareece, a Black female student in Ms. Moore’s class, this type of teaching and instructional leadership is important for how she “get[s] to be part of the class. See, I don’t be feelin’ like I’m alone or, like, I can’t say what I’m thinkin’ in her class. I get to be me, and I’m learning.” The type of teaching and instructional leadership that Ms. Moore and Ms. L. practice and embody can be described as critically conscious work guided by care, respect, and justice. Their teaching and instructional leadership are also about purposefully living in ways that “honor and respect humankind” (Willis et al., 2008, p. 49).

Implications for Projects in Humanization

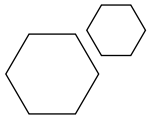
Ms. L. and Ms. Moore use a language of care and love in their work with students. They do not talk *at* and do not purport to talk *for* students. Instead, they encourage students to use their voices, perspectives, and lived experiences to make sense of the world as they question injustices that daily circulate around them. Their attention to who students are materializes in how they: 1) Purposefully invite students into learning, 2) Co-create humanizing, welcoming, and respectful classroom environments with, and because of, students, 3) Position students as co-facilitators of learning and co-constructors of knowledge, 4) See connections among teaching, leading, and living for justice, and 5) Encourage students to use familiar language to participate in learning. Their collaborations with students are guided by how they view language as what people do, address inequities, and engage in meaningful change, all of which are components of PiH as critically conscious teaching, as effective instructional leadership, and as life projects.

From Ms. L. and Ms. Moore, I have learned valuable lessons related to critically conscious teaching, effective instructional leadership, and living as relevant, purposeful, and responsive. Their commitment to instructional approaches that are grounded in CRP and CM is beneficial for how students connect what they are learning to who they are and seek to be in the world. It encourages Ms. L. and Ms. Moore to ask students to consider who they are in relation to others in the classroom, and how they can collaborate to enhance their academic literacies and increase their levels of consciousness. Simultaneously, it motivates students to inquire into how they can be change agents (Derek); how they can use familial language in schools (Khaleeq); and how they can take ownership of their feelings within school spaces that have historically excluded their perspectives (Shareece).

I believe Ms. L.'s and Ms. Moore's commitment to centering their instructional approaches in CRP and CM points to how

and why they honor and respect students' multiple identities, even in the presence of inevitable conflict, difference, and vulnerabilities. Finally, their instructional practices and interactions with students value listening, respect, knowledge co-construction, and agency in ways that point to critically conscious teaching and instructional leadership as Projects in Humanization. From Ms. L.'s and Ms. Moore's practices, I believe other teachers and instructional leaders can learn how to co-create humanizing environments that are inclusive of all students, that promote critical inquiry, and that rely on culturally relevant instructional approaches.

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Understanding the Ethical Self in Instructional Leadership: The Practical Value of Philosophical Thought

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Abstract

The author sets forth an argument for instructional leadership, delineating a three-tiered approach that incorporates not only the instructional leader's duty to those served in the educational setting and to society but also the instructional leader's obligation to take into consideration the "duty to self," which includes fidelity to the instructional leader's personal ethical values and commitments. In arguing the importance of "ethical self" and "duty to self," the author examines the instructional leader's work as providing an environment that makes possible and sustains conditions for ethical learning as a defining element of the institution's purpose.

Introduction

Is instructional leadership philosophy or flight of fancy? This question poses an important and, as yet, unattended to discussion in instructional leadership, in particular when one examines the philosophy of "self," of the "ethical self," in relation to instructional leadership. Scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the ethical dimension in educational leadership (see, for example, Begley, 2003, 2004, 2006; Begley & Johansson, 1998; Begley & Stefkovich, 2007; Campbell, 2008; Campbell et al., 2003; Langlois & Lapointe, 2007; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005; Starratt, 2004a,

2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2007). Likewise, scholars have increasingly drawn attention to instructional leadership in educational settings (see, for example, Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Hallinger, 2005; Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012; Prytula, Noonan, & Hellsten, 2013; Reitzug & West, 2008; Rigby, 2014; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010; Ylimaki & McClain, 2015). However, less direct attention has been given to understanding the "ethical self" in instructional leadership.

Accordingly, the argument set forth delineates a three-tiered approach that incorporates not only the instructional leader's duty to those served in the educational setting and to society but also the instructional leader's obligation to take into consideration the "duty to self," which includes fidelity to the instructional leader's personal ethical values and commitments. In arguing the importance of "ethical self" and "duty to self," it is important to situate the argument in educative institutions, whose work is to provide an environment that makes possible and sustains conditions for ethical learning as a defining element of the institution's purpose.¹ The unique role that instructional leadership, indeed, "ethical" leadership, performs as it responds to intensely complex and constantly changing circumstances coincides with Starratt's (2004a) notion of ethical leadership as "ethical activity," thus moving ethics to a level of heightened educational significance.² The "ethical work" embodied in instructional leadership "is a dynamic and continuing activity rather than an adherence to a system of moral codes and principles enshrined in formal policy statements" (Niesche & Haase, 2010, p. 2).

A Philosophy of Self

What is the "self?" What is the nature of the "ethical self?" What is the "ethical duty to self" of the instructional leader? These questions are not concerned with what they are in content, but primarily what they are in principle. The nature of instructional leadership is complex, merging the "self" of the practitioner with the "self" of the scholar. Heslep (1997), writing on the practical value of philosophical thought, noted that educational leaders, as practitioners,

...are very much engaged in ethical matters.... They continuously deliberate in deciding upon all the actions – whether about curriculum, instruction, student conduct, personnel, material resources, or community relations – that ought to be undertaken to fulfill their stated missions (p. 67).

Heslep argued that educational leaders, as practitioners, "should also be concerned with the philosophical nature of their work . . . philosophy is important for the ethical concerns of educational leadership" (pp. 67–68). The nature of "self," "ethical self," and "ethical duty to self" are philosophical in nature. The philosophy of self defines the essential qualities that make one person distinct from all others. Herein lies, in part, the complexity of instructional leadership, the translation of the philosophical into the practical.

Educational leadership, to be viable as a profession, must be able to combine its art (practice) and science (disciplined inquiry) without deprecating either; by its

very nature, instructional leadership is a merging of art and science, practice and philosophy. Therein, the argument set forth by this merging of art and science, practitioner and scholar, practice and philosophy, is that the instructional leader has an “ethical duty to self,”³ in concert with its relationship to other ethical obligations.⁴ Although the concept of an “ethical duty to self” has been explored in philosophical scholarship,⁵ less attention has been paid to the role of the “ethical duty to self” in the work of educational leaders.

Clarifying the ethical meaning behind the words “the ethics of self” and “an ethical self” and addressing the issue of “self in relation to others,” the ethical self, or, the ethics of self is necessary to understanding the ethical self in instructional leadership. Simply stated, one’s daily comportment in relation to others is implied in the ethics of self. However, the complexity of the instructional leader “self” requires further examination.

Ethical Self in Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership, by its very concept, is never primarily for the benefit of administrators, teachers, political groups, or economic interests; it is always mainly for the benefit of students, for their education, however that might be conceived. In this sense, the “ethical self” is concerned with the education of students; there is an ethics of learning and teaching that foregrounds the instructional leader’s work. Therefore, the end of instructional leadership must embody an idea of what education is and the form that idea will take in the students for whom the leadership is responsible.

Situating the “self” of the instructional leader in relation to the end of educational leadership necessitates that the one embody an understanding of the relation of “self to itself” in terms of its moral agency. More specifically, the ethics of self denotes the intentional work of an individual as instructional leader on itself in order to subject itself to a set of moral recommendations for conduct and, as a result of this self-forming activity, constitute

its own moral being (see Foucault, 1988, 1997).⁶ The work of forming the “ethical self” is intensely personal, and without acknowledging the subjective reality of the instructional leader, and the intersubjective realities of the instructional leader’s relationship with others, one cannot fully take into account what it means to engage critically in the work of the “ethical self;” the “ethical self” is concerned with authenticity in interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.⁷ In this sense, there is need for relational authenticity on the part of the instructional leader, a striving to “capture the genuine way that individual selves connect with the world around them” (Fletcher, 2013, p. 87).

The education of students necessarily requires a “duty to ethical self” on the part of the instructional leader and, at the same time, a “duty to the self of others” that manifests in leadership practices that are ethical by nature. Such leadership practices “must include a notion of how faculty, students, community members, and resources may be motivated, organized, and employed for attaining whatever end in view there is” (Heslep, 1997, p. 74). Equally important, the practices of instructional leaders should be “simultaneously intellectual and moral; an activity characterized by a blend of human, professional, and civic concerns; a work of cultivating an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible” (Starratt, 2004a, p. 3). Davies (2006) argues for a continual process of reexamining one’s responsibility to and for oneself in relation to others. Sparrowe (2006) argues that, “the true self is not discovered absent of others, but is constituted in relation to others” (p. 421).

Duty to Self in Instructional Leadership

The “duty to self” or “caring for the self” requires the instructional leader to not only know him/herself but also to equip him/herself with “knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles that are both truths and prescriptions” (Foucault, 1997, p. 285).

For Foucault, ethics is linked to games of truth through the acquisition of “rules of law, management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play the games of power with as little domination as possible” (p. 298). That is, in order to exercise a “decisive will not to be governed,” the instructional leader must acquire an ethos characterized by a permanent self-critique and an understanding of the relation between systems of truth often formed as “truth games” and modalities of power concerned with domination.⁸

“Duty to self,” arises from the use of our freedom. It is freedom that makes one a person. As such, it is our proper use of freedom, tempered by our rationality, that forms the basis of morality and all ethical obligations.⁹ The instructional leader, in attending to the “ethical duty to self” and the ethical duty to others necessarily also is concerned with freedom. The personal choices that constitute an individual’s style of life, then, can be judged on the basis of whether they promote or inhibit the exercise of freedom. In the same sense, the professional choices that constitute an instructional leader’s practices can be judged on the basis of whether they promote or inhibit freedom. Freedom here should be understood as the capacity to “question and modify those systems which make only particular kinds of action possible,” to “free our relation to the practices and the thinking that have historically limited our experience” (Rajchman, 1985, pp. 110–111).¹⁰ In ensuring the education of students as an ethical obligation, the instructional leader, as an “ethical self,” is concerned with freedom in the sense that freedom is the “ontological condition of ethics” in leadership: we cannot act as ethical subjects without the possibility of refusal, and ethics is the “considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (Foucault, 1997, p. 284). Freedom is both the precondition and goal of ethical work as an “ethical self” in instructional leadership, the object and end of ethical behavior.

Such ethical behavior is dependent, in this sense, on questioning the foundation of the “ethical self” and the “self-forming” practice necessary to freedom. Three questions framed the opening of this discussion: What is the “self?” What is the nature of the “ethical self?” What is the “ethical duty to self” of the instructional leader? Why one question suggests another is explainable partly by logic and partly by experience. That is, some answers suggest other questions in that they logically presuppose them; some answers suggest other questions because of what experience tells us about those answers. If, for instance, the answer to the question “What is the ‘self?’” is “The essence of the person as ethical being responsible for the thoughts and actions of an individual to which they ascribe,”¹¹ that answer logically presupposes the question of “What is the nature of the ‘ethical self?’” If the answer to the question is “The intentional work of a person on itself in order to subject itself to a set of moral recommendations for conduct,” this presupposes the question “What is the ‘ethical duty to self?’” If the answer is “The ethical duty consists of the self-forming activities meant to ensure one’s own subjection to a moral authority and transform oneself into an autonomous ethical agent,” this presupposes the question “Can the instructional leader be an ‘ethical’ self without engaging in self-forming activities that are concerned with ‘ethical self’ in relation to ‘ethical duty to self’ and ethical duty to others?”¹² If the answer is no, that answer acknowledges the ethical imperative that plays an integral role in the ethics of instructional leadership. The primacy of “duties to self” is situated in the realization that the source of all duties is the humanity within the person of the instructional leader.¹³ “Duties to self” exist not for ethics to be possible but for self-forming activity in leadership practices to develop the “ethical self” of the leader. “Duties to self” in this sense are due to the intrinsic nature of the self as an “ethical self.”

The conception of ethical self-formation in instructional leadership requires that

we shift the pedagogical focus of moral development from establishing universal principles of knowledge and agency to changing the relation of the self to itself through a constant writing activity in which instructional leaders collect and reflect upon what they read and hear from others. The aim of ethics is to transform deeply ingrained customs, habits, dispositions, sensibilities, ideologies, and ways of perceiving that limit the exercise of freedom. The locus of ethical responsibility is on individuals not only to change their thinking but to transform their lives by risking what they are, by engaging in social encounters that illuminate the limits of what they can tolerate knowing, being, and doing.¹⁴ Ethics is about questions regarding worthwhile ends in life. With this in mind, instructional leadership as “ethical activity” is concerned with questioning, both in terms of the philosophical and the practical. Therein, “ethical activity” concerned with questioning takes direction from the virtues that guide the “ethical self” in reflecting and examining itself and in its “duty to self” and “duty to others.” Virtues, understood as dispositions, that involve “characteristic patterns of desire and motivation” (Williams, 1985, p. 11) are both self-conscious in their attention to moral principles and revealed in certain habits. Thus, while conscientious reference to universal principles is sometimes necessary, ethical reasoning – in the sense of “ethical self-formation” – should not be considered the exclusive or privileged basis of ethical behavior.¹⁵

Mediating the Ethical Self in Instructional Leadership

Understanding the “ethical self” in instructional leadership is concerned with the virtues of ethical leadership, with the self-forming nature of the “ethical self” as a “virtuous self.”¹⁶ Starratt (2004a) has argued that there are three virtues integral to leadership as “ethical activity:” the virtue of presence, the virtue of authenticity, and the virtue of responsibility. Each virtue of the three interpenetrates and enriches

one another. The “ethical self” of the instructional leader, as it engages in “ethical activity,” is concerned with mediating the “inner values of the individual and his or her specific commitments within the complex social life of the modern world” (Starratt, 2004a, p. 28).

Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) has argued that ethics is about the discovery of virtues, viewed as dispositions, needed to enable and sustain the search for a purposeful life. It is in the quest for purposes, he insists, “that the goal of the quest is finally to be understood. A quest is always an education both as to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge” (p. 204). Virtues are ways of responding to the moral demands and opportunities proffered within the varying circumstances and settings of associated living (Flanagan & Jupp, 2001). The virtues, as Starratt explained, are viewed as interpersonal ethics actualizing the work of “administrators, teachers, and students” (Starratt, 2004a, p. 9) through the mutual involutions of the three virtues. Mediating the “inner values of the individual and his or her specific commitments within the complex social life of the modern world” is the self-forming of “ethical self” as related to the three virtues (Starratt, 2004a, p. 28).

Presence

Presence, the self-forming activity of being present as an “ethical self” and in the “ethical duty of self” requires that the instructional leader embody affirming presence, enabling presence, and critical presence. Affirming presence accepts the person or the event as it is—in its ambiguity, its incompleteness, its particularity and its multidimensionality. Enabling presence is open to the possibilities of the person or event to contain or reveal something special, something of deep value and significance. Critical presence expects to find both negative and positive features in persons and events. People and events and circumstances reveal unequal relationships of power and reciprocity. Critical presence illuminates what is tacit, assumed, or presumed in situations that reflect human

constructions and beliefs, rather than something prefixed as normative, as natural, as essential (Starratt, 2004a; 2005a). The aim of an ethic of presence is self-invention, a conscious and deliberate transformation of the self rather than a narration of self in which one rearranges the already given. At the same time, the “duty to self” and the “duty to other” requires the mediational value of ethical presence if the “self” is to engage in self-formation. If one’s ethical presence, in the sense of the affirming, authenticity, and responsibility, are formative of one’s values, and one’s values influence one’s behavior as an instructional leader, then presence is important to “ethical self-formation.” The instructional leader, by enacting ethical presence, is interrelatedly enacting the virtue of authenticity. That is, working to unconceal that which lies within the “self” of the “self” and of others and develop the “ethical self” while enacting the “ethical duty to self” and “ethical duty to others.” Enacting an ethic of presence is an “ethical activity” necessary to developing the authentic self.

Authenticity

The virtue of authenticity is the connecting of the “self” to a wider whole, of situating the “ethical self” of the instructional leader in dialogue with the wider whole, “of discovering that the deepest character of all beings . . . is their relationality, their participation in the larger life around them. . . . authenticity is an ideal that can never be fully or permanently realized” (Starratt, 2004a, p. 70). As with the virtue of presence, the virtue of authenticity is a dialogical virtue. One cannot be an authentic “self” alone in isolation from other members of humanity. Authenticity, to be enacted as an “ethical self,” occurs in relationship to another. Authenticity is revealed in our actions, in our acting out the various social and cultural roles we play. The “ethical self,” in enacting authenticity, must achieve a self that is neither effacing nor aggrandizing. Authenticity enacted by the instructional leader encourages a self-creation that recognizes “preexisting

horizons of significance” and helps foster a relational identity that is embedded in and embellished by it.¹⁷ Actions reveal the “self” behind the actions. Most basically, one is authentic as an “ethical self” in response to one’s own humanity and the humanity of the other.

However, the instructional leader’s expression of authenticity through leadership as “ethical activity” has to take into account the similar effort of others to be authentic to themselves as well. Authenticity supposes a kind of social contract, namely that, as a person expects to be granted a certain latitude to be himself or herself, to own one’s life and one’s choices, so too must one afford to others the latitude to chart the courses of their own lives (Starratt, 2004a, 2005a; Taylor, 1992). The instructional leader understands his/her identity as an “ethical self” is always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities one’s significant others want to recognize in the person. There is a relational authenticity necessary to “self-understanding” as an “ethical self.” In this sense, the “self” of the instructional leader is a social product developed through interactions and relationships with others.

Thus, the authentic “ethical self” of the instructional leader cannot be developed in isolation from the context of the school and the society within which leadership is exercised (Starratt, 2007). This context describes a complex and continually changing fusion of an individual’s values, the values underpinning the society, and multiple other features affecting the leadership world (e.g., policy, politics), as well as the organizational environment (Walker & Shuangye, 2007). The ethic of authenticity, the way of being real, is a moral good. Having a lucid self-awareness and a disposition to accept one’s personal responsibilities, the instructional leader “as an existentially authentic person must have a basic disposition to respect and care about other people” (Heter, 2006, p. 85).

Responsibility

The first and most basic domain of

ethical responsibility is as a human being: acting humanely toward others.¹⁸ In this domain, an instructional leader considers the humanly ethical thing to do, “taking into account the intrinsic dignity and inviolability of the other person” (Starratt, 2005b, p. 125). The virtue of responsibility is enacted in a second way, “the carrying out of citizen responsibilities as a public servant” (p. 131), which flows immediately from the leader’s effort to enter into dialogue with the world, and that is to listen to and reflect on what lessons experience of the worlds have to teach about living the leader’s life, about defining himself or herself as an “ethical self,” about the obligations of membership in those worlds, about the unfinished agendas of those worlds, about the possibilities of agency within those worlds. Responsibility here is about responding to the many significant potential lessons offered in these focused learning experiences of the physical, social, cultural, and historical worlds. The “ethical duty to self” and “ethical duty to other” as instructional leader is enacted, in part, through the virtue of responsibility. The philosophical and practical worlds of the instructional leader are bound together through the enactment of responsibility as “ethical activity.” Starratt (2005b) explains that the “absorption of all levels of ethical enactment is important” (p. 131).

The instructional leader as a responsible “ethical self” is simultaneously “humane, caring, and compassionate, even while appealing to altruistic teacher and student motives” (Starratt, 2005b, p. 131). And, as a responsible “ethical self,” the instructional leader “has to affirm the dignity and rights of students and teachers as autonomous citizens, even while appealing to their higher civic and democratic ideals” (p. 131). The aim of an ethical enactment of responsibility by the instructional leader is, as Foucault’s ethics suggest, to transform deeply ingrained customs, habits, dispositions, sensibilities, and ways of perceiving that limit the exercise of freedom.¹⁹ The locus of ethical responsibility is on individuals not only to change their thinking but to

transform their lives by risking what they are, by engaging in social encounters that illuminate the limits of what they can tolerate knowing, being, and doing.

As a responsible “ethical self,” the instructional leader recognizes that the virtue of presence is the virtue that interfaces with the virtues of authenticity and responsibility, thus creating a foundation for the “ethical self” and enabling the “ethical duty to self” and “ethical duty to others” to be realized. Instructional leadership, as “ethical activity,” requires the virtue of presence – affirming presence, enabling presence, critical presence – be maintained and developed in order to sustain the virtues of authenticity and responsibility. As well, enacting the “ethical self” as authentic and responsible is essential to enacting the virtue of presence.

Final Reflections

The instructional leader, as ethical reasoning “self,” acknowledges that the challenges of enacting ethics of responsibility, presence, and authenticity in the educational setting is complex, made so by constant attention to constantly addressing the philosophical and practical responsibilities of leadership as “ethical activity” – an ethical responsibility of constantly connecting the science and art of instructional leadership that is met only through the virtues of authenticity and presence.

The ontological requirement for creating and sustaining trusting and respectful relationships between the “ethical self” of the instructional leader and the “self of others” as a basis for all moral decisions is apparent. Relational authenticity is essential to “self-formation” of the instructional leader’s “ethical self,” just as the leader’s enactment of presence is crucial to meeting the responsibilities of leadership as “ethical activity.” The world that the instructional leader, as rational being, would choose is a world where all individuals govern conduct by Kant’s second formulation of the categorical imperative: “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an

end and never as a means only.”²⁰ The role of instructional leadership, indeed, “ethical” leadership, performs is by its very nature concerned with the education of students, as argued earlier. This is the end of ethical leadership in schools.

The constant address of “What is the ‘self’?” “What is the nature of the ‘ethical self’?” “What is the ‘ethical duty to self’ of the instructional leader?” is necessary to realizing one’s life and practice as an instructional leader. These are the questions that are at the heart of the eternal search for meaning and understanding of the “ethical self” in instructional leadership. And, this search must necessarily be extended into the lives and experiences of the students and teachers with whom we work each day as we lead a community of learners toward the future.

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¹This view of instructional leadership as a distinctively human endeavor sees such leadership as catalyzing ethical learning, which can be differentiated from other forms of learning by its constant concern with ethical behavior beyond immediate institutional learning contexts, indeed, in everyday social life. For Starratt (2004a), this ethical activity requires the virtues of authenticity, presence, and responsibility. While other socially and politically sanctioned institutional roles certainly can and do engage others in learning practices, the contention here is that no other role is invested with the charge to support and foster learning so extensively as that of the instructional leader.

²The ideologically embeddedness of schools is socially constructed and, more precisely, it is actively constituted through social and political struggle (Tucker, 1989), giving educational significance. Starratt’s (2004b) notion of “leadership as ethical activity” situates ideology firmly within material institutions, and conceives ideology as a body of discursive practices grounded in economic interests and interpellations that sustain individuals as subjects of market-driven managerial ideology (p. 730). Elsewhere, Starratt has warned about the danger of thinking that administrators and schools automatically assimilate desirable standards as “ethically naïve, if not culpable” (Starratt, 1991, p. 187). The “ethical duty to self” demands that instructional leaders not only attend to moral issues, but do so in particular ways, while attending to the “ethical self.”

³Drawing from the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, the ethical work involved in the “duty to self” consists of the self-forming activities meant to ensure one’s own subjection to a moral authority and transform oneself into an autonomous ethical agent. Foucault refers to these self-forming activities as practices or technologies of the self, or ascetic practices (see Foucault, 1988, 1997, 1998, 2000). Also, “duties to oneself” form the keystone in Kant’s overarching moral theory (see Kant 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2002). Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* demonstrate a cohesive, non-derivative notion of duties to self; Kant conceives of the source of duties to self as deriving from the very nature of self. Among ethical duties, Kant posits there is a fundamental division between duties to oneself and duties to others. Regarding duties to oneself, there is a division between “perfect” and “imperfect” duty; regarding duties to others, the strict or narrow duties are called “duties of respect,” while the wide or meritorious ones are

called “duties of love.” Kant does not attempt to cover all the ethical duties; rather, he confines the “metaphysics” of morals only to those duties that are generated by applying the principle of morality to human nature in general. But many of our duties, as Kant recognizes, arise from the special circumstances of others, or our relations to them, and especially from the contingent social institutions defining these relations.

⁴Kant argued that our obligations to others aren’t based merely on a social contract that’s enforced by some external authority, but rather on a rational imperative to be true to our autonomous moral nature. Morality is autonomous because it comes from within, giving expression to our ability to govern ourselves by something higher than protocols of mere survival or the desire for prestige. See Kant (1997a, p. 37).

⁵See, e.g., Bustos (2008); Denis (1997); Eisenberg (1967); Fahmy (2013); Finnis (1987); Guyer (1998/2004); Hill (1992); Hills (2003); Jeske (1996); Paton (1990); Sartorius (1985); Singer (1959); Straumanis (1984); Wick (1960).

⁶Here Foucault argues that ethics is the form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection, and by this he means that freedom consists in reflectively informed ascetic practices or practices of self. The instructional leader, in situating the “self” in relation to the ends of educational leadership, is concerned with developing the “ethical self” – self-forming activity – in relation to ensuring the education of students. The instructional leader’s informed practices are imbued with an attitude, ethos, or relationship to one’s ethical substance that Foucault understands as the activity of freedom (see Foucault, 1997). The question of freedom is at the heart of Foucault’s ethics, but we cannot exercise freedom unless we interrogate the cultural inscriptions that keep us “trapped in our own history.” Also important to understanding freedom, Kant championed a freedom that both expresses and arises out of reason, rather than a freedom expressing human desires and inclinations. It is a freedom of self-mastery, not self-indulgence. For him, moral freedom is rational. Kant believed that *the choice to live as a free human being is the supreme act of “self-respect;” it is the most important moral choice open to humans, and all other moral choices flow from it* (see Kant, 2002).

⁷Here I draw on Begley’s (2006) explanation of authenticity as: “. . . professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices. . . that implies a genuine kind of leadership – a hopeful open-ended, visionary and creative response to societal circumstances. . .” (p. 570).

⁸Foucault (1997).

⁹See Haezrahi (1961–1962).

¹⁰For Foucault, experience is not constituted by a meaning-making subject of consciousness, but in the interplay and correlation between three axes of genealogical analysis: “types of understanding, forms of normativity, and modes of relation to oneself and others.” See Foucault (1988, p. 336).

¹¹The term *person* has historically been understood to refer to a being with a moral significance that elevates it above other types of beings, a significance derived from its possession of rationality. Generally, to be a person means to be a full member of the moral community. Kant, for example, describes human beings as persons possessing an “absolute worth” or “dignity” by virtue of their qualities of rationality and autonomy. See Kant (1997a, p. 37).

¹²*Self-forming activity* refers to the particular practices we employ, such as self-examination and reflection, keeping a diary or a notebook, and embracing or renouncing certain desires or pleasures, in forming ourselves as ethical subjects. It represents a “set of techniques that help change us into the kind of being who can behave ethically.” In working on ourselves, however, we do not invent new technologies, but base our ascetic practice on models that are “proposed, suggested, imposed upon us by our culture, society, and social group” (Foucault, 1997, 291).

¹³It is precisely the instructional leader’s humanness in his or her relation to others that makes the urgency and seriousness of ethical leadership manifest. The instated effect is to invoke the proactive virtue of responsibility. On this point, Starratt has argued authenticity as the basis of proactive responsibility. This effect is also seen clearly in Levinas (1981): “Responsibility for another is not an accident that happens to a subject, but precedes essence in it, it has not awaited freedom, in which a commitment to another would have been made” (p. 114).

¹⁴Ethical responsibility is a virtue that emerges theoretically and existentially as an interstitial position. It is perhaps an idea that is necessarily more or less contradictory. Todd (2003) emphasizes the positive and fundamental meaning that relational responsibility imports in terms of the “ethical self:” “Responsibility is not located within a subject. Instead, involved in the initial susceptibility I have to the other, responsibility comes from the other and emerges out of the difference that structures the human relation – a relation that does not presuppose that self and Other are the same. There is always only a self and an other, not two selves or two others that are interchangeable, for this would imply a

knowledge, a thematization, an understanding that ‘we’ are all the same” (p. 109).

¹⁵From Kant’s standpoint, all people are equal in dignity and therefore entitled to equal rights and equal moral consideration. Impartial reasoning is the mark of an autonomous person who’s a slave to neither the opinions of society nor her own private passions. See Kant (1997b).

¹⁶Neil Levy maintains that Foucault’s investigations of the ‘care of the self’ shows that his ethical work is best understood as a virtue of theoretic ethics. See Levy (2004). Robert J. Starratt argues that virtues are integral to ethical leadership, acknowledging that “ethical activity” requires that the ethical leader enacts virtues as a moral being. See Starratt (2004a).

¹⁷Taylor explains authenticity as having three dimensions. The first is self – namely, a tacit moral imperative to be true to oneself, something that only the individual can discover, define, and actualize. Taylor (1992) defines this dimension as “a certain way of being human that is my way” (p. 28). The second dimension is “relations.” In addition to the manner of being authentic, which is self-referential, the content of authenticity is realized in relationships. A person is authentic in a dialogue with another and in his or her interaction with his or her culture, which teaches one the necessary moral lessons about life. As Taylor says, “We define [our identity] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant other wants to recognize in us.” (p. 33). The third dimension is freedom. One’s liberty to choose and shape one’s life can be exercised only in a society that guarantees that liberty for everyone. As Taylor explains, our authenticity is “grounded in a self-determining freedom” (p. 39). Taylor emphasizes that authentic identities are the product of our personally endorsed sources of significance as well as intimate dialogue with the cast of characters in our lives: “We define [our identity] always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us. And even when we outgrow some of the latter – our parents, for instance – and they disappear from our lives, the conversation with them continues within us as long as we live” (p. 33). See Taylor (1992).

¹⁸Starratt identifies five domains of responsibility that are central to the virtue of responsibility. These include responsibility as a human being, a citizen and public servant, an educator, an educational administrator, and as an educational leader. See Starratt (2005b).

¹⁹See Foucault (1982, pp. 229–252).

²⁰See Kant (1989, p. 18).

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