

THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP, SCHOOL CULTURE,  
AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN MISSOURI MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Review of Related Literature

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## Chapter 2

### Review of the Related Literature

#### Introduction

More than 53.6 million students are enrolled in approximately 94,000 kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade schools in the United States (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Public schools historically have been considered the great equalizer in American society (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999); however, American schools have been viewed recently as in need of serious reform efforts (Henig et al., 1999). The quality of schooling for all students has not been adequate to prepare students for the future, including working in a global economy (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992). Current students are growing up in a global, internationally competitive economy (Brown, 1993) and schools must change so American students can succeed and prosper in this environment (Lucas & Valentine, 2002; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992). Policy makers, in particular, are making the link between effective schools and the ability of the national economy to compete in a global marketplace (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2002). If schools are not improved, the nation will pay a high price economically and socially (Parish & Aquila, 1996).

Policy makers, as well as educators, are concerned about schooling in America (Lam, 2002). Educational stakeholders including teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members are now paying more attention than ever to improving schools (Peterson & Deal, 2002). A primary focus of these individuals, especially policy

makers, is on school leadership. School leaders are in positions seen as pivotal to educational reform (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, & Harris, 2006). The principal is a linchpin in educational change because policies are easily written which direct the school reform actions of the principals (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). These policy makers are correct to initiate the school improvement process with school leaders. Scholars as far back as Edmonds (1979) made the connection between effective schooling and strong leadership; however, the principal cannot accomplish school reform alone (á Campo, 1993). This is partly because it is not possible for one person to totally “run” a school; reform takes all organizational members, not just those at the top, working to improve the education for all students (á Campo, 1993; Maher, Lucas, & Valentine, 2001). Even with the entire school working toward the goals of school reform, improving a school is a complex task with no precise step-by-step plan to follow which will accomplish reform objectives (Fullan, 2002; Kilman, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986).

Reform efforts being pushed forward by policy makers have the central goal of improving the education of all students in school. This, according to Cavanaugh and Dellar (1998) and Danielson (2002), is the primary mission of the educational system. Policy makers, especially at the federal level, are now taking this notion of academic success for all students to a new level of accountability through the 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (Gruenert, 2005). NCLB makes schools accountable for student academic success through state-wide testing (Gruenert, 2005). Not all in the education field are pleased with this aspect and other stipulations of NCLB; however, Grogan (2004) described the policies within NCLB which require all sub-groups of students to

perform at a proficient level academically as a positive for the educational system. She explains that not taking action to improve the education of all students when evidence exists that students are not receiving a high quality education is simply “wrong” (Grogan, 2004). This statement by Grogan is a strong encouragement that leaders need to be more concerned with not only improving overall academic achievement in their school, but also with the academic success for every student within the school (Fullan, 2002). As Edmonds (1979) stated, all students are educable and there has never been a time in the United States where schools did not have all of the knowledge they needed to make changes to improve the educational system for all students. The key issue today is how to incorporate that knowledge into the mainstream of educational change so all students can be successful.

### Change

Schools have changed little even though they have been the target of many reform movements (Parish & Aquila, 1996). There are still schools where most teachers work autonomously to educate students (Gruenert, 2005). There have been many reform movements but until recently these reforms have been aimed solely at schools on the periphery (Hallinger, 1992). Deal (1990) stated almost every conceivable action had been taken to improve schools. That statement was made almost 20 years ago, and today new and powerful conceptions for school reform continue to be advanced by practitioners and researchers. Reform efforts have not always been positive; in fact, some have produced negative effects in schools (Deal, 1990). The 1990s were precarious times for public education (Kernan-Schloss & Plattner, 1998), and with the passage of NCLB in 2001 schools find themselves in another uncertain and unstable educational environment.

NCLB mandates have influenced school change across the nation, but many schools, even without NCLB, were initiating their own reform efforts to improve the education for their students (Davis, 2003). One reason for self-initiated school reform programs is the uncertainty educators will face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century American economy. Schools are reevaluating their role in society due to this ambiguous environment (Leithwood, 1994). These changes in society have created not only a need for new organizational thinking, but also new approaches to leadership (Brown, 1993). Leaders must focus on change because the coming era will be dominated by this trend (Leithwood, 1994).

Leaders must acknowledge change as a slow process which takes careful planning and patient execution to accomplish successfully (Davis, 2003). Often in education, change has been unsuccessful because too many programs aimed at comprehensive school reform have been implemented simultaneously (Silins & Mulford, 2002b). A few coherent change programs initiated and carried out effectively are far more powerful than many divergent programs which are poorly carried out (Fullan, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Henig et al., 1999). Change fails not just as a result of the number of programs but also because of the specific actions taken by the leaders and followers within the organization. Leaders often rush into the change process without a plan, and more importantly without a vision or strategy to accomplish school reform (Davis, 2003). Change also fails because leaders do not build coalitions of followers who support the process. The difficulty of building coalitions is challenging because many followers are satisfied with the current conditions and do not see a need for change (Davis, 2003). These issues have a detrimental effect on reform processes and can ruin a program before

it has a chance to succeed. A principal must create a plan of action which deals with both internal and external pressures for change (Davis, 2003). Successful school change cannot occur without the principal playing a crucial role (Day, 2000). Studies of leadership continually document that the school leader is a critical element in the successful completion of a change initiative (Leithwood et al., 2006).

School leaders direct the course of the school under typical circumstances (Maher et al., 2001) but play a much more prominent role when change occurs (Leithwood, 1994). A number of scholars (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Bass, 1990; Brown, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) all point to the need for leaders in schools undergoing change to embody the characteristics of a transformational leader. Bass (1990), as well as Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), stress the need for transformational leadership. The characteristics of this type of leader are appropriate when schools are faced with turbulence brought about by uncertainties in the environment (Bass, 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Hay (2006) explains that a transformational leader during times of organizational change must implement four things. First, the principal must make a compelling case for why change is needed in the organization. Without this action, the faculty will not be committed to the change and open to altering their current practices. Second, a principal must inspire a shared vision. This helps the faculty, once they are successfully committed to change their practices, to set a shared course of action. The change process can move forward when the leader's and teachers' purposes become the same (Brown, 1993). Third the principal needs to keep the sense of urgency for change at the forefront. Without urgency the change initiative is likely to falter. Finally, to make the change successful, it must become embedded in the culture of the school. Only after this

stage can the change truly become rooted in “the way we do things around here” (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 4). Fostering change may seem like an easy process, but as Yukl (2006) states, implementing change is one of the most difficult of all leadership responsibilities. One problem with school change is the frequency with which reform movements have been initiated and not completed. The leader must carry out a plan so that people in the school are assured the change will be successful (Schlechty, 2000). If teachers believe the change will occur they will be allies with the principal. If teachers are opposed to the change they can successfully block its completion (Parish & Aquila, 1996).

Principals play a central role in school change and they directly influence school culture, which affects the change process (Marks & Printy, 2003). One way principals affect culture is through their communication with stakeholders. This communication can be both formal and informal (Norris, 1994). Communicating with stakeholders gives the stakeholder the knowledge necessary to become aware of, and committed to, the need for change (Brown, 1993). Effective communication allows the principal to build a sense of teamwork so change can be successful (Mitchell & Tucker, 1992).

Leaders must admit during the change process the school is imperfect (Sapher & King, 1985). Imperfection can be overcome in a culture which understands and embraces change (Sapher & King, 1985). An altered culture which embraces change will affect the whole school as both the principal and the teachers become part of the change process (Purkey & Smith, 1982). Altering a school’s culture and a school becoming a place where nearly everyone willingly embraces change will take between 3-5 years (Fiore, 2004). The time it takes to build this strong school culture is worth the time and effort because a

solid foundation for continued improvement is built (Hopkins, Ainscow, & West, 1994; Leithwood et al., 2006).

Numerous scholars have confirmed over the years that school culture is a key factor in successful school change (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Hopkins et al., 1994; Lucas and Valentine, 2002; Norris, 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1982). An old school culture has a tendency to reappear when changes threaten to permanently alter the school (Parish & Aquila, 1996). Cuban (1988) describes the type of change which fundamentally alters the culture of the school as a second-order change. A principal must understand that major structural changes to a school, including changing its culture, will be a difficult task because of resistance (Cuban, 1988). A change to school culture may be difficult to implement because it is a second-order change but the successful implementation of cultural change will support other significant school improvement initiatives (Cuban, 1988; Gruenert, 2000).

### Leadership

The concept and definition of leadership has been a topic of debate among scholars for many years. Simple concepts are easily defined but complex concepts such as leadership must be defined more vaguely (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Defining leadership is difficult because it involves a multitude of follower interactions which take place in many different types of organizations and environments (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Stewart, 2006). Yukl (2006) states that the concept of leadership has fostered many definitions, with no one definition becoming universal because the concept of leadership is so arbitrary and subjective.



Though leadership is difficult to define, three major areas common to most definitions have been identified. The first is that leadership is based on organizational improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). Leaders are people within an organization attempting to improve the organization in some way. Another commonality in leadership definitions is about direction-setting within the organization (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2006; Yukl, 2006). Direction-setting is linked to organizational improvement because for leaders to improve an organization they must have a direction toward which they are taking the organization. Without this direction, organizational improvement is not likely to occur. The final commonality to leadership definitions is the importance of leader influence (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a; Leithwood et al., 2006; Rauch & Behling, 1984; Yukl, 2006). Influence is important regardless of who is exerting it, how much is exerted, the purpose of exerting it, or its outcome (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Leaders intentionally exert influence on organizational members in order to affect the organization (Yukl, 2006). Yukl's (2006) definition of leadership encompasses these three commonalities into one definition: "Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 8). Yukl fails to mention, however, the role and impact of followers in his definition of leadership, a concept common to other leadership definitions (Meindl, 1995).

Burns (1978) explains the interconnectedness of leaders and followers when he describes the nature of leadership. Other scholars (Meindl, 1995; Ogawa & Bossert,

1995) explain this notion further by describing the significance of the relationships created between leaders and followers. This concept helps explain Bass's (1990) observation that most leaders do not rely on legitimate or coercive power as much as relationships. These relationships are critical because leadership cannot and does not occur without followers (Leithwood et al., 2006; Meindl, 1995).

Other scholars (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997; Meindl, 1995) take the idea of a follower's place in leadership even farther when they explain how a follower's perception is the key to leadership. This notion is justified because individuals' perceptions are their reality (Kezar et al., 2006). Individuals who perceive a person as a leader are more likely to become followers and therefore allow themselves to be influenced by this leader (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997). Leaders, knowing this information, need to focus on the perceptions of followers if they are going to be effective (Kezar et al., 2006). Followers are influenced not only by their own perception of the leader, but also by the perception of the leader as held by other organizational members (Meindl, 1995). Knowing the importance of the perceptions of organizational members as individuals and collectively means leaders must interact in positive ways so followers work toward reaching organizational goals (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Leaders could find themselves without followers, making them unable to accomplish anything, if they do not take into account the perceptions of others (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). The growing focus on the impact of followers has led to a less leader-centric view of leadership in many recent leadership models (Kezar et al., 2006).

The definitions for principal leadership have gone through multiple iterations over the past century. Principals starting in the 1920s and continuing to the 1960s were seen as administrative managers who supervised the day-to-day aspects of the school (Hallinger, 1992). Principals in the 1960s and 1970s started to manage programs, especially federally funded ones like special education and bilingual education, shifting part of a principal's role toward curriculum reform (Hallinger, 1992). This new role pushed principals from being individuals who maintained the status quo during the 1920s to the 1960s to change agents in the 1960s and 1970s (Hallinger, 1992). Principals in the 1960s and 1970s were concerned with making changes but not necessarily about the effectiveness of change (Hallinger, 1992). Regardless of the outcomes, the shift toward being a change agent and being more involved in curriculum issues within the school laid the groundwork for the instructional leadership movement.

The shift toward instructional leadership started in the 1980s and was a response to the public's desire that schools raise standards and improve the academic performance of students (Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1994; Stewart, 2006). The principal who was an instructional leader became the primary source of educational expertise in the building (Hallinger, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003). The principal became responsible for managing the school and improving the teaching and learning in the building (Leithwood, 1994). The nature of instructional leadership was typically top-down because most principals set school goals (Hallinger, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003). The principal "led" the faculty toward attainment of the goals as a means to school improvement. According to Marks and Printy (2003) however, the practices which defined an instructional leader were not achieved. Educational researchers have noted

reasons and limitations of instructional leadership which help explain this failure to change schools.

One major area of concern for scholars is the top-down nature of instructional leadership. School improvement is a complex and diffuse process so top-down leadership is not an effective mechanism to accomplish school change (Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger, 2003). The school improvement process is particularly difficult in secondary schools because the many specialized subject areas mean the principal lacks the curricular knowledge to impact the teaching and learning (Leithwood, 1994). Another flaw in instructional leadership is that sometimes great leaders are not always great classroom teachers (Liontos, 1992). The principal who is an instructional leader must have a solid grounding in teaching and learning (Liontos, 1992). Some leaders do not have a vast knowledge base about teaching and learning but are still able to improve schools (Liontos, 1992). In addition to these flaws in instructional leadership, the top-down approach of this leadership style did not blend well with the shift in the 1980s toward schools becoming more democratic institutions (Marks & Printy, 2003; Stewart, 2006). These issues with instructional leadership provided a type of foundational grounding for one of today's more prevalent perspectives on leadership. That theory is transformational leadership.

Leithwood (1992b, 1993) predicted that transformational leadership would subsume instructional leadership as the dominate leadership philosophy in schools during the 1990s. Hallinger verified this prediction in his writings in 2003. One of the major driving forces in the rise of transformational leadership was its ability to assist principals

in coping with unplanned actions which are necessary for school reform (Hallinger, 1992).

It is widely acknowledged that leadership affects organizations (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) and this notion holds true for schools as well (Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Heck, 1999). Student achievement is primarily used as the dependent variable in studies about the effect of school leadership because achievement is the primary measure of school effectiveness (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This dependent variable is becoming even more common in studies because of the value NCLB places on student achievement. Numerous scholars (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger et al., 1996; Leithwood et al., 2006; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) have determined principals have some degree of impact on student achievement, but the strength of this relationship is still widely contested. Research design has made a difference in the findings related to the effect of principal leadership on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Newer studies have attempted to discover the avenues by which principals affect achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This is a shift from previous studies which merely focused on whether or not the principal had any affect on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Principals must know what specific actions they can take to improve a school if student achievement is to be improved.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) analyzed studies on leadership and achievement and looked at direct, indirect, and mediated effect research models. Direct research models look for direct relationships between the principal and student achievement (Hallinger &

Heck, 1996). Direct studies of leadership on student achievement showed anywhere from no effect (Hallinger et al., 1996) to weak effect (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Stewart, 2006; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). Hallinger and Heck (1998) conclude that direct effects models do not produce conclusive results concerning leadership and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). The complex nature of a school makes it difficult for principals to have a direct effect on achievement because principals have limited contact with students. Indirect studies look for relationships between the principal and student achievement but include other variables which may impact the dependent variable (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Indirect models show a limited effect of the principal on student achievement when other variables were included such as parent involvement, school social economic status, teacher experience, and principal gender (Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004). Hallinger and Heck (1996) refer to the variables in indirect effect models as antecedents. These antecedents are placed in the study to impact the principal leadership (Hallinger and Heck, 1996). The relationship between the principal and the dependent variable can be analyzed in greater detail after this impact is taken into account (Hallinger and Heck, 1996). Antecedents are difficult to use in research models as there are a multitude of factors which impact schools. Datasets using antecedents must be large so Type I statistical errors are not made as the number of variables increase. The mediated effect models of research place variables in the study known to have an impact on principal leadership and student achievement including climate and instructional organization (Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). This research design has produced

strong results (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). A reason for the strong findings using the mediated effect model is because the principal, through manipulation of the mediated variable, influences others, including teachers, who directly affect students (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999). The mediated effect model is designed to address the issues of limited principal-student contact which produced no effect to weak effects in the direct effects model.

Leadership effects are not always positive in nature; indeed in some cases leaders can have significantly negative effects on organizations (Stewart, 2006; Waters et al., 2003). Leadership is not a precise process (Brown, 1993) because the leader's actions in one school may not be appropriate for another (Wilmore & Thomas, 2001). The drastic differences in rural/urban and high/low socio economic status schools make creating one all encompassing leadership process to achieve student success difficult if not impossible. Changing times call for principals to acquire different skill sets so they continue to be effective in fulfilling their role as school leaders (Leithwood et al., 1999).

#### Transformational Leadership

James McGregor Burns in 1978 was the first scholar to employ the term transformational leadership (Burns,). Bernard Bass extended Burns' initial introduction of transformational leadership (Liontos, 1992). Burns and Bass studied political leaders, army officers, and business executives (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Liontos, 1992). Leithwood and his colleagues extended the study of transformational leadership into the field of education over the last decade (Stewart, 2006).

The extensive research which has been done on transformational leadership has not produced any single agreed upon concept for the theory (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999b; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The lack of an established definition does not mean the concept is irrelevant, especially during the times of change experienced in education (Antonakis & House, 2002; Brown, 1993; Hay, 2006; Roberts, 1985). Transformational leadership provides a flexible approach to change which allows a leader's personal style and the context to vary (Bass, 1990; Deal, 1990; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Stone, 1992). Flexibility allows organizations to solve problems (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marks & Printy, 2003) while raising followers' commitment, motivation, empowerment, and elevating the leader and the follower to a higher purpose to support institutional change (Burns, 1978; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Yukl, 2006).

The ability to raise follower commitment is essential for a transformational leader to accomplish change, especially in uncertain times (Bass, Waldman, Avolio, & Bebb, 1987; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999b; Marks & Printy, 2003). Commitment creates greater individual productivity on behalf of the organization (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Greater productivity allows the organization to meet its goals (Hay, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Commitment of organization members is also influenced by the motivation transformational leaders instill (Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Motivation helps individuals move into positions of greater responsibility (Wilmore & Thomas, 2001). When transformational leaders find and understand what motivates individuals, they are better able to influence the organizational members to



transcend their own self interest for the betterment of the organization (Barnett, McCormick, & Conners, 2001; Burns, 1978; Hay, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003). Empowerment of organizational members means the principal may not be the sole transformational leader (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Transformational leaders, who may or may not be the principal, are those who can influence and inspire the commitment and raise the level of motivation for followers in a school (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Transformational leaders are able to affect individuals because such leaders provide a vision, communicate high expectations, provide intellectual stimulation, provide support and consideration, role model behavior, take risks, show integrity and inspire followers to create change (Bass, 1990; Hay, 2006; Kezar et al., 2006). The transformational leader also creates followers who can become transformational leaders themselves (Bass et al., 1987; Bass, 1990; Bass, 1995).

Transformational leadership creates commitment, motivation, and empowerment in individuals. The transformation of followers is able to create change by followers' pursuing higher goals (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1990). The growth of organizational members transforms both the follower and the leader as they work together to improve the organization (Burns, 1978).

Leithwood and his colleagues have created the most fully developed model of transformational leadership in schools (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Leithwood and his colleagues have created three categories of transformational leadership, each of which has three subcategories referred to as practices. The first category is setting direction, which is evident in a leader's ability to build a vision, develop specific goals and

priorities, and convey high performance expectations (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006). The second category is developing people, which includes providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, and modeling desirable professional practices and values (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006). The final category created by Leithwood and his colleagues is redesigning the organization, which includes developing a collaborative school culture, creating structures which foster participation in school decisions, and creating productive community relationships (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1998; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006).

Transformational leadership has been studied extensively to determine if it has an impact on student achievement. Research findings have reached varied conclusions on the impact of transformational leadership on student achievement. Research by a number of scholars finds no relationship between transformational leadership and student achievement (Griffith, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003). Other scholars find weak effects (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), in a review of research studies, found mixed results between transformational leadership and student achievement. Six of the nine studies in the review found that transformational leadership has a positive impact on student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The article by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) did not give adequate details of the studies reviewed which makes it difficult for the reader to determine if the conclusions reached

are valid. In a more recent review of research findings, Leithwood et al. (2006) reached two conclusions. First, the combined direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on student achievement are small but educationally significant (Leithwood et al., 2006). This conclusion by Leithwood and his colleagues (2006) is not described in great detail. The reader is left to determine what “educationally significant” means according to the authors. Second, three overarching categories of transformational leadership, created by Leithwood and his colleagues, provide robust evidence of the positive effect transformational leaders have on student achievement. These categories are direction setting, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2006). Much like the article’s first conclusion, the second conclusion leaves the reader with few details justifying the statement that the three categories of transformational leadership provide robust evidence of the impact of transformational leadership of student achievement. Studies repeatedly find a principal’s ability to identify and articulate a vision leads to increased student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Prater, 2004; Schooley, 2005). Other studies find modeling (Prater, 2004), intellectual stimulation (Schooley, 2005), developing goals (Hallinger & Heck, 1998), and having high expectations (Hallinger et al., 1996) all have statistically significant relationships with student achievement. These studies vary in samples and statistical analysis methods, but the findings do in part suggest that Leithwood and his colleagues 2006 claims of robust evidence supporting the impact of transformational leadership in student achievement does exist in the literature.

### *Setting Direction*

Schlechty (2000) states that one of the greatest barriers to school reform is the lack of a clear vision. Excellent schools have a clear vision (Sergiovanni, 1984) whereas ineffective schools lack one (Matthews & Sammons, 2005). An important function of leaders is to create this vision (Day et al., 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Hallinger and Heck (2002) describe vision as the moral and spiritual values which underlie a leader's view of the world and provide the inspiration for the leader's life work. The adoption of a school vision is meant to create a fundamental sense of purpose and guide the activities of a school over a number of years (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Leithwood et al., 1999; Stolp, 1994). Successful leaders must be able to create a vision which others will follow or facilitate the collaborative creation of a vision (á Campo, 1993; Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 1994; Brown, 1993; Day, 2000; Lontos, 1992; Parish & Aquila, 1996). Some scholars (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Stolp, 1994) believe creating a vision through a collaborative process is far more beneficial for the school because more individuals will support an idea they helped create. The school vision also needs to be student-centered to help unite the faculty (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Lambert, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1999). It is important to periodically revise the vision because it guides the direction of the ever-evolving organization (Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Lambert, 2003; Senge, 1990). Visioning is imperative to the establishment of the direction of an organization, but goals must also be set to achieve this school vision (Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood et al., 2006).

Goals are more precise, whereas the vision is more overarching (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Goal-setting can be done by the principal or through a collaborative process, which encourages organizational members to be more invested in the goals set

by the school (Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood et al., 2006; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992). The gap between current practices and desired practices in a school are identified when schools create goals (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Goals must be achievable and are usually quantifiable so there is more accountability (Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). The implementation of both a vision and goals help increase student achievement by setting a consistent direction for the school (Stolp, 1994). Leaders can help followers accomplish school goals by setting high expectations (Leithwood et al., 2006). High expectations help motivate teachers to work toward goal attainment by comparing current performance to future success. (Leithwood et al., 1999).

A leader must be willing to challenge and change the organizational culture so the vision will be fulfilled (Bass, 1990; Norris, 1994). A strong culture is fundamental to fulfilling the school vision (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Marzano et al., 2005; Sapher & King, 1985). Strong school cultures also help ease the adjustment between current practices and future goals, which is essential for goal achievement (Sergiovanni, 1984). The school culture plays a part in the ability of the transformational leader to set the direction (á Campo, 1993).

### *Developing people*

People are the organization (Leithwood et al., 1999). Organizational improvement comes from the improvement of the people who are members of the organization (Leithwood et al., 1999). It is the duty of a transformational leader to create and share knowledge so individuals in a school are developed (Day, 2000; Fullan, 2002). One avenue to develop organizational members is through intellectual stimulation which helps promote intelligence, rationality, and problem solving (Bass, 1990). Schools in the midst

of reform must be able to solve problems. Intellectually stimulating organizational members to look at old problems in new ways is a way of facilitating the solving of complex issues which arise during school reform initiatives (Bass, 1990; Bass et al., 1987; Giancola & Hutchison, 2005; Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996). Professional development is another way to nurture the problem solving ability of teachers (Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood et al., 2006; Muijs et al., 2004). Intellectual stimulation through professional development leads to collaboration and the promotion of collective action to reach school goals (Brown, 1993; Poplin, 1992).

Another avenue to improve a school is for the leader to provide individualized support to faculty members (Hay, 2006). Transformational leaders must know their organizational members well to be successful at providing individualized support (Leithwood et al., 2006). Individualized support can be provided in a variety of ways including giving personal attention to teachers (Bass, 1990), assisting individuals when they are struggling personally or professionally (Bass, 1990), and showing concern about staff members' needs and feelings (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood et al., 1999). A principal is able to create greater motivation by supporting teachers emotionally and professionally (á Campo, 1993; Bass et al., 1987). Direct contact by the principal provides personal motivation, thus creating a feeling of support for the necessary work of successful school change (Brown, 1993; Hallinger & Heck, 1999).

A final means to develop people within an organization is through the modeling of behavior. Modeling behavior allows the principal to set an example for the staff by demonstrating how one should act in order to facilitate the accomplishment of the school vision and goals (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Lucas & Valentine, 2002). While reflected

in the school vision, the principal's beliefs must also be supported by action (Leithwood et al., 2006; Schlechty, 2000). It is essential that the organization members see actions taken by the principal to model behaviors which are in line with the school's vision (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2006).

Developing people in the organization can have an overarching effect on the culture of the school (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Leithwood, 1992a; Norris, 1994; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Principals, who meet the needs of their staff members socially and emotionally, encourage them to take risks, and help them grow professionally, help change the culture of their schools (Norris, 1994). Modeling appropriate behaviors by the principal can also have a positive effect on shaping the school culture (Fiore, 2004; Maher et al., 2001; Norris, 1994; Yukl, 2006).

#### *Redesigning the organization*

Leithwood and his colleagues added the category of redesigning the organization to transformational school leadership in the late 1990s. Numerous scholars (Barnett et al., 2001; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Stewart, 2006) described the effect a transformational leader has on a school culture. Leaders who impact school culture are able to foster change (Huber & West, 2002). Principal actions, including creating a vision and modeling behavior, impact the culture of the school (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). The school culture creates the conditions which allow for the accomplishing of school-wide goals (Richards & Engle, 1986). Shared decision making and community relations impact school culture; vision building, goal setting, high performance expectations, intellectual stimulation, individualized support, and modeling also have a strong influence (á Campo, 1993; Leithwood et al., 2006). Shared decision making becomes a part of the school as

the principal builds consensus for school reform (Silins & Mulford, 2002a). Structures and processes, both formal and informal, draw on the strengths of teachers and allow for shared decision making to occur within a school (Leithwood et al., 1999). Shared decision making becomes part of the culture, promoting increased teacher motivation and commitment to the school vision (á Campo, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1999). The final piece of the Leithwood and colleagues (2006) definition of school transformational leadership is building productive relationships with families and communities. A principal must be connected to the community because what is happening outside of the school impacts the performance of students (Leithwood et al., 2006). Connecting to the wider environment allows the school to use new ideas from the community and helps resources flow into the school (Leithwood et al., 2006). It is no longer possible for schools to ignore the impact the family and community have on the school (Fullan, 2002). Schools must build relationships with outside stakeholders to ensure school change (Leithwood et al., 2006).

### Culture

It appears evident that culture is interwoven with transformational leadership. Over the last three centuries, American public schools have developed their own stable organizational culture (Parish & Aquila, 1996). Every school has a unique culture (Marzano et al., 2005). Scholars (Maher et al., 2001; Sapher & King, 1985) state a school's culture is the foundation for successful school improvement. The concept of school culture has been borrowed from the field of anthropology (Smircich, 1983). There is no agreed upon definition of culture in this field of study (Smircich, 1983). The definition of culture is also unclear in the field of education (Deal & Peterson, 1999;



Gruenert, 2000; Gruenert, 2005). The definitions of culture vary, but some of the following words have been used to describe the phenomenon: assumptions, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, ceremonies, covenants, dress, expectations, fairy tales, heroes, history, ideology, knowledge, language, laws, myths, norms, practices, purpose, rewards, rituals, stores, structure, symbols, traditions, values in a school (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1997a; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1997b; Fiore, 2004; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Gruenert, 2000; Gruenert, 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Hopkins et al., 1994; Kilman et al., 1986; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999a; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999b; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005; Morgan, 2006; Norris, 1994; Parish & Aquila, 1996; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Pritchard, Marrow, & Marshall, 2005; Schein, 1992; Schein, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1984; Stolp, 1994). Marzano (2005) and á Campo (1993) explain that no matter what the definition of culture, a culture exists as a natural by-product of people working together. The concept of culture as a product is also part of Bolman and Deal's (2003) definition; culture is a product and a process (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Culture is a product because it has been produced by those previously in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Culture is a process because it is being renewed and recreated as new members enter the culture and make the old ways their own (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The impact of new organizational members on a school's existing culture means a school's culture is not static (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998). In his study of culture, Edgar Schein (1992) created three levels of analysis for culture. Each level is based upon how visible the culture is to observers (Schein, 1992). The lowest level of culture, artifacts, is easily visible while the highest level, basic assumptions, is difficult to see by those inside and outside the organization (Schein, 1992).

Schein's (1992) first level of culture is the artifacts of the organization. Artifacts are things a person sees, hears, and feels. Schein cautions that this level is easy to see but should not be the sole criterion for analyzing an organizational culture because an individual's personal interpretation of artifacts will affect the findings (Schein, 1992). The second level of culture according to Schein (1992) is espoused values. These are the vital values of the organization that have been established and discussed as being part of the organization's past and present success (Schein, 1992). Espoused values do not have to be in line with Schein's (1992) final level of cultural analysis, basic assumptions. It is far more likely though that the organizational values which are put into action, not just espoused, are in line with the basic assumptions of the organization (Schein, 1992). Basic assumptions are the actions which are taken for granted and usually not confronted or debated within the organization (Schein, 1992). If this level of the culture is changed it will create anxiety which must be addressed if a change is to become permanent (Schein, 1992). Basic assumptions are such an integral part of culture that individuals who do not believe in these basic assumptions are considered outsiders (Schein, 1992). Deal and Kennedy (1982) made their definition of culture concise, stating it as "the way we do things around here" (p. 4). Other scholars have taken this concise approach but included how members of the organization interact with each other (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Gruenert, 2000). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) describe culture in a school as the guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations evident in the way a school operates.

Scholars have not only disagreed about the meaning of culture, but also about the different types of school culture. Leithwood (1992) and Brown (1993) created a dichotomous view of school culture by describing it as being either rigid and top-down

with teachers working in isolation or as being collaborative, where members work together to create change (Leithwood, 1992b). Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) expand on this dichotomous view with four categories including stuck, wandering, promenading, or moving. Stuck schools are low achieving and are characterized by teacher isolation and blame being placed on external stakeholders (Hopkins et al., 1994). Wandering schools are those which are experiencing too many innovations, creating fragmentation and a lack of overall direction for the school (Hopkins et al., 1994). Promenading schools are living in their past achievements and not changing quickly and in any major way (Hopkins et al., 1994). The final type of school according to Hopkins et al, (1994) is a moving school where there is a healthy balance of change and stability as the school improves. No matter how culture is described or the types of culture which appear in schools, the culture of a school impacts educational stakeholders (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Kilman et al., 1986; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Pritchard et al., 2005). People learn from the culture how to act and often times what to feel and think (Gruenert, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 2002; Stolp, 1994). A negative culture guides people in the wrong direction and puts strong pressure on organizational members to conform (Kilman et al., 1986). The presence of a weak culture may be due to the lack of a transformational leader (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998). Literature reviews find principals effect school culture which in turn effects student achievement (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Research findings support the notion that the presence of a transformational leader and a strong school culture positively impact student achievement (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Le Clear, 2005; Lucas, 2001; Lucas & Valentine, 2002; Miles, 2002; Schooley, 2005; Scope, 2006). The findings from studies of school culture's impact on

student achievement are consistent across time, research design, instrumentation, and achievement variables. This variation suggests strong evidence of the strong connection between school culture and achievement. These relationships are consistently statistically significant that school culture can be used as a mediating variable when research is focusing on the impact of leadership on student achievement (Maher, 2000; Maher et al., 2001). The research suggests that a transformational leader can help create strong cultures which will improve the school. Conversely weak cultures hinder school improvement and are characterized by teachers working to solve problems alone instead of collectively (Brown, 1993; Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998). While a weak and negative culture can divide a school, a strong and positive school culture can unite a school for change (Firestone & Louis, 1999). A positive culture guides the actions of members in the right direction and puts pressure to conform on those working against the culture (Kilman et al., 1986). A common direction in a school leads to the overall growth of the organization (Norris, 1994). The journey to create a strong, positive culture is long, but worthy of the effort put forth by organizational members (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

School culture is one aspect of a school which a leader can influence (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). However, principals can only impact the school culture if they understand it (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Sapher & King, 1985; Stolp, 1994). Effective leaders understand the culture so they are able to push for the necessary changes without destroying the school culture (Waters et al., 2003). Principals want to positively affect the culture of the school because it is a major factor in the school improvement process (Gruenert, 2000). Large scale change usually requires changing cultures which is a difficult task and cannot be completed by altering a

few small things (Parish & Aquila, 1996; Yukl, 2006). A weak school culture can be changed easier than a strong school culture (Kilman et al., 1986). Most cultures, however, are deeply entrenched and to change them is to fundamentally alter the character and identity of the organization (Deal, 1990; Kilman et al., 1986). A leader cannot accomplish change without the support of the teachers (Sapher & King, 1985). A critical mass of teachers is necessary to change a culture. Enough organizational members must be willing to let go of the old and adopt the new if a change in culture is to become permanent (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Deal, 1990). A culture can change much more quickly if the members want a change to occur (Fiore, 2004). Cavanaugh and Dellar (1998) explain that if change is desired, it can occur in as little time as one year. Gruenert (2000) disagrees with this notion and believes fundamentally changing a culture takes five to seven years.

School success depends on culture (Leithwood et al., 1999; Sagor, 1992; Sapher & King, 1985), so culture cannot be ignored and must be a focus of the school (á Campo, 1993; Maher et al., 2001). Numerous literature reviews (Cavanaugh & Dellar, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2006; Muijs et al., 2004; Stolp, 1994; Waters et al., 2003) link strong, positive, collaborative school cultures and student achievement. Research studies have confirmed this relationship (Gaziel, 1997; Gruenert, 2005; Maher et al., 2001; Pritchard et al., 2005; Zigarelli, 1996). Studies of elementary schools in Arizona (Liu, 2004), Arkansas (Fowler, 2006), Florida (Cunningham, 2003), Missouri (Schooley, 2005), and Texas (Zuniga-Barrera, 2006) find that culture impacts student achievement. Studies of middle schools in Florida (Vislocky, 2005), New Jersey (Brown, 2004), North Carolina (Brown, 2004), and Pennsylvania (Brown, 2004) and high schools in Ohio (Herrmann,

2007) and Texas (Patterson, 2006) have drawn the same conclusion. The sample sizes, location of the samples, type of school, instrumentation, statistical analysis methods, and other differences are present in these studies. The consistent statistically significant findings suggest the relationship between school culture and student achievement is verifiable and should be used to improvement student achievement in schools. School leaders need to see school culture and student achievement on the same end of the educational spectrum because they are complementary (Gruenert, 2005).

### Conclusion

Schools in the United States are under tremendous pressure to improve. Transformational leadership and school culture is a research avenue which must be extensively explored with the anticipation that the findings will confirm or expand existing knowledge. A more thorough understanding of these factors can enhance existing practices and thus improve student achievement.

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