

**THE EFFECT OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN
CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE DURING TIMES OF CHANGE
AND CHALLENGE**

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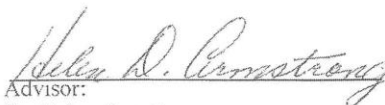
The Effect of the School Principal in Creating an Inclusive School Culture during Times of Change and Challenge

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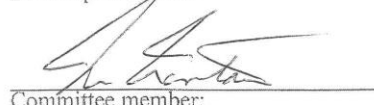
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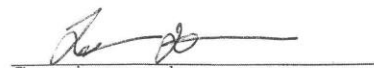
MASTER OF EDUCATION

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Dedication

This research work is dedicated to my Mom, who taught me how to persevere during difficult times. Thank you for all your hard work in encouraging me to always do my best. It has paid off. I made it, Mom! God bless you.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful for the mentorship, guidance, and the commitment that I received from my advisor, Dr. Helen Armstrong. Thank you for your unconditional support, assistance, and the immeasurable hours you spent working on this study with me. I am also appreciative for your patience and understanding throughout the process of this research work. Thank you for believing in me and for pushing my academic confidence to a higher level. You are incredible! I have been blessed to work with you.

I would like to say a big thank you to my committee members. Dr. Jacqueline Kirk helped me boundlessly throughout my study at Brandon University, and provided me with the opportunity to learn from her. I appreciate Dr. Mike Nantais, who assisted me with professional feedback and his expertise on this research work. I have learned a lot working with you. I thank Dr. Tom Skinner, who imparted valuable educational knowledge to me; I enjoyed all the classes I took with you. Thanks to all of you!

My sincere appreciation also goes out to the five selected principals. Their willingness to talk about their experiences has allowed me to develop a deeper understanding on how they created and sustained an inclusive school culture during change and challenge. It was truly a learning experience for me.

I would like to acknowledge my family who have supported me unconditionally throughout my educational journey. I especially want to thank my mom, Mrs. G. I. Osiname, for her words of encouragement and those late night calls. To my sisters, Temitope Osiname and Adetokunbo Osiname; thank you for your support. And to my Dad I extend my thanks for his incessant prayers; they have worked for me!

Lastly, I want to thank everyone who kept me uplifted in their prayers. I love you all!

Abstract

This qualitative case study examined the leadership styles that five selected school principals in southwestern Manitoba, Canada, utilize to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture. These principals found ways to successfully embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture and building a school community that supported diversity and embraced change. The framework that undergirded this study—the critical, inclusive praxis—reinforced that the school principal was charged with the responsibility of transforming the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action. The author engaged in an interaction (i.e., interview) with these principals to learn about their lived experiences, particularly their patterns of behaviour related to their leadership approaches within a critical inclusive praxis. The study’s conclusions confirmed that through collaboration and dialogue, by building positive relationships in safe and caring environments where there is concern for others and a supportive approach, all the while still adopting a growth mindset, these school principals built positive cultures where stakeholders felt valued, safe, respected, and included. This research deepens our collective understanding of how principals negotiate the political dynamics within their schools and vary leadership styles to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture.

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Chapter One

Setting the Stage for the Study

Personal Background

Education has always been a part of my life. Both my mother and my paternal grandfather were professional educators in Nigeria. My Grandpa was influential in the lives of so many people. He lived in an impoverished community where children were often required to work with their families just to ensure their survival. Education was not so highly valued in such a situation. His deep belief in the value of education led him to build a one room school house at his home where he could offer a free education to the children in the community. He continued to teach in that school until he died. In the community they called him “Baba Teacher” or master teacher.

When I was small, my Mom returned to university to finish her Bachelor’s Degree in Education. Since then, she has risen through the ranks to become the head teacher or principal. She is a strong person and has been very influential in my own educational life. Even while I was a university student, she would call to make sure that I was at home on school nights and that I was finishing my assignments on time. Although I did not always appreciate it at the time, I know that I owe much of my success to her support and guidance.

Many people had noticed that I shared traits with my Mom and my Grandpa and suggested that I should try teaching. Every time someone suggested that I try it however, I made a different choice. Then, I got a teaching job at Model Kiddies Nursery and Primary School. It is a private school located in a small community at Oke-ata, Ogun State, Nigeria, that serves a community of about 500. I was a classroom teacher, teaching grade 4 and 5. To my surprise, I loved it. There I developed my passion for teaching as a profession and I discovered that I

enjoyed being around children. I taught at this private school for over a year before the opportunity surfaced for me to pursue a master's degree in Canada, at Brandon University.

Growing up in Nigeria, I had to face threats to safety and survival. Despite that situation, and although my family could not afford much, my parents made sure that they instilled strong moral values and a belief that we had the skills to succeed as long as we kept working hard. As such, they have had a huge impact on the way that I view the world, and the way that I have lived my life. These experiences led me to identify both educational and work opportunities in Canada. I realize now that the knowledge I gained through life in Nigeria has helped me to have empathy for and a deeper understanding of marginalized groups in Canada.

During my master's program, I have had opportunities to interact with several very different groups that do not fit smoothly into Canadian society: youth in foster care (often Aboriginal), senior citizens, African immigrants, and individuals that would self-identify as LGBTQ. With individuals from each of these groups, I have tried to listen closely so as to understand what they value and embrace what I could learn from their experiences. Although they are often very different, I have learned that they all need caring relationships. The foster kids seek someone who will pay attention to them, the seniors long for people who will comfort them, the African immigrants hope for someone to support them, and those who identify as LGBTQ desire acceptance. It is important to create an environment where people feel safe, respected, valued, included, accepted, and loved.

I have passion for supporting and promoting humans' welfare. My prior experiences, my values, and my beliefs have brought me to study how leaders develop inclusive cultures in schools. As well, my background has also fed into my ongoing love for humanitarian work and inspired a passion to work with an intergovernmental organization, particularly an organization

that seeks to promote and assist children and mothers in developing countries and/or in countries that are experiencing high tensions or crises. Like my Grandpa, who saw the future in education and dedicated his life to giving all children in his community the opportunity to be educated, and like my Mom, who taught me to persevere through difficult times, I want to make a difference for people who have neither the power nor the position to overcome their current challenges and find success. As I seek to do that work, I will learn from those who are currently involved in that endeavor; for this study that extends to schools and school principals.

Introduction to the Study

The school principal is charged with the responsibility of providing an inclusive and safe environment for all teachers, support staff, and students in the school, regardless of their race, gender, language, sexual preference, socioeconomic status, and/or varied ability. To that end, school principals have significant influence over the culture of schools. They must be committed to creating a just and equitable school culture where everyone feels safe, valued, included, and respected. The school principal must ensure that all individuals' characteristics in the school are recognized in ways that foster community, affiliation, and belonging in the work toward overall socio-emotional health and academic excellence. By varying their leadership approaches depending on the situation, school leaders can work positively with people in the school community to develop a climate where educators and students can succeed.

In developing this supportive environment, there must be significant attention given to creating and sustaining aspects of a positive school culture. Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) identify the school principal as a key participant in directing school change and creating school cultures that support teachers to meet the needs of all students. The literature indicates that schools that developed effective inclusive programs had strong leadership from principals who

provided the school with many types of support (Hoppey & McLesky, 2013; Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014; Marks & Printy, 2003). These principals engaged in fostering a shared vision, creating collaborative structures, encouraging teacher-centered professional development, promoting learning communities, and understanding policies to facilitate school change (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Larsen & Rieckhoff, 2014; Parker & Day, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers, support staff, and students who do not identify with the majority group and/or who express divergent ideas are often isolated and marginalized by school cultures that do not embrace diversity, that rather in fact, promote group think (Janis, 2011). As a result, many find that their professional and educational experiences make them feel less connected, more isolated, and silenced. Such cultures of enforced conformity are challenged to address various external and internal social and academic issues, often selecting to ignore their existence for as long as possible. Managers of group think cultures have neither the skills nor the knowledge to alleviate the pressure of negative environments caused by group think, as they have not nourished a school culture that will address or even acknowledge internal and external demands and challenges, as well as their repercussions, in any more than a superficial manner.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the different leadership styles or ways that selected school principals use: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change.

Culture is defined as a phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, that is incessantly enacted and shaped by our interactions with others (Schein, 1992, p. 1). Schein (1992) defines

the concept of culture and shows its relationship to leadership. Schein (1992) refers to leadership as the creation and management of culture. He explains that the dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership, which makes the concepts of leadership and culture intertwined. In this sense, Schein (1992) also describes leadership as the ability to step outside of the culture that created the leader in order to initiate adaptive change processes.

Leaders create and change culture (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) explains that organizational cultures are created in part by leaders; the most decisive functions of leadership are the creation, the management, and sometimes the destruction of culture (p. 2). Moreover, Schein (1992) points out that culture is not easy to purposefully create or change. Leaders are not the only determiners of culture—culture is the result of a complex group learning process that is only partially influenced by leaders' behaviour. However, if there is a toxic culture that results in a threat to the healthy survival of individuals and/or groups, it is the responsibility of the leader to recognize and do something about the situation. Bogler (2001) explains that school principals who are successful in their role have used a wide range of mechanisms to influence and motivate their staff to bring about positive changes in their school culture.

The ability to recognize “the limitations of one's own culture and to develop the culture adaptively is the essence and ultimate challenge of leadership” (Schein, 1992, p. 2). Schein (1992) explains that cultural understanding is essential for leaders in order to lead effectively. For example, if a culture becomes dysfunctional, it is the unique function of leadership to perceive the functional and dysfunctional elements of the existing culture and to manage cultural evolution and change in ways that groups can survive and thrive in a changing environment. Schein (1992) stresses that leaders need to be conscious of the culture in which they are embedded, and that leaders must see themselves as agents of change. Schein (1992) suggests that

leaders need two particular characteristics to be an agent of change: leaders need to have emotional strength to be supportive of the organization, and leaders need a true understanding of cultural dynamics and the properties of their own organizational culture (p. 65). Deal and Peterson (1999) note that culture is constituted by “the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic ‘taken-for-granted’ fashion an organization’s view of itself and its environment” (p. 219). This in-depth nature of assumptions and beliefs is relevant for the leader who sets out to change the culture of the organization.

The role of the principal is pivotal to school change (Fullan, 2003). Fullan (2003) examines the moral purpose of school leadership and its critical role in changing the context in which the role is embedded. He explains that leaders cannot be effective change agents in any settings without behaving in a morally purposeful way. Fullan (2003) calls for principals to become agents as well as beneficiaries of the process of school change. He identifies five essential components that principals of cultural change must display, which are characterized by moral purpose, an understanding of the change process, ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. School improvement depends on principals who can foster the conditions necessary to sustain education reforms in a complex, rapidly changing society (Fullan, 2002). Botha (2004) refers to these principals as transformational leaders; they are leaders who do not center on the culture of teaching and learning alone but who are future-oriented leaders, quick to respond to a changing educational climate, and who are able to utilize the representative and cultural aspects of schools to promote a culture of excellence (p. 240).

It is important to point out that an inclusive culture does not mean that people cannot express differences of opinion. Janis (2011) warns against the pitfalls of ‘groupthink’ in organizations that adopt a cohesive culture. Janis (2011) referred to groupthink as a “weakening in mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgements as a result of group pressures” (p. 190). The leader needs to be courageous enough to challenge the status quo, to disrupt the tendency for groups to conform to group norms rather than critically evaluating each scenario (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Similarly, Johnson (2003) warns against the inherent dangers of groupthink, which is the uncritical conformity to the group, the unthinking acceptance of the latest solution, and the suppression of individual dissent (p. 338). Janis (2011) put forth several practical suggestions for avoiding groupthink in organizations:

- The leader should assign the role of critical evaluator to each member and encourage the groups to give high priority to open discussion of objections and doubts.
- Leaders should adopt an impartial stance instead of stating preferences and expectations.
- An expert should be invited to every discussion and that expert should challenge the views of the core members.
- The team should divide into two or more subgroups to meet separately and come back together to dialogue about differences.
- Groups should hold a second chance meeting to rethink the whole issues before making a definite choice. (pp. 195-196)

The leader needs to be conscious of group dynamics and to ascribe urgency to preventing groupthink in the organization. By setting norms of acceptance of diversity, leaders, groups, and individual members in the organization will work together in a conducive environment free of group pressures.

Research Questions

The following focus questions will be elaborated within twenty-one interview questions (see Appendix A).

- How do principals in diverse schools conceptualize and vary leadership styles to encourage and sustain an inclusive culture in the school?
- How do principals negotiate the politics of school change to deal with difficult issues and challenging people in the school while maintaining a positive school culture?
- How do principals build cohesive cultures in their schools while addressing challenging situations?

Assumptions and Beliefs

Assumptions are the beliefs that I have about the elements of my study. At this level, I believe that the participants will be able to critically consider and respond to the interview questions. I assume that their answers will help to establish a foundation for this study that addresses the ways in which the interviewed principals lead in their schools. I believe that cohesive cultures can be developed with diverse people and when facing change and challenge, and I believe that the principal can have an effect on creating and sustaining such a school culture. Positive cohesive cultures are not static, nor are they threatened by change and challenge. In fact, “adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people’s priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties. Making progress requires going beyond any authoritative expertise to mobilize discovery, shedding certain entrenched ways, tolerating losses, and generating the new capacity to thrive anew” (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 19). Building a positive inclusive school community is a challenge that implies significant transformation and the willingness and desire “to reassess existing values systems, mindsets and

habits, to change entrenched ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting, and to follow new paths” (Pless & Maak, 2004, p. 135). Essentially then, I assume that the school principals who have participated in this study are empowered leaders.

Need for the Study

There are limited numbers of studies that explore how school principals adapt their leadership styles to encourage and sustain inclusive culture in order to address difficult issues and embrace challenging people, and to build a school community that supports diversity. Hernandez and Fraynd (2014) examined the role of leadership in inclusive Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ) supportive schools. Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) investigated how a school principal supported teachers in improvement during the period of high stakes accountability. Bogler (2001) explored the influence that leadership styles had on teachers’ job satisfaction. There is less evidence from the literature that explores the area of leadership for challenge and change; as such, there are deficiencies in the knowledge base in this area of study. This prompted the need to explore how the school principal can use different leadership styles: 1) to encourage and sustain inclusive cultures; 2) to deal with difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and 3) to build a school that supports diversity and change. The study will concentrate on the leaders of five schools in Manitoba, Canada, within a qualitative case study approach.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that undergirds this study I have termed as “critical inclusive praxis” (See Figure 1). Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) proclaim that critical pedagogy is primarily committed to the advancement and enactment of a culture of schooling that advocates for the liberation of socially marginalized and economically excluded students (p. 9). Critical

pedagogy focuses on educating the subject to think, to reflect, and to act in order to create a more democratic, equitable society. The main purpose of critical pedagogy is to use education as a means to bring about a more socially just world. Praxis relies on both theory and practice.

Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) point out that praxis starts with an abstract idea (theory) or an experience and incorporates reflection upon that idea or experience that then translates into purposeful action (p. 13). Praxis provides a means to transform the world through reflective, critical, and dialogical action (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009, p. 13). Praxis in education aims to bridge the gap between theory and transformational action to reflectively and critically transform human experience.

A leader requires a critical inclusive praxis in order to sustain a strong culture that embraces diversity during times of change and challenge. The school principal needs to recognize and acknowledge the challenges in the school and from within the community. Once the problem areas have been identified, the principal will develop a plan of action to begin to address the problems. While collectively creating and implementing the action plan over a reasonable period of time, the school principal simultaneously needs to lead the ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the action plan, thus continually striving to improve the praxis of the plan. I have interviewed the five participating principals so as to develop an understanding on how they lead in their schools while supporting such inclusive change initiatives.

The framework places critical inclusive praxis at the center of the illustrative Venn diagram (See Figure 1). This reinforces that the school principal is charged with responsibility of transforming the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action. The school principal is required to provide an inclusive and a safe environment for all teachers, support staff, and students, as well as parents and community members. In order to sustain a strong culture that

embraces diversity and supports change, the school principal must understand and engage five aspects: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. Towards this end, there is need to understand how these elements intersect with one another in the realization of an inclusive culture.

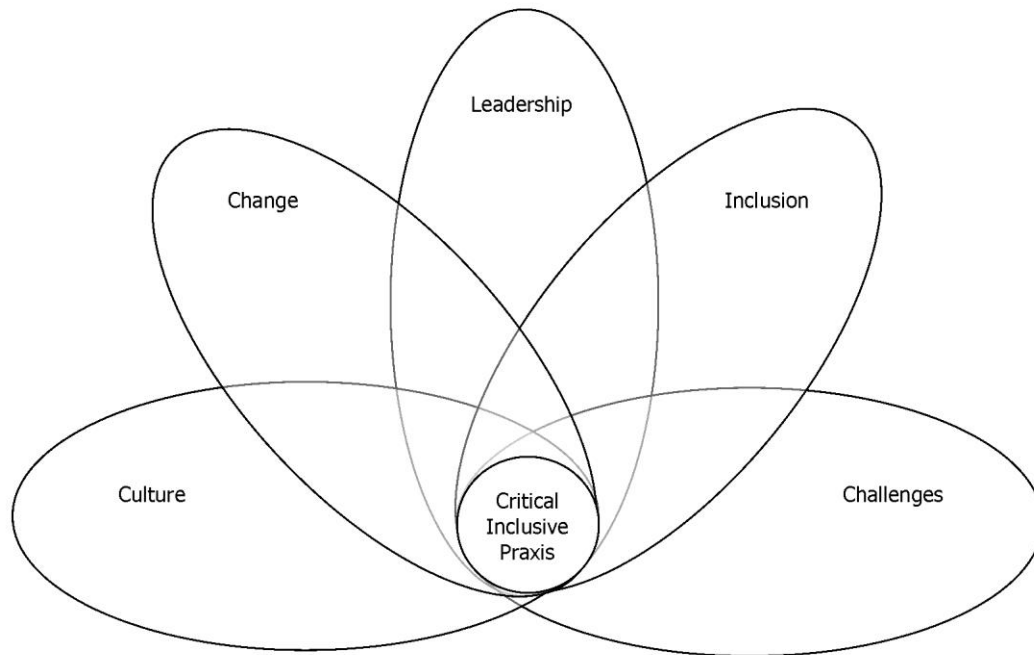


Figure 1. Critical Inclusive Praxis: This Venn diagram represents the conceptual framework.

Culture

Schein (1992) refers to the role of leadership as the creation and management of culture. The school principal is charged with the responsibility to create, embed, develop, manipulate, manage, and change the culture of the school. Schein (1992) explains that these dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of the school leadership. In order to create a positive school culture, it is important for school leaders to understand the dynamics of culture.

Change

The role of the school principal in the crafting of cultures is ever-present (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Peterson and Deal (1998) explain that in crafting school culture, “school leaders are models, potters, poets, actors, and healers. They are historians and anthropologists. They are visionaries and dreamers” (p. 30). School cultures can become toxic and unproductive without the responsiveness of the school leaders. The school leaders’ words and actions, as well as their accomplishments, all shape school culture. Peterson and Deal (1998) suggest that principals should be aware of their role as the leader of the school’s culture, and by so doing, they can help develop the foundation for school change and success.

Leadership

Robbins and Alvy (2009) state that effective school leadership must be both administrative and cultural in scope. They (2009) explain that the school principal shapes a culture through a variety of means. They suggest that leaders should begin with reading the existing culture and progressively moving to actions or behaviours that “mold or reinforce desirable core values or norms” (p. 37). School leaders from every level are key to shaping school culture.

Inclusion

Theoharis and Scanlan (2015), in their book *Leadership for Increasingly Diverse Schools*, explain that school leadership for equity and diversity requires a bold vision, significant knowledge and skills, as well as the working together of many people. Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) explain that school leadership is key in creating more inclusive schools; principals must engage in practices that create socially just schooling. The authors describe that socially just schooling is evident when educational prospects abound for all students, when ambitious

academic goals are held and met by all students, when all students and families are made to feel welcome in the school community, when students are equitably distributed across all groupings in the school, and when one aspect of identity does not directly correlate with undesirable aspects of schooling (p. 3).

Challenges

The forces that can contribute to slowing down or even blocking of the change process are important parts of an organization's environment (Hanson, 1996). Hanson (1996) explains that these forces must be diagnosed, understood, and taken into account in the steering process and the selection of a change strategy. Hanson (1996) refers to these forces of resistance as "sociotechnical" (p. 290). He explains that the resistance to change occurs at the organizational level and at the individual level. Sociotechnical interpretation of the environment refers to the behaviour of individuals within an environment that are shaped by the interaction of technical characteristics (e.g., instructional equipment, physical layout, activity schedules) and social characteristics (e.g., norms, informal groups, power centers).

Limitations

The limitations of a study are the issues that might prevent the data from being insightful, and thus that will prevent the researcher from hearing considered responses to the questions that were posed. This qualitative study is intended to garner insights from five principals. It is not a quantitative study and therefore while the results may be transferable, they are not generalizable. While the second limitation of the study is that the individual participants might not want to give adequate information due to the sensitivity of the subject area, every effort was made to select participants who were candid and honest.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a study are the boundaries that are developed by the researcher to define the study. The delimitations determine what items might be considered to be data in the study. This research study includes interviews with five principals in Manitoba, Canada. Data were gathered by interviewing these five school principals.

Thesis Chapter Overview

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one contained the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions and beliefs, need for the study, conceptual framework, and the limitations and delimitations. Chapter two presents a review of the literature on culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenges, as well as a description of the role of the school leadership with reference to each of the five elements. In chapter three, the methodology of the study is addressed. In that process, the chapter includes sections on the research design, description of the sample, instruments, relationship-building and rapport, trustworthiness and triangulation, ethical considerations, and patterns of data analyses procedures are described. Chapter four elaborates the data from the study around emergent themes. Finally, chapter five provides the summary of the study, as well as its significance and the implications for future studies.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate the thesis' conceptual framework, the critical inclusive praxis (See Figure 1, p. 11). This chapter explains how the five elements in the conceptual framework intersect to provide an understanding of how the school principal builds an inclusive school culture during times of change and challenge. The conceptual framework may lead to a deeper understanding of how the school principal is empowered to transform the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action, and in so doing, help to create a more democratic school community.

Critical Inclusive Praxis

The notion of a critical inclusive praxis is an appropriate framework for this study. The study focuses on how the school principal uses a variety of leadership styles: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. To understand how the principal uses different approaches toward this end, it is necessary to understand these five elements: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. There is need to understand how these elements intersect so as to develop an understanding of how the school principal builds an inclusive school culture.

In order to nourish and sustain a strong culture that embraces diversity and supports change, the school principal is required to continuously transform the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action. A critical inclusive praxis is characterized by informed understanding and dialogical actions that produce not only a school culture that embraces diversity and supports change, but that also works towards the educative aim of a better society.

Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) stated that school leadership for equity, change, and diversity requires a bold vision, and significant knowledge and skills, as well as the collaborative efforts of many people. The use of the critical inclusive praxis framework requires that the principal recognize, understand, and acknowledge the challenges in the school and from within the community. Activating the aspects of the framework will enable the principal to think, reflect, and act in ways that create more democratic, equitable schooling. To this end, the principal will then be empowered to transform the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action. The principal will thus use the critical inclusive praxis to engage in practices that create and sustain socially just schooling.

Critical pedagogy promotes and provides coherence to the theoretical landscape of the fundamental principles, beliefs, and practices that contribute to an emancipatory ideal of democratic schooling (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). This school of thought reflects a significant attempt to bring together a collection of divergent views and perspectives in order to engage educators critically about the impact of capitalism on education, as well as the effects, for example, of gendered, racialized, and homophobic relations on students from historically marginalized populations. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) explain that critical pedagogy emerged from an historical legacy of radical social thought and progressive educational movements that sought to link practices of schooling to democratic principles of society and transformative social action concerning oppressed populations.

In the attempt to develop a socially, politically, and economically emancipatory culture of schooling, critical pedagogy calls on educators to recognize how schools have historically embraced theories and practices that unite knowledge with power in ways that sustain asymmetrical relations (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). In response, the praxis of critical

pedagogy seeks to address the nature of cultural politics by challenging the status quo and legitimizing the experiences or perceptions of diverse educators and students and by considering what these educators and students perceive as their lived truth. To that end, critical pedagogy urges educators to create opportunities that will enable themselves and students to discover that there is no historical reality that is not human (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009). Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) suggest that by enlightening ourselves as educators, along with our students, we all come to understand ourselves as subjects of history and to recognize that conditions of injustice, although historically shaped by human beings, can also be transformed by human beings. Critical pedagogy focuses on educating the subject to reflect and to act in order to create a more democratic, equitable society.

Praxis relies on both theory and practice as we become critically reflective practitioners. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) explain that theory and practice are indivisibly connected to our understanding of the world and those actions that we take in our lives. Praxis provides a means to transform the world through reflective, critical, and dialogical action. Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) explain that all human activity is understood as evolving from the on-going action and interaction of praxis, the symbiosis of cause and effect. The authors further elaborate that if practice is secluded, theory becomes abstraction or simple verbalism. As well, however, “cut off from theory, practice comes to be ungrounded activity – blind activism” (p. 13). Praxis relies on theory to illuminate human activity, which then provides a better understanding of human existence for further action or practice. The process is symbiotic and reciprocal.

Dialogue is an important aspect of critical pedagogy. Freire (2000) considers dialogue as a human phenomenon that uses “‘word’ as an instrument to make dialogue possible” (p. 87). The

author explains that within the word, there are two dimensions: reflection and action. Freire (2000) further explains that there is no true word that is not at the same time praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. An unauthentic word is one that is unable to transform an oppressive reality and results when a privileged dichotomy is imposed on reflection and action (Freire, 2000, p. 86). “When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection suffers, and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, alienated and alienating blah” (p. 87). Such a disconnected word becomes an empty word, one that cannot denounce an oppressive world when it is deprived of enlightened action—there is no transformation without emancipatory action.

Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2009) explain that the process of critical pedagogy is comprised of dialogue and analysis, which serves as the foundation for reflection and action. The authors explain that dialogue supports emancipatory educational processes that are committed to the empowerment of educators and students through challenging the dominant educational discourse and clarifying the right and freedom of educators and students to become enacting subjects of their world, possessing agency or the power to affect their own world. Praxis provides the means to transform our world through reflection, combined with critical and dialectic action. To this end, school principals cannot create democratic, equitable schooling if they are not committed to and engaged in reflective, critical, and dialogical action. On the other hand, a critical inclusive praxis will enable the principal to reflect and act in ways that build a culture of schooling that serves the common good and promotes democracy. To this end, use of the framework will enable the principal to collaboratively transform the school and create equitable, just education for every student.

The following sections will address the five researched elements of a critical, inclusive praxis: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. In the first section I will begin with answering some questions about culture. What is culture? What is school culture? And, what role does the school principal play in creating culture? Second, I will look at change in the same manner. What does change look like in the school setting? What are the different types of change? What are the barriers to change? Who is responsible to initiate change in the school organization? Third, I will explore leadership. I will look at the definition of leadership as it is described by authors in the field. What is the role of leadership in the school context? I will explore different leadership styles that principals utilize in their work with teachers, support staff, parents, and students. I will then look at inclusion. I will explore the various definitions of inclusion in the context of a culture of diversity among staff, students, and the community. I will also deliberate on schools as inclusive environments, specifically how the principal acts as the creator of a culture of inclusion. Lastly, I will look at the challenges that the school principals face in creating an inclusive school culture. I will explore internally and externally initiated challenges and how the principals work with teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, and the community to address these challenges.

Culture

This section looks at different definitions of culture as elaborated by prominent authors. Also addressed is the importance of building a strong, positive school culture and how such a culture shapes and forms interactions that go on in schools. Additionally, the section describes the role of the school principal as the builder and shaper of culture, including how the school principal reinforces values and traditions to create and nourish a strong, positive culture. Lastly,

this section explains how the principal, teachers, students and parents work together to build a strong culture that fosters student learning.

Defining Culture

The term “culture” has been used by different authors, researchers, and managers to describe the climate and practices that organizations develop. Most of these studies refer to culture as the espoused values and beliefs of an organization, as well as the theory-in-action (Argyris, 1977). Several notable authors, including Schein, Deal and Peterson, Barth, and Sergiovanni dominate existing educational studies on culture.

Schein (2010) defines culture as a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems, which include related practices that have worked well in the past and thus have been perceived as valid (p. 18). As such, these ways have been passed on to new members as the legitimate ways to act, think, and feel in relation to those problems. Schein (2010) explains that culture encompasses the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behaviour over time. Deal and Peterson (1990) define culture as a phenomenon that surrounds us at all times and that is frequently enacted and formed by our interactions with others. Deal and Peterson (1990) explain that this taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions gives meaning to what people say and do and allows for the on-going predictability of behaviour in response to certain stimuli, an accepted nature of cause and effect. Barth (2002a) explains that culture is a historically-rooted, socially-transmitted set of patterns of thinking and ways of acting that gives importance to human experience, which unconsciously dictates how experience is seen, assessed, and acted on (The Culture Builder, para. 5).

Barth (2002a) refers to a school's culture as a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply rooted in the very core of the organization (The Culture Builder, para. 6). In another publication, Barth (2002b) explains that school culture dictates "the way we do things around here" (p. 7). School culture is described as a historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping how people in the school organization think and how they act (Barth, 2002a, The Culture Builder, para. 5). Stoll (1998) describes school culture as the traditionally communicated pattern of meaning that comprises the values, norms, beliefs, myths, rituals, ceremonies, and customs understood by stakeholders of the school community. Stoll (1998) explains that school culture is seen in the ways people relate to each other and work together; the management of the school's structures, systems and physical environments; and the extent to which there is a learning focus for both pupils and adults (p. 10). School culture is not only the patterns of perception related to behaviours, but also a system of relationships between those preceptors in an ongoing symbiosis of cause and effect (Prosser, 1999). In practice, Prosser (1999) explains that school culture is often viewed as both a totality, and thus a summation of behaviours, as well as a system of dynamically connected sub-cultures (p. 7).

Sergiovanni (2000) describes the foundation of school culture as what persons believe, the notions that they create about how schools function, and what they consider to be right and true (p. 46). Sergiovanni (2000) considers that culture serves as a scope setter, directing people in a common direction to provide and then sustain norms and thus also a framework for existence. School culture serves as the governing set of bonds that hold a school in sync. Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that culture lives and moves in the deeper elements of a school. Culture encompasses the unwritten rules and assumptions, the combination of rituals and

traditions, the array of symbols and artifacts, the special language and phrasing that staff and students use, and the expectations about change and learning that saturates the school world (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 9). Peterson and Deal (2009) further explain that culture is also embedded in an informal cultural network. Staff members often take on roles in such a network. Peterson and Deal (2009) describe that every school has its collection of keepers of values, as well as those who act as exemplars of these core values. For example, every school has individuals who socialize new hires, gossips who transmit information, storytellers who keep history and lore alive, and heroines or heroes who display the core values (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 8).

Importance of School Culture

The importance of understanding school culture is paramount if emancipatory changes are being considered (Barth, 2002; Peterson & Deal, 2009; Schein, 2010). The deeper elements (e.g., accepted norms, beliefs, rituals, artifacts, traditions of social expectations) found in a culture influence almost everything that happens in the school (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 9). The school culture influences and shapes the way that teachers, students, and administrators think, feel, and act (Peterson & Deal, 2009). Peterson and Deal (2009) emphasise that “school culture impacts what people pay attention to (focus), how they identify with the school (commitment), how hard they work (motivation), and the degree to which they achieve their goals (productivity)” (p. 10). Culture is a powerful web of rituals and tradition, norms, and values that affect every aspect of school life.

A school’s culture directs the focus of daily behaviour and increases attention to what is considered important and valued, and whether or not everyone is honoured in that process (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 2009). Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that if the

underlying norms and values of a school reinforce academic learning, the school will stress academic learning. Thus, the school will focus time, energy, and resources on curricula and instructional strategies that will help all students to become better readers, for example. How that process plays out will tell the tale of whether the deeper values of the school community are linked to the development of the students' humanity, and furthermore, if the students' humanity is honored within the praxis of the school leaders. Deal and Kennedy (2000) explain that schools that have cultivated staff and student identities by shaping values, making heroes, spelling out rites and rituals, and acknowledging the cultural networks have a tremendous edge (p. 15). Even so, what the edge *is* continually needs to be defined and critiqued. Deal and Kennedy (2000) further explain that a strong culture is a powerful lever for guiding behaviour; it helps individuals in the school organization do their job more proficiently, while always critiquing, once again, what that *job* actually involves. The authors describe two characteristics of a strong culture: a) As a system of informal rules, culture spells out how people are to behave; b) As well, culture may enable people to feel better about what they do, and thus, they are more likely to work harder (p. 17). In this sense, the predictability of culture may sharpen one's focus. Again, it is important to critique the nature of that culture while always questioning if the culture is inclusive in its emancipatory focus.

A school's culture builds commitment to and identification with core values (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 2009). Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that rites, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and celebrations build a sense of community. Thus, staff, students, and community will identify with the school and will feel committed to the purpose of the school and to their relationship with the school (p. 11). The authors explain that schools that improve their academic performance have fostered a shared system of norms, folkways, values, and traditions

(p. 7). These elements infuse the staff and students in the school with passion, purpose, and a sense of spirit. A positive culture builds commitment. For example, in a school where staff members feel that they are part of a professional community committed to students, they may not want to leave even if they are offered opportunities elsewhere.

A positive school culture affects motivation (Barth, 2002a; Peterson & Deal, 2009). Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that when a school recognizes accomplishments, values effort, and supports commitment, staff and students alike will feel more motivated to work hard, innovate, and support change (p. 11). MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) also place emphasis on the effects of school culture and climate on student achievements. They found that schools with strong cultures have better motivated staff and students. The authors further explain that highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance and student learning outcomes (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Similarly, Barth (2002a) explains that a strong positive school culture advances a shared sense of purpose among staff members, and they respond by pouring their hearts into teaching (Yearning for Learning, para. 5). Barth (2002a) further describes a school with strong positive culture as a place with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn (p. 2). A strong positive culture increases motivation, advances a clear sense of purpose, inspires vision, and celebrates accomplishment (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 11).

A positive school culture fosters a commitment to student achievement and a focus on learning (Barth, 2002a; Peterson & Deal, 2009). Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that teachers and students are more likely to succeed in schools with cultures that “foster hard work, commitment to valued ends, attention to problem solving, and a focus on learning for all students” (p. 11). The authors affirm that in schools that have a positive, strong culture, the staff

shares a strong norm of collegiality and improvement, values students learning over personal ease, and assumes that all students can learn (p. 11). In this kind of school, Peterson and Deal (2009) describe that the culture of the school reinforces collaborative problem-solving, planning, and data driven decision-making (p. 12).

The Principal as a Builder and Shaper of Culture

All aspects of a school are shaped, formed, and molded by underlying symbolic elements (Peterson & Deal, 2009). According to Peterson and Deal (2009), strong, positive school cultures do not just happen; they are built and shaped by those who work in and attend the school and by the formal and informal leaders who encourage and reinforce values and traditions. Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that strong, positive cultures that are rich in purpose, and abundant in tradition and meaning, are supported and nourished by school principals who consciously and unconsciously reinforce the best that the school and its staff can become (p. 8). Schein (1992) explains that organizational cultures are created in part by leaders and that some of the most vital tasks of leadership are the creation, the management, and sometimes the destruction of culture (p. 6). Schein (1992) further explains that through myriad of daily interactions, careful reflections, and conscious efforts, school leaders can shape positive cultures of schools. Similarly, Deal and Peterson (1990) explain that school leaders can nudge the process of shaping culture through their actions, conversations, decisions, and public announcements (p. 202). Administrators shape school culture through their words, their nonverbal messages, their actions, and their accomplishments (Barth, 2002b). School leaders adopt various symbolic roles as they build and shape school culture.

One unique talent of leaders is their ability to read, understand, and work with culture (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) explains that school leaders must understand and work with the

culture as they lead in order to build a strong positive school culture. Deal and Peterson (1990) affirm that in order to be effective, school leaders must read and understand their school culture, as well as their community culture. Deal and Peterson (1990) explain that effective school leaders are at all times alert to the deeper issues stirring beneath a seemingly rational layer of action (p. 202). They read between the lines to decode complex cultural codes and work hard to figure out what is going on. Reading school culture takes several forms: watching, listening, sensing, and interpreting (Deal & Peterson, 1990). It is important that school leaders ponder over whether and how to shape or reshape existing realities. Deal and Peterson (1990) suggest that leaders should use all of their senses and employ intuition when reading culture. School leaders must understand their school, its patterns, the purposes they serve, and how they came to be (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 203). Thus, a school leader must explore below the surface of what is happening in the school. This inquiry will enable the leader to discover a deeper explanation for what is really going on in the school so as to understand the existing culture of the school in order to build and sustain a strong, positive, inclusive school culture.

As school leaders reflect and come to understand a school's culture, they can assess the need to shape or strengthen it. According to Peterson and Deal (1990), valuable aspects of the school's existing culture can be reinforced, problematic ones revitalized, and toxic ones given strong antidotes (p. 204). The authors explain that school leaders may reinforce the underlying norms, values, and beliefs, or they may attempt to interrupt those aspects to create positive change. School leaders support a positive direction to the central mission and purpose of the school. They sustain motivation and commitment through affirming rites and rituals. Barth (2002b) argues that it is not only the formal leadership of the principal that sustains and continuously reshapes culture but the leadership of everyone—principal, teachers, students, and

parents. The author stresses that without the attention of school leaders, school cultures can become toxic and unproductive. However, through deep, shared leadership, schools build strong and cohesive cultures (Barth, 2002a). This kind of supportive school culture will maintain a strong, positive, and student-focused vision. School leaders are key to eliminating toxic and unproductive cultures and to building strong, positive cultures.

School leaders from every level are crucial to shaping school culture (Barth, 2002a, Peterson & Deal, 1990, 1998, 2009). Principals communicate core values in their daily work, including within a model of distributed leadership. Teachers reinforce shared standards in their actions and words. Parents boost spirit when they visit the school, participate in governance, and celebrate success. To this end, in the strongest schools, leadership comes from many sources (Peterson & Deal, 1990). Peterson and Deal (1990) outline eight major symbolic roles that school leaders assume in shaping a school culture of responsible shared leadership. The authors explain that school leaders are models, potters, poets, actors, and healers. They are historians and anthropologists. They are visionaries or dreamers (p. 204). As a *model*, school leaders affirm values through behaviour, attention, and routines (p. 207). As a *potter*, school leaders shape and are shaped by the school's heroes, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, and symbols. As well, they bring in staff members who share the core values (p. 208). As a *poet*, school leaders use language to reinforce values and sustain the school's best image of itself (p. 210). As an *actor*, school leaders improvise in the school's unavoidable dramas, comedies, and tragedies (p. 211). As a *healer*, school leaders oversee transitions and changes in the life of the school, as well as heal the wounds of conflict and loss (p. 212). The school leader as *historian* seeks to understand the social and normative past of the school (p. 204). The school leader analyses and probes for the current set of norms, values, and beliefs that define the current culture; in this aspect, the

school leader serves as an *anthropologist* (p. 205). As a *visionary*, school leaders work with other leaders and the community to define a deeply value-focused picture of the future for the school as a constantly evolving vision (p. 205). As a result, while paying avid attention to the symbolic side of their schools, leaders can help develop and sustain the foundation for change and success.

A key to a successful school is often established in the unique aspects of its organizational culture (Peterson & Deal, 2009). In their role school leaders must act as sentinels to know which aspects of culture to shape, which to respect as is, and which to change. Every behaviour or trait of school leaders does have symbolic meaning that can help reaffirm, redirect, or damage cultural values and beliefs within the school (Peterson & Deal, 1990). Thus, the shaping, enhancement, and maintenance of a school's culture are the primary responsibility of the school's leaders. To this end, it is generally accepted that a school's culture develops to a great extent from its leadership, while at the same time the culture has also a reciprocal impact on the development of its leadership (Simosi & Xenikou, 2010).

A school culture influences everything that happens in the school. Since all aspects of a school are shaped, formed, and molded by the underlying symbolic elements—expected norms, beliefs, rituals, artifacts, traditions of social expectations—the importance of understanding the school culture is vital to the development of emancipatory change. The school principal will then use that understanding to reinforce the valuable aspects of the existing school culture, revitalize problematic ones, and provide strong antidotes to unproductive ones. The school principal must work with the teaching staff, support staff, students, and the parents to build a positive culture that fosters student learning. The school principal is charged with the responsibility not only to build but also to reinforce these values and traditions in order to create and nourish a strong

positive culture. To this end, school leaders in their roles as custodians of culture need to know which aspects of culture to shape, which to respect as is, and which to change.

Change

Change is an ever-present feature in organizations and has become a constant in school life (Evans, 1996; Kin & Kareem, 2015; Peterson & Deal, 1998). The authors who have researched in this area explain that change is a continuous aspect that touches all organizations regardless of purpose, location, size, and age. As a result, this section looks at different definitions of change as explained by notable authors, as well as the importance of school change and what change looks like in the school. In addition, the section describes the role of the school principal as a change agent. To conclude, this section explains what could be experienced as resistance to change.

Defining Change

There are a variety of different definitions and views on organizational change. According to Hanson (1996), organizational change is the practice of altering the behavior, structures, procedures, purposes, or output of some unit within an organization. Hanson (1996) describes change as the process of implementing an innovation in an organization (p. 283). Kin and Kareem (2015) define organizational change as a state of transition between the present state and the future towards which the organization is directed. Kin and Kareem (2015) explain that organizational change involves the movement of an organization from the present plateau toward a desired future state with the purpose to raise organizational productivity and efficiency (p. 135). Similarly, Evans (1996) describes organizational change as concerned with breaking down existing structures and creating new ones. Evans (1996) explains that organizational change is a process of identification and implementation of new organizational routines and practices. It is

evident from these views on organizational change that change means different things to different people (Fullan, 1999). Fullan (1999) explains that change must be meaningful to those who implement it. The introduction of change may encourage resistance, as change provokes loss, challenges competence, confronts confusion, and causes conflict (Fullan, 1999, p. 11). However, the process of change is necessary if an organization is to continually improve.

Change, whether organizational or personal, follows similar patterns (Calabrese, 2002). Calabrese (2002) identifies two reasons or primary motivations for change: a) individuals or organization are dissatisfied with their current state and desire a different state; or b) individuals or organizations are satisfied with their status quo, but they see a different state that seems to be more appealing (p. 8). In some cases, change in individual or organizations relates to survival (Calabrese, 2002).

Change as Applied to Schools as Organizations

Schools as organizations are both entities and processes whose life emerges from the members comprising the organization (Calabrese, 2002). Calabrese (2002) explains that an organization's culture originates in its original membership and evolves through the organization's history (p. 9). Every member operates in a context influenced by the organizational culture. As the organization develops, its culture may become entrenched; if that happens, change becomes more difficult. In other words, the organization may have developed unexamined ways of responding to its members and to its environment over time (Calabrese, 2002).

Hanson (1996) describes three types of organizational change: planned change, spontaneous change, and evolutionary change (pp. 283-284). The author defines *planned change* as a conscious and deliberate attempt to manage events so as to influence the outcome towards a

predetermined end. Hanson (1996) refers to planned change as a tool for adopting a new innovation, resolving a conflict, clearing communication channels, or upgrading instructional quality, for example (p. 283). The author stresses that planned change initiatives seek to establish built-in problem-solving capabilities that allow for innovative experimentation in the school. For instance, planned change occurs when an effort is made to initiate the use of behavioural objectives as a vital component in the teaching and learning process. Cumming and Worley (2015) explain that organizations can use planned change to solve problems, to learn from experience, to reframe shared perceptions, to adapt to external environmental changes, to improve performance, and to influence future changes (p. 40). *Spontaneous change* is a type of alteration that emerges in a short time frame as a result of natural circumstances and random occurrences (Hanson, 1996). Hanson (1996) explains that no deliberate attempt is made to bring about this form of change; it just occurs in the school, sometimes in response to an unplanned occurrence or event, for example. *Evolutionary change* is referred to as the long-range, cumulative consequences of major and minor modifications in the school (Hanson, 1996). Hanson (1996) submits that evolutionary change is often associated with the idea that an organization develops over time as new people enter the schools, as conditions evolve, and as situations improve. This process, if it involves considered evolutionary change, is more likely to occur in a culture of critical inclusive praxis. Without that considered process, the cumulative concerns of unexamined change initiatives may be seen in every aspect of organizational life, and they may or may not confirm a school culture of a shared, emancipatory humanity.

Evans (1996), as well as Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002), divide change into two categories: first-order and second-order change. First-order changes attempt to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of what is already happening; these changes are usually single,

incremental, and isolated (Evans, 1996, p. 5). Evans (1996) explains that these types of changes do not alter the basic features of the school or the way the members perform their roles.

Similarly, Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002) note that first-order change is based on the assumption that existing goals and structures of schooling are adequate and desirable. Thus, the intent of first-order change is not necessarily to create observable differences nor a change in the existing school culture (p. 769).

Second-order changes are systematic in nature and attempt to modify the way an organization is put together (Evans, 1996). Second-order changes alter the assumptions, goals, structures, roles, and norms of a school and thus its culture (p. 5). Evans (1996) describes that second-order changes require that people not just do old things slightly differently, but that they also change their beliefs and perceptions. Second-order change seeks to change the culture of schools because it addresses the fundamental, underlying, systemic features of school life: it changes the behavior, norms, and beliefs of practitioners (Evan, 1996, p. 8). Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002) affirm that second-order change seeks to modify the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together and the manner in which people within those organizations interact with each other by introducing new goals, structure, and roles that transform familiar ways of doing things. This involves an adoption of new ways of thinking, acting, and organizing rather than a simple assimilation of new ideas into existing patterns (Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002, p. 769).

Change within schools is a usually slow and evolutionary process (Fullan, 1991). Evolutionary changes, by definition, occur very slowly (Borwick, 2013, Revolutionary vs evolutionary change, para. 3). Borwick (2013) explains that positive evolutionary change in the school needs a change agent to assist in the form of a critical, inclusive change initiative, as

people continuously respond to, interact with, and understand the change while simultaneously implementing it. As a result, everyone will understand the current condition, leading to more thoughtful solutions and collectively working together to figure out where people are, to find out where they need to be, and to help them build the scaffolding to get them from one place to the other (Borwick, 2013). This form of change is built collectively as people gradually interact with the change through empowered dialogue and action.

Changing the culture of school requires altering unhealthy elements of the existing culture and replacing those elements with more desirable aspects (Barth, 2004, p. 162). A central task in creating such cultures of educational change involves developing more collaborative working relationships between principals and teachers, and among teachers themselves (Hargreaves, 1997). Hargreaves (1997) points out the need for teachers to collaborate with each other with trust, candor, openness, risk-taking, and commitment to continuous improvement. School change has thus been linked to teacher development (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2013). Fullan and Hargreaves (2013) describe how teacher development and successful implementation of innovation are related. The authors observe that effective implementation consists of alterations in curriculum materials, instructional practices and behaviours, and beliefs and understanding on the part of teachers involved in a given innovation (p. 1). As Barth (2004) points out, school cultures cannot be changed from without; they must be changed from within (p. 162). Thus, the principal is crucial to the process of change, particularly to changes in the underlying culture of the school (Fullan, 2007).

The culture of a school is difficult to change, in part because change may first need to occur within the individual, and schools are composed of many individuals with differing perspectives at different stages within the process of change (Fullan, 1991). Fullan (1991)

stresses the importance of the individual when implementing successful change, whether the person is the initiator or the recipient of the change. The author explains that to initiate any significant change, implementers must work out their own meaning because each individual has a role in the process and each individual must decide on a course of action in the change process. To this end, Fullan (1991) states that “the starting point for improvement is not system change, not change in others around us, but change in ourselves” (p. 167). Fullan (1991) encourages principals to talk with teachers about teachers’ views and also to critically reflect on their own positions, particularly by modelling that critical praxis themselves. Change involves a dynamic, open, self-examining, interactive structure (Fullan, 2007).

One way that change can be implemented in schools is through the pathways around which they are structured (Fullan, 2007). Fullan (2007) points to the importance of an empowering and collaborative work environment, an environment where teachers believe they are important and that their voices are heard (p. 241). Successful structures provide teachers with an opportunity to work together, often in an inter-disciplinary fashion, to help meet the needs of the students (Fullan, 2007). Williams (1998) explains that such a professional structure that promotes positive change must be facilitated by the school principal.

The Principal as Change Agent

School improvement does not just happen by accident (Sergiovanni, 1991). Someone must decide to do something to change the status quo for the better. According to Sergiovanni (1991), sometimes the decision to embark on school improvement efforts develops from a teacher or group of teachers, but often such efforts result from deliberate action by the school principal. In general, it is the responsibility of the school principal to manage and lead school improvement efforts as they become embedded in the school. The school principal is responsible

to set out and mobilize the search for solutions to challenges and/or to move the school in an envisioned direction. Calabrese (2002) notes that the awareness of the need for change is the starting point of the change process. The author states that the school leader must facilitate the members' perceived need for change, as well as their learning, practice, and evolving stability with the change so that the change can gradually become part of the school's identity (p. 19). Calabrese (2002) suggests three principles that are pertinent to school leaders who want to lead, facilitate, and manage change: 1) creating an environment that is supportive of the desired change; 2) involving those participating in the change; and 3) re-educating stakeholders in the change process (pp. 30-31). Similarly, Schein (2010) explains that school leaders facilitate organizational change through the encouragement of a generative learning environment. Schein (2010) describes four ways that school principals facilitate change: school leaders must become immersed in change; they must create and sustain parallel systems to foster learning and change; they must exercise well-honed change management skills; and school leaders must align the three aspects of school culture, that is executive, engineer, and operator, to create an environment conducive to change (as cited in Calabrese, 2002, p. 33).

Moreover, while changing an organization is the ultimate test of leadership, understanding the change process is essential to many aspects of the school leader's job (Kotter, 1998). Kotter (1998) explains that successful school leaders must work with staff to figure out where the problems are and what to do to resolve those problems. Leaders need to reduce negative emotions that slow and stifle the needed changes and enhance positive feelings that motivate constructive actions (p. 8). Kotter (1998) describes two skills leaders can use to understand the change process: building coalitions and creating a vision (p. 30). The author explains that school leaders must win the support of staff for any successful change initiative to

occur. Because school leaders are likely to encounter resistance from unexpected areas, building a strong coalition is essential. Kotter (1998) explains three keys to creating such alliances: engaging the right talent, growing the coalition strategically, and working as a team rather than a collection of individuals (p. 30).

According to Kotter (1998), another crucial skill a leader can use to understand and facilitate needed change involves the process of creating a vision. Leading by example is essential to communicating a vision (Kotter, 1998, p. 31). Kotter (1998) explains that school leaders must convey a vision of the future that is clear in intention, appealing to stakeholders, and ambitious yet attainable (p. 31). The author stresses that effective visions are focused enough to guide decision-making yet flexible enough to accommodate individual initiatives and changing circumstances.

Such attention to the necessary aspects of change is not likely to happen in the school organization without leadership (Burke, 2014). Burke (2014) explains that if leaders are to lead change successfully, they need to be transparent, non-defensive, and persistent yet patient in their endeavors. The author explains that taking a direct frontal approach to changing values is fraught with difficulty, resistance, and strong human emotion. Leading change needs to start with changing behaviours, including one's own, and with changing people's mental sets or frameworks for thinking about the addressed problem.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) identify eight steps that school leaders can use to lead a successful change. These steps include:

- Push urgency up
- Put together a guiding team
- Create a vision and strategies

- Remove barriers to action
- Accomplish short term wins
- Keep pushing for wave after wave of change until the work is done
- Create a new culture to make new behaviour stick. (p. 7)

Kotter and Cohen (2002) explain that the central challenge in all the eight stages is changing people's behaviour—what people do, and the need for significant shifts in what people do (p. 2).

The authors explain that people change what they do because they are given an analysis that shifts their thinking, and even more so by seeing a reality that influences their feelings. Kotter and Cohen (2002) explain that the flow of both analysis-think-change and see-feel-change are essential to a successful organization. Thus, it is crucial that the school leaders use their leadership skills to aim at changing the thinking of the staff in order to change their behaviour toward a successful change.

As noted, one of the functions of the principal as a change agent is to prepare and organize the school for change (Fullan, 2007). In his book *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Fullan (2004) describes five components of leadership for change:

- Moral purpose (making a positive difference)
- Understanding change (change is complex)
- Relationship building (among diverse people)
- Knowledge creating and sharing (information becomes knowledge through a social process)
- Coherence making (integrating, focusing amid complexity). (pp. 8-9)

Fullan (2004) describes these components as hallmarks of effective leadership in a time of change. He (2004) explains that leaders who work on all the five aspects will be effective in

leading change. He further notes that leaders increase their effectiveness if they constantly work on these five components of leadership with energy, enthusiasm, and hope (p. 8). In leading change in schools, Fullan (2004) explains that leaders with deep moral purpose provide direction but that they should also be aware of blind commitment or group think, when such groups go along uncritically with the leader or the group (p. 6). These five components of leadership as described by Fullan (2004) provide a foundation for leaders of change initiatives.

School principals, as agents of change, must address aspects of resistance to change. Zimmerman (2006) explains that the first step in overcoming resistance to change in schools is to determine who is resisting change and why (p. 239). The author explains that school leaders need to take a systemic perspective that recognizes a teacher's attitudes and behaviours within the context of the social norms of the school. Attitudes towards change are a variable that have been linked to staff acceptance of new procedures (Zimmerman, 2006). Zimmerman (2006) identifies ten barriers that could be a threat to teachers in the change process:

- Failure to recognise the need for change
- Habit
- Previously unsuccessful effort at change
- Fear of the unknown
- Security
- Perceived threats to teachers expertise
- Threats to their power relationships
- Threats to social relationships
- Threats to their resource allocation. (pp. 239-240)

Zimmerman (2006) explains that there is a need to understand these barriers as they affect teachers (p. 240). She further explains that school principals must understand individuals and organizational mental models in order to make sense of the teachers' worlds or contexts and also to interpret their reality. Similarly, Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) explain that leaders who sought to lead adaptive change requires a new mind-set (p. 15). Zimmerman (2006) suggests that school principals should guard against yielding to their own faulty mental models, which are characterized by blaming teachers for resisting change without taking into account fundamental systemic issues at the heart of the problem (p. 240).

Calabrese (2002) identifies four ways that school principals can promote change: encouraging participation, providing ongoing professional development, encouraging failure, and story sharing (pp. 79-80). Similarly, Zimmerman (2006) suggests that school principals can promote change readiness by being sensitive to teachers' potential change barriers. She goes on to say that school principals should model risk-taking and a willingness to change in order to earn teachers' trust (p. 241). Zimmerman (2006) describes five strategies the school principal can use to promote change in the school, including: developing a supportive culture, involving teachers in decision-making, enhancing teachers' sense of efficacy, promoting professional development, and winning the support of influential teachers (pp. 241-243).

Zimmerman (2006) explains that school principals can prepare for change by improving their own skills and behaviours (p. 241). The author explains that leaders prepare for change by utilizing their skills and behaviours to understand the change process. Calabrese (2002) argues that leaders must understand the process of change not only as it relates to members of their organizations but also as it relates to them personally. For example, if school leaders expect teachers to take risks in learning and practicing new behaviours, they themselves must be open to

change and willing to expose their own weaknesses and/or need for more expertise by becoming learners themselves. Zimmerman (2006) stresses that “a catalyst to the successful implementation of change is not only to admit that there is a need to change but also to know oneself; one’s strengths and weaknesses” (p. 241). Thus, school principals should model lifelong learning and strive for personal excellence when promoting successful change (Fullan, 2007).

Another strategy school principals can use to promote change in the school is to develop a culture of shared decision-making (Zimmerman, 2006). Zimmerman (2006) explains that when school principals involve teachers and other stakeholders in developing shared visions and goals, their actions give meaning, a common purpose, positive challenge, and motivation to everyone in the school (p. 242). Furthermore, developing a collaborative culture will empower teachers to participate in decision-making, cultivate teachers’ competence as problem solvers, and support an environment of risk-taking that inspires teachers to try new ideas and strategies (p. 242).

Shared decision-making within a positive school culture is associated with higher teacher efficacy (Zimmerman, 2006). In turn, higher teacher self-efficacy is related to students’ achievement, motivation, and self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2006). Zimmerman (2006) explains that individuals are more likely to attempt to control the conditions that affect their lives if they believe that control is indeed possible. Self-efficacy reflects confidence in one’s ability or agency to exert control over one’s own motivation, behaviour, and social environment (Bandura, 2012, p. 13). Teachers who possess high self-efficacy motivate and challenge themselves and guide their own actions by visualizing success (Zimmerman, 2006).

Zimmerman (2006) explains that leadership and professional development can also advance teachers’ sense of efficacy (p. 243). The author notes that, given the fact that change is complex and that teachers’ confidence levels might initially decrease as they try new ideas, it is

important that the school principal respond with the necessary feedback and reassurance. Thus, a supportive environment is necessary for change to occur, so that teachers do not feel stressed and revert to their old ways. It is crucial that the school principal nurture a supportive culture for change by promoting professional development through positive feedback and encouragement.

According to Zimmerman (2006), influential teachers who are considered opinion leaders can exert influence over colleagues in the adoption of change. The author explains that peer pressure combined with peer support is most effective in developing a culture of change in schools. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found that cultural norms that define the context in which teachers work, influence teacher's sense of efficacy with students. However, staff development needs to be focused and ongoing, with organizational learning built on collaborative reflection and joint action. This kind of collaborative environment will support teachers' growth and advance a meaningful change in the school.

Change is inevitable in the life of every organization. The role of the school principal as a change agent is paramount. In leading and managing change, it is important for school leaders to understand the change process. School leaders must collaborate and work with everyone in the school to lead a successful change initiative. While leading change, school leaders need to be open, non-defensive, and patient in their endeavors. Leaders need to start by changing behaviours and mental sets of the staff, students, and parents, as well as by improving their own behaviour and skills. School leaders must also address all aspects of resistance to change. They need to identify these barriers and work with people to promote a successful change initiative. Leaders can promote successful change by encouraging participation, providing ongoing professional development, encouraging failure, and story sharing (Calabrese, 2002). School

leaders are charged with the responsibility to set out and organize the search for solutions to barriers and to move the school along an intended path.

Leadership

The following section reviews leadership as it is defined in the literature and as it reflected within the context of education. While leadership is one of the most widely talked about subjects in general, it is also one of the most puzzling. Therefore, the need for understanding of how leadership affects organizations has intensified our quest for knowledge in this area. The first part of this section looks at the definition of leadership as it is described by authors in the field. The next part considers the role of leadership in the school context. Finally, the discussion of leadership concludes with an explanation of the different leadership styles that principals utilize in their work with teachers, support staff, parents, and students.

Defining Leadership

There are nearly as many definitions of leadership as there are individuals who have attempted to define the concept. Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth (Burns, 1995, p. 9). Several prominent researchers have noted that many of these definitions of leadership are ambiguous and elusive (Bass, 1995; Burns, 1995; Gardner, 1990; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Moreover, the many dimensions into which leadership has been cast and their overlapping meanings have added to this confusion. The meaning of leadership may depend on the kind of organization in which it is found (Bass, 1995). Yet, there is connection among these definitions. Leadership has been conceived as the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a practice of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviours, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as initiation of structure, and

as many combinations of these definitions (Bass, 1995; Burns 1995, Gardner, 1990; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (1995) define leadership as the practise of persuading an organized group towards achieving its goals (p. 43). They explain that leadership is a social process shared among all members of a group. Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphey (1995) elaborate that leadership is not limited to the influence exerted by someone in a particular position or role, and that followers are part of the leadership process, as well. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) define leadership as an organizational quality. These authors explain that leadership shapes the organizations that then produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organizational events (p. 39). Gardner (1990) defines leadership as the process of persuasion by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers (p. 3). Gardner (1995) explains that leaders are integral parts of the organization, and that they perform certain tasks and functions that are essential if the groups in the organization are to accomplish their purposes. Gardner (1995) describes shared values as the bedrock on which leaders build the edifice of group achievement (p. 5).

Burns (1995) suggests that “without a powerful modern philosophical tradition, without theoretical and empirical accretion, without guiding concepts, and without practical considered experiences” (p. 10), we lack the very basis for knowledge of a phenomenon—that is, leadership in the arts, the academy, science, politics, professions, and/or war—that touches and shapes our lives. The author explains that without such understanding we cannot identify vital differences among types of leaders; we cannot differentiate leaders from rulers, from power wielders, and

from despots (p. 10). This foundation of knowledge of the nature of leadership sets a standard for assessing the past, present, and potential leaders (Burns, 1995).

School Leadership

School leadership is an important and significant symbol and practice that determines the success of a school. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), and Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006), school leadership is defined as involving those persons occupying various roles in the school who work with others to provide direction and who exert influence on persons and things in order to achieve the school's goals. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) explain that leaders primarily work through and work with other people to establish the conditions that enable people to be effective (p. 2). Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006) explain that successful leadership is an interactive, reciprocal, and evolving process involving many players, which is influenced by and in turn influences the context in which it occurs (p. 379). Davies and Davies (2005) affirm that leadership is not the provenance of one individual but of a group of people who provide leadership in the school and, by doing so, provide support and aspirations to others to achieve the best for the children in their care (p. 2). The authors explain that leadership is about direction-setting and inspiring others to make the journey to a new and improved state for the school. To this end, leadership is not set in isolation; rather, it is set in the context of organizations and the wider society.

Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006) describe six claims about school leaders that are generalizable to most school contexts:

1. Successful school leadership makes important contributions to the improvement of student learning.
2. The primary sources of successful leadership in schools are principals and teachers.

3. In addition to principals and teachers, leadership is, and ought to be, distributed to others in the school and school community.
4. A core set of 'basic' leadership practices is valuable in almost all contexts: setting directions; developing people; redesigning the organization.
5. In addition to engaging in a core set of leadership practices, successful leaders must act in ways that acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy context in which almost all work, including the market, decentralization and professional and management accountability.
6. Many successful leaders in schools serving highly diverse student populations enact practices to promote school quality, equity and social justice through: building powerful forms of teaching and learning; creating strong communities in school; nurturing the development of educational cultures in families; expanding the amount of students' social capital valued by the schools. (p. 372)

School leaders can make a positive difference to the quality of education (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006). These positive contributions include: engendering a sense of confidence; providing a positive direction through their vision and enthusiasm; holding high expectations of staff and students; focusing on students and families; empowering staff; aligning the community, staff, and school goals; promoting change in teaching and learning; and building capacity (pp. 380-381). Thus, school leaders' contributions are significant to the success of education.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argue that leadership is a function more than a role. The authors express that even though leadership is often invested in, or expected of, persons in positions of formal authority, leadership encompasses a set of functions that may be performed by many different persons in different roles through the school (p. 2). Leadership functions are

distributed across many formal and informal roles in the school. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identify three practices that are important for leadership success in the educational setting: a) setting directions, b) developing people, and c) developing the organization (p. 3). The authors explain that the *direction-setting* aspect of leadership practice includes actions aimed at developing goals for schooling and inspiring others with a vision of the future. School leadership helps to identify and articulate a vision for the school. Leaders help to create shared meanings and understandings to support the school's vision. Competent leaders focus their attention on key aspects of the school's vision and communicate the vision clearly and convincingly (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 4).

Another essential practice that is important for school leadership success is the *development of people* (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), given that most of the work in schools is accomplished through the efforts of individuals in the school. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) explain that school leaders provide intellectual stimulation by encouraging reflection and by challenging their staff to examine assumptions about their work and to reconsider how it can be performed (p. 4). The authors explain that school leaders provide individualized support by showing respect for staff and concern about their feelings and needs. Leaders provide encouragement and structures to promote change, as well as opportunities for individual learning and appropriate means for monitoring progress toward improvement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). School leadership serves as an appropriate model for staff by modeling desired dispositions and actions, and enhancing others' beliefs about their own capacities and their enthusiasm for change (Huber, 2004, p. 5). To this end, effective school leaders influence the development of the human resources in their schools.

School leaders attend to aspects of the *school as an organization* and as a community, with respect to internal processes and external relationships (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) explain that effective leaders enable the school to function as a professional learning community so as to support and sustain the performance of all workers, including teachers as well as students (p. 3). In effect, school leaders help to develop and strengthen school cultures that embody shared norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes and that promote mutual caring and trust among all members (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5). According to Huber (2004), the organizational structure can enhance or hinder individual performance and the accomplishment of school goals. The author explains that effective school leaders help to direct structural changes that promote positive conditions for achieving the school goals, as well as teaching and learning (p. 6). School leaders enhance the performance of their schools by providing opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is crucial (Harris, 2005, p. 161; Huber, 2004, p. 2). Towards this end, leaders help others to shape the school in ways that can accomplish shared goals and address individual concerns.

Huber (2004), as well as Leithwood and Riehl (2003), explain that effective leaders work with representatives from the school's environment, including parents, community members, business and government liaisons, and influential individuals. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) describe effective leaders as those who "pursue positive interactions with the goals of fostering shared meanings, garnering resources and support, and establishing productive inter-organizational relationships" (p. 5). Similarly, Huber (2004) explains that the factors for school effectiveness mostly fall within the influence of the school leaders (pp. 2-3). Huber (2004) advises school leaders to be aware of how influential they can be and to use the opportunity

given to them judiciously (p. 3). To effectively position their schools within their environments, and to respond to legitimate concerns from parents and others, school leaders must be client-centered, proactive, and focused (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5)

Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006), as well as Riley (2013), explain that successful leadership is underpinned by core values and beliefs. Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006) describe that the values and beliefs inform the leaders' decisions and actions, as well as their visions (p. 381). Similarly, Bush, Glover and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2003) reports that leadership needs to be grounded in firm personal and professional values (p. 4). The Bush, Glover, and NCSL (2003) report illustrates that leadership begins with the character of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capacity (p. 5). According to the Bush, Glover, and the NCSL (2003) report, the primary role of any leader is the unification of people around key values. Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006) grouped these values and beliefs into three categories: "a) innate goodness and passion, demonstrated through honesty, empathy and commitment; b) equity (everyone matters), demonstrated through being open and flexible; and c) other centeredness (all can learn), demonstrated through dispersed leadership and responsibility" (p. 375). Thus, effective leaders are informed by and communicate a clear set of personal and educational values that represent their moral purposes for the school (Bush, Glover, & the NCSL, 2003; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006).

The Principal as the School Leader

A key element of an effective school is an effective principal (Fullan, 2004). Even though school success is influenced by many people, excellent school principals remain one of the most important factors to the success of any school. Marsh (1997) explains that principals

traditionally focused on four key elements: 1) Principals are responsible for defining the mission of the school and setting school goals; 2) Principals are to manage the production of education function: coordinating the curriculum, promoting quality instruction, conducting clinical supervision and teacher evaluation/appraisal, aligning instructional materials with curriculum goals, allocating and protecting instructional time, and monitoring student progress; 3) Principals are to promote an academic learning climate by establishing positive high expectations and standards for student behaviour and defined academic achievement, maintaining high visibility, and providing encouragement for teachers and students; and 4) Lastly, principals are to promote and manage professional development efforts that may be and often are separated from instructional practice (p. 126). In addition, principals are expected to develop cultures at schools that include a safe and orderly work environment, opportunities for meaningful student involvement, strong staff collaboration and cohesion, additional outside resources in support of the school goals, and stronger links between the home and the school (Marsh, 1997, pp. 126-127).

Marsh (1997) argues that the old role of the principal as the solitary instructional leader is inadequate for the new direction in educational reform (p. 129). He explains that the approach that emphasizes the directive and clinical view of instructional leadership no longer fits the current realities of the available time and contemporary workload for principals. Marsh (1997) believes that the educational role for school principals needs to be reinvented with respect to three perspectives. First, the cultural or school transformation perspective emphasizes that a new form of expertise is needed for all participants. All individuals groups in the organization need skills in working together, as well as expertise in inventing new arrangements and approaches for teaching and learning. Secondly, the strategic or results-driven perspective stresses that schools

will need both leadership focused on results within the tightly coupled educational and social system, and leadership to help all students meet high performance standards while still achieving quality goals. The third perspective that Marsh (1997) describes involves linking management support to the educational improvement perspective (p. 133). He explains that from this perspective, traditional management functions such as personnel and budgeting have to be redesigned in dramatic new ways if these functions are to meaningfully support contemporary educational reform.

Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkin (2008) describe seven strong claims about successful principals:

- School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning.
- Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
- The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices, not the practices themselves, demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by the context in which they work.
- School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation and commitment, and working conditions.
- School principals have a greater influence on schools and students when leadership is widely distributed.
- Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.
- A small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. (pp. 27-28)

The lived professional practice of these claims increases the quality and quantity of the measure of successful school leadership.

From the literature there are different leadership models that principals can develop in their work with teachers, support staff, parents, and students (Harris, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Starratt, 2005). Bogler (2001) explains that school principals who are successful in their role have used a wide range of approaches to influence and motivate their staffs to bring about changes in their school culture. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), Starratt (2005), Sergiovanni (1992), Harris (2005), and Greenleaf (1995) all identify different models of leadership applicable to principals in the school context. These models include: transformational, moral, servant, shared, and transformative leadership.

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) describe *transformational leadership* as one of the approaches a leader can develop to work with teachers, support staff, and students. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) explain that transformational approaches to leadership emphasize emotions and values, and share a fundamental aim in fostering capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of the leader's colleagues (p. 39). The authors explain that this approach assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitment and capacities of organizational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity (p. 35). Bogler (2001) describes transformational leaders as those who inspire their followers to achieve higher levels of morality and motivation, such as justice and equality. The author explains that transformational leadership connects leaders and followers within a collaborative transformational process and as a result contributes to the performance of the entire organization. The Bush, Glover and National College for School

Leadership (NCSL, 2003) report conceptualizes transformational leadership along eight dimensions:

- Building school vision
- Establishing school goals
- Providing intellectual stimulation
- Offering individualized support
- Modelling best practices and important organizational values
- Demonstrating high performance expectations
- Creating a productive school culture
- Developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. (p. 13)

Bush and Glover and the National College for Leadership (NCSL, 2003) describe transformational leadership as the model that comes closest to providing a comprehensive approach to leadership (p. 14). To this end, transformational leadership focuses primarily on the process by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes rather than the nature or directions of those outcomes (Bush, Glover & NCSL, 2003).

The *moral leadership* approach assumes that the critical focus of leadership must be on the values and ethics of leaders themselves (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) explain that authority and influence are to be derived from defensible conceptions of what is right or good (p. 15). Bush, Glover, and National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2003) report shows that moral leaders exhibit the following values and beliefs through their words and actions: inclusivity, equal opportunities, equity or justice, high expectations, engagement with stakeholders, cooperation, teamwork, commitment, and understanding (p. 16). The report adds that this model includes normative, political/democratic, and symbolic concepts

of leadership (p. 15). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) further explain that the moral view of leadership is political in origin and focuses on the nature of the relationships among those within the organization and the distribution of power among shareholders both inside and outside the organization (p. 16). Values central to this form of leadership are derived from democratic models (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Starratt (2005) describes four levels of ethical acting for an educational leader: a) Educational leaders must consider what the humanly ethical thing to do might be, as related to their enactment as a human being; b) The second level of ethical enactment for an educational leader is as a citizen or public servant; c) The third level of ethical enactment for leaders is as an educator, or the ethical enactment of an educational leader as an educational administrator; and d) The fourth level of ethical enactment by an educational leader is as an educational administrator (pp. 61-64). Starratt (2005) explains that the moral dimension of leadership is based on normative rationality, in particular discernment based on what we believe and what we consider to be good (p. 65). The author's idea is closely linked to the transformational model (p. 64). Starratt (2005) explains that schools must move beyond concern for goals and roles to the task of building purposes into its structure and symbolizing these purposes in everything that it does with the effect of transforming school members from neutral participants to committed followers (p. 65). The embodiment of purpose and the development of followership are inescapably moral (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 270).

Servant leadership is another form of leadership that the school principal can utilize in working with teachers, members of staff, parents, and students. Servant leadership is an approach by which leaders derive the necessary legitimacy to lead (Sergiovanni, 2007). Sergiovanni (1992) explains that servant leadership provides acceptability partly because one of the responsibilities of leadership is to support a collective sense of direction and an overarching

purpose. Greenleaf (1995) explains that a servant leader is servant first (p. 22). He explains that this form of leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. After making that choice, one may come to aspire to lead. Greenleaf (1995) further explains that this form of leadership is manifested in the choice taken by the servant to make sure that other people's highest needs are being served. Sergiovanni (1992) explains that when practicing servant leadership, the leaders may be tempted by personal enthusiasm and commitment to define the needs of those to be served. Greenleaf (1995) maintains, however, that it is best to empower those who will be served to define their own needs in their own way (p. 22). Servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that while serving others is important, the most important thing is to serve the values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community (Greenleaf, 1995, p. 22).

The role of a school principal today is beyond what is reasonable to expect an individual to achieve alone. The school principal can utilize a *shared leadership* model to work with staff, parents, and students in the school. Shared leadership in the school organization involves the principal working together with members of the school staff to develop the mission and vision, to share power and authority, and to assign responsibilities to improve educational outcomes (Natsiopoulou & Giouroukakis, 2010, "Beyond Distributed Leadership" para. 1). Shared leadership refers to the model that distributes leadership responsibilities and activities widely across multiple roles and participants so as to achieve collectively inspired organizational goals (Davies, 2005, p. 167; Harris, 2004, p. 4). Sharing leadership responsibilities helps schools to become more inclusive and self-reflective because more people are exchanging important information, discussing issues, and making decisions collaboratively. Through the process of shared leadership, the principal, school staff, and community members meet regularly to make

important school decisions and to coordinate school improvement initiatives. Harris and Lambert (2003) describe shared leadership as a form of collective leadership in which school staff members develop expertise by working together (p. 86). They explain that shared leadership is attained when each staff member of the school shares the responsibilities in a collective manner, depending on their area of expertise and skill, and that shared leadership involves widespread input that has significant effect on student learning.

According to Spillane (2005), shared leadership is a system of practice that includes a collection of interacting components: leaders, followers, and situations (p. 145). He explains that shared leadership involves a social distribution where leadership functions are stretched over the work of multiple leaders and where the tasks are accomplished through interaction (p. 147). Helstad and Moller (2013) describe shared leadership as a practice that is owned by a group of individuals or a network of interacting individuals within the school organization rather than only by the principal or administrator (p. 246). Principals who share leadership responsibilities with others will be less burdened than principals who attempt the challenges and complexities of leadership alone (Tongneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 168). Mulford (2003) affirms that student outcomes are likely to improve where leadership resources are shared throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered in the areas important to them (p. 38). Shared leadership is crucial to school success. It makes the job of the principal more manageable, increases teachers' contribution and participation, and enhances student achievement (Spillane, 2006, p. 343; Harris, 2004, p. 6; Harris & Lambert, 2003, p. 56).

Transformative leadership starts with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others (Shields, 2010, p. 559). Shields (2010) explains that the

notions of promise, liberation, hope, empowerment, activism, risk, social justice, courage, and revolution are at the heart of transformative leadership. Transformative leadership is an ethically-based leadership model that integrates a commitment to values and outcomes by optimizing the long term interests of stakeholders and society and honoring the moral duties that organizations owe to their stakeholders (Caldwell et al., 2012, p. 176). Caldwell et al. (2012) state that transformative leadership integrates ethical mandates, behavioural assumptions, and standards of excellence that are important in leading effectively. Shields (2003) defines transformative leadership as a reciprocal process whereby one or more individuals engage with others in a way that leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of motivation and morality (p. 21). She explains that transformative leadership is value-based in a given social context, and that it can bring about the necessary change in society. Caldwell et al. (2012) conclude that transformative leadership creates personal connections and displays moral principles that help followers to examine their lives, fulfill their potential, and create a better world.

The transformative leadership model is characterized by a shared vision in pursuit of a grand ideal to touch hearts, to create personal relationships that bring about the best in others, and to change the world. It is a leadership approach that inspires and creates connection with others and gives direction to their lives in pursuit of a changed society. Transformative leadership is perceived as authentic and genuine because it involves the ability to touch hearts, inspires great sacrifice, and demonstrates courage. Transformative leaders connect with followers, earn their support, trust, and commitment, and bring out the best in people, an approach that creates sustainable connections and shared leadership opportunities (Caldwell et al., 2012, p. 179). This model of leadership is characterised by an overriding commitment to social justice, equity, and a democratic society (Theoharis, 2009, p. 9).

Leaders are often in the best positions to encourage inclusion in diverse school contexts. They have the influence to shape leadership practices that are consistent with emancipatory inclusion. School leaders must approach leadership as a collective and collaborative process of working together for just, democratic, and inclusive schools and communities. They can utilize a wide range of leadership approaches to influence and motivate teaching staff, support staff, students, and parents to the same purpose. Inclusive leadership is communal, participatory, and non-hierarchical (Ryan, 2003). Leadership approaches that leaders can utilize in their work include: transformational leadership, moral leadership, servant leadership, shared leadership, and transformative leadership. However, not all approaches to leadership are equally equipped to promote inclusive practices. Ryan (2003) explains that leadership approaches that support distinctions between leaders and followers and that see leadership in terms of single performer or performances may rely on manipulative forms of influence that call on either technical or personal forms of power, focus on comparatively narrow organizational goals, or assume forms of neutrality will not guarantee that diverse groups will be included equitably in the content and processes of schooling (p. 58). Promoting inclusive schools requires leadership that emphasizes group effort rather than exclusion or individual action, attention to global forms of power and justice, critique, action and dialogue, and inclusive forms of practice (Ryan, 2003). To fully understand how leaders can develop inclusive cultures within their schools, it is necessary to construct a deeper understanding of the nature of inclusion.

Inclusion

Effectively educating a diverse population is an old and important challenge. In fact, part of the original push towards forming a system of public schooling was a desire to bring unity to culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse people (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015).

Unifying, inclusionary schools do not happen simply as a result of random processes and actions (Parker & Day, 1997). Parker and Day (1997) explain that an inclusive learning community requires commitment, planning, preparation, and staff development (p. 84). The following section looks at the definition of inclusion in the context of a culture of diversity among staff, students, and the community. The second part deliberates on schools as inclusive environments, specifically how the principal acts as the creator of a culture of inclusion.

Defining Inclusion

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that enables every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe (Manitoba Education, 2015, Philosophy of Inclusion, para. 2). According to Manitoba Education, an inclusive community consciously develops to meet the changing needs of its members (para. 2). Through acknowledgment and support, an inclusive school community provides meaningful involvement and equitable access to its benefits by everyone (para. 2). Kugelmass (2004) defines inclusive schools as educational institutions designed to promote active participation among all students in the culture and in the curricula of the school, and among all members of the local community (p. 3). Kugelmass (2004) also describes inclusion as a philosophy supporting and celebrating diversity in its broadest sense. Ryan (2003) views inclusion as total and complete accommodation (p. 17). He (2003) explains that inclusive schools welcome, accommodate, and celebrate diversity, uniqueness, and individuality. Mark and Day (1997) explain that diversity in the school must be recognized and celebrated in ways that foster community, affiliation, and belonging (p. 84). Similarly, Sailor (2002) explains that inclusive schooling is informed by the understanding that a school is embracing, that every student is able to identify and connect with the school's social environment, cultural milieu, and organizational life (p. 13). Ryan (2003) concludes that in inclusive schools, all members of school communities

are involved or represented in equitable ways (p. 18). Ryan (2003) explains that this process is inclusive in that everyone has the right and the opportunity to contribute. As a result, everyone will be motivated to work towards a whole, just, and democratic school community.

Inclusive education aims at eliminating social exclusion that is a consequence of negative responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability (Kugelmass, 2003, p. 3). According to Ryan (2003), one way to understand inclusion is to look at its antonym – exclusion – which denotes segregation, isolation, and stigmatization (p. 17). Inclusion, on the other hand, seeks to counteract all these tendencies to exclude some people. Ryan (2003) explains that inclusion promotes and values a cohesion that is based on the complementarity of similarity and diversity (p. 19). Villa and Thousand (2005) explain that the underlying assumption is that inclusion is a way of life, or a way of living together, that is based on a belief that each individual is valued and belongs (p. 10). The process involves schools embracing diversity to include all students within their communities and to counter all forms of selection and exclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006). In this respect, inclusion is connected to a principle of the equality of beliefs held by all students and staff within the educational community (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Inclusion may be defined in a variety of ways. Ainscow et al. (2006) explain that the definition can be either descriptive or prescriptive (p. 14). A descriptive definition of inclusion reports on the variety of ways inclusion is used in practice. On the other hand, a prescriptive definition indicates the ways we intend to use the concept of inclusion and the way we would like it to be used by others. However, both kinds of definitions are important in the way inclusion is being regarded. Ainscow et al. (2006) describe six ways of thinking about inclusion:

- Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorized as having special educational needs.
- Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion.
- Inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion.
- Inclusion as Education for All.
- Inclusion as a principled approach for education and society. (p. 15)

Similarly, Kugelmass (2004) broadened the definition of inclusion, as adapted from UNESCO, (1997; 2000). Inclusion as defined in this sense includes the following: a) Diversity in culture, language, ability, and student interests are all celebrated and are seen as enriching the experiences of all children; b) Families are active and integral members of the school community (p. 4). Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) explain that inclusion is increasingly acknowledged as a human right (p. 9). The authors explain that inclusion requires the recognition of all children as full members of society and the respect of all their rights regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language, poverty, and/or impairment. Thus, inclusion involves the elimination of barriers that might avert the enjoyment of these rights, and requires the establishment of appropriate supportive and protective environments (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015). To this end, inclusion benefits all students, educators, parents, and community members.

Principals as the Creator of a Culture of Inclusion

An inclusive school is one that is accepting of all children. Kugelmass (2004) and Ryan (2003) explain that promoting whole-school approaches to learning is an important component of inclusion. Inclusive schools are diverse problem-solving organizations with a common mission that emphasizes learning for all students (Martyn & Florian, 1997). Martyn and Florian (1997) clarify that these schools employ and support teachers and others who are committed to working

together to create and maintain a climate conducive to learning. Ryan (2003) explains that inclusivity means: 1) dealing with equity, which requires attention to the qualitative value of justice; 2) addressing the question of representation, which necessitates that multiple perspectives be entrenched in the academic discourse, knowledge, and texts of the school; and 3) making instructional practices responsive to the challenge of diversity, which involves awareness, critique, and response to the structure of domination (e.g., with regard to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability) within the school system and in the wider society (p. 17). Riehl (2000) supports that the development of inclusive structures and practices must be accompanied by new understanding and values for such development to result in lasting change.

Riehl (2000) describes three broad tasks that face school principals as they work to serve diverse students within inclusive schools: a) fostering new meanings about diversity, b) promoting inclusive practices within schools, and c) building connections between schools and communities (p. 59). The author explains that principals' approaches to these three tasks determine the degree to which their practice can be characterized as inclusive and transformative. The remainder of this section will utilize the three categories proposed by Riehl (2000) to provide a deeper understanding of the role of the principal in encouraging and sustaining an inclusive culture and in building a school community that supports diversity and embraces change.

School principals work to foster new meanings about diversity (Riehl, 2000). Most of the study on school reform emanates from, and is directed towards professional and technical processes internal to schools, with the majority focussing on the key activities of teaching and learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2003; Fullan, 2004). The new instructional methods, (i.e., project based learning or constructivist learning); new organizational configurations (i.e., smaller

schools, smaller class sizes); new forms of assessment and accountability (i.e., portfolios and high-stakes gateway testing); and new norms of teacher practice that underscores collaboration and professional growth are examples of reform initiatives that address fundamental structures and processes within schools (Riehl, 2000, p. 60). Riehl (2000) explains that school principals must make efforts to explore these possible avenues in their efforts to improve educational experiences and outcomes for diverse groups of students. In addition, Fullan (2004) demonstrates that school reforms will not be sustained unless broad constituencies, including students, parents, and school communities, as well as educational professionals, understand and invest in changes that embrace diversity (p. 8). Riehl (2000) explains that schools embody a complex array of understandings, beliefs, and values that find legitimacy through their acceptance by the broader public and that these elements (i.e., understandings, beliefs, and values) are coded in school structures, culture, and routine practices. Thus, schools are, in effect, constructed around meanings that people hold about them (p. 61). To this end, authentic organizational change occurs not simply when technical changes in structure and process are undertaken, but when persons inside and outside of the school construct and embrace new understandings about what the change means (Riehl, 2000).

The praxis of the school principal is crucial in defining and redefining meanings in the school that embrace diversity and support inclusion. Riehl (2000) notes that school principals are often in a better position than others to influence meanings in the school (p. 61); as such, principals are key agents in framing those meanings. By serving in this capacity, Ryan (2003) explains that principals need to approach leadership not as sets of skills or activities associated with one individual but as a collective process involving people working together for just, democratic, and inclusive schools and communities (p. 171). Riehl (2000) explains three

strategies by which principals influence meaning-making: a) through the day-to-day awareness and management of meanings held among stakeholders; b) through the mediation of conflict when open contention arises; and c) through the cognitive task of resolving contradictions within their own ideological perspectives (p. 62). Ryan (2003) explains that school principals can employ a variety of rhetorical and dialogical strategies in communicating new meanings, such as official ceremonies, public relations events, and meetings (p. 171). Riehl (2000) affirms that fostering beliefs about diversity and inclusion practices involves communicating new understandings, so that they become diffused through the educational context (p. 63). The author explains that by doing so, groups and individuals are not simply the recipients of new meanings, but they are co-creators of these new meanings (p. 61). In addition, another key strategy presented to school principals for developing new meanings is the promotion of democratic discourse within the school community (Riehl, 2000, p. 61). Riehl (2000) explains that this process will engender educational practices that serve the needs of diverse students, staff, and communities. School principals can help to change meanings by changing the routine ways in which things are done and how the school organization is designed.

The second task facing school principals who wish to create and sustain embracing schools is to help create conditions and practices within schools that address the needs of diverse students by promoting inclusive practices within their schools (Riehl, 2000). Riehl (2000) explains that this task centers on two dimensions: a) promoting forms of teaching and learning that enable diverse students to succeed, and b) molding a school culture that embraces and supports diversity (p. 62). Riehl (2000) first explains that school principals can act in direct ways to impact the school culture but their role with regard to *inclusive instructional practices* is more indirect (p. 62). Parker and Day (1997) describe the role of the instructional leadership as

supportive, facilitative, or catalytic. The authors explain that this role entails helping to establish the school goals, obtaining resources, stimulating new understandings, changing the structures, and promoting practices that improve learning experiences and outcomes for students (p. 84). Similarly, Riehl (2000) identifies leadership as one core factor contributing to school effectiveness, enacted through principals' high expectations for student achievement, high visibility through frequent visits to classes, high support for staff, and strong goal orientations for task completion (p. 63).

In addition, Youngs and King (2002) stress the development of schools as professional learning communities for teachers. The authors explain that restructuring a school to become a professional learning community helps to improve teaching quality and raise student achievement (p. 644). McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) suggest that principals have an important role in the development of professional learning communities in two ways: a) through their attention to individual teacher development, and b) by creating and sustaining networks of conversation in their schools around issues of teaching and learning (p. 10). Parker and Day (1997) also provide additional insight into the role of principals in fostering inclusive practices for teaching and learning. Their study examines the impact of various organizational conditions affecting diverse students, including school size, class size, school choice options, ability groups, curricular tracks, and other forms of curriculum differentiation. Parker and Day (1997) explain that principals play a key role in the improvement of teaching and learning by influencing the organization of instruction (p. 87). To this end, principals can foster inclusive teaching by examining the impact of various organizational alternatives on the stratification of access to instruction and student achievement, and also by making appropriate changes that promote both equity and excellence for all students (Riehl, 2000).

The second dimension to creating schools that can serve the needs of diverse students more effectively, as noted by Reihl (2000), is centered on *creating school cultures that are inclusive of multiple forms of diversity* (p. 64). Riehl (2000) defines multiculturalism as a comprehensive philosophical reform of the school environment essentially focused on the principles of equity, success, and social justice for all students (p. 64). The author explains that equity is the result of changing the school environment, especially the curriculum and instruction component, through restructuring and re-organizing so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social classes experience educational equality and cultural empowerment (p. 64). Riehl (2000) explains that success is demonstrated through the parity of achievement of students across racial, ethnic, cultural, and social classes (p. 64). Lastly, the author explains that social justice in schools is accomplished by the process of judicious pedagogy as its foundation and that social justice focuses on complete knowledge, reflection, and social action as the foundation for social change (p. 65). This approach (i.e., multiculturalism) reflect notions of an inclusive school culture, via the norms, values, and understandings that are manifested implicitly or explicitly through structures, activities, and interactions within the school (Riehl, 2000).

The third task facing school principals who serve diverse students is based on the understanding of the embeddedness of schools both within the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located and within the system of organizations and institutions through which students move (Riehl, 2000). In this respect, schools cannot function as isolated entities; the school is not an academic island that exists apart from the community. Riehl (2000) explains that effective principals understand these inter-organizational community dynamics and seek to position their schools to benefit from the collective opportunities. Likewise, effective school principals buffer students and schools from the undesirable impacts of some groups (e.g., gangs)

and instead promote positive connections that meet students' needs. Theoharis and Scalan (2015) explain that effectively engaging families and communities is an essential component of effective learning environments (p. 170). Ryan (2003) describes two reasons why it is important to include parents and community members in school activities. First, parents' involvement in their children's education can improve their academic performance (p. 93). Ryan (2003) elaborates that the second reason relates to matters of justice (p. 93). The author explains that it is only right that parents have a say in the education of their own children because of the stake they have in the outcomes. Similarly, Riehl (2000) describes two important tasks of the principal: a) mobilizing schools within the processes of community development, and b) working with other organizations to deliver coordinated services to diverse children (p. 66). Thus the school principal has an important role in school community relations to mobilize the integration and inclusion of the school within the broader community.

Principals have much to contribute to the implementation and maintenance of inclusive practices in diverse schools (Ryan, 2003). The school leaders' knowledge, skills, and dispositions will enable them to influence inclusive practices. They can promote inclusion by nurturing and sustaining dialogue between and among teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, and the school community, as well as by emphasizing student learning. In this manner, the school principal can help introduce and maintain processes that are integral to inclusion. This process displays a number of characteristics: critical, educative, reflective, transformative, advocacy-oriented, collective, equitable, and dialogical (Ryan, 2003, p. 188). Toward this end, the school leaders will use this praxis to address challenges that may serve as threats to inclusive practices in the school.

Challenges

Creating and sustaining an inclusive culture is a complex and ongoing process that requires continuous self-examination and thoughtful reflection by leaders and all members of the organization (Wasserman, Gallegos, & Ferdman, 2006). Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) explain that building and fostering inclusive schools that meet the diverse needs of students is a complex and challenging task (p. 1). The authors found that effective principals met numerous challenges from within the school, the community, and beyond. Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) further explain that if the schools are to serve the common good and promote social justice, the principal needs understanding, skills, and dispositions to provide support for the success of teachers, students, parents, and the community. Responding appropriately to the wide array of educational stakeholders makes the role of the principal both complex and challenging. This section will look at the challenges that school principals face in creating an inclusive school culture. Some of the challenges are initiated internally as students and teachers struggle to attain academic success together, and others are initiated externally as the community reaches out in an effort to support students and teachers.

Internal Challenges

Leadership for social justice entails attending not only to the multiple dimensions of diversity, but also to multiple aspects of leadership—from student achievement to school structures, to curriculum and instruction, to safety, to behavior, to culture, and to community (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015). In this regard, school principals need to approach leadership as a collective process that involves people working together for inclusive schools and communities (Ryan, 2003, p. 171). However, educators face enormous challenges in building a culture where

every student, along with everyone else, feels, valued, safe, respected, and included. These internal challenges could be categorized into two aspects: academics and non-academics.

Academic challenges. Learning is the core purpose, the quintessential mission of schools and schooling. Learning and its associated issues also present problems and questions for school leaders: What can and should be learned? How should opportunities for learning be structured? To whom should such opportunities be directed and how (Parker & Day, 1997)? As schools move towards creating inclusive learning communities, these and other complications may arise. Parker and Day (1997) explain that these questions are fundamental to the issues of inclusion in schools. The authors explain that even when a mission is developed collectively, the school leader is responsible to clearly define and articulate a mission that incorporates the values of inclusion and inclusionary practices (p. 83). These practices include: a) fostering a school climate in which all members share a clear understanding that the school stands for the success and achievement of all students; b) managing and coordinating resources for curriculum and instruction in ways that explicitly support inclusion of all students; c) monitoring and supporting each student's development and progress; and d) modeling reflective practices and supervising teaching to continually encourage and strengthen the culture for inclusion of all members in the school and in the community (Parker & Day, 1997, p. 84). Thus, Parker and Day (1997) note that by applying positive dimensions of instructional leadership, school principals who anticipate and recognize potential difficulties will be better positioned to support colleagues, students, and families and, by so doing, ease the challenges encountered. Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) argue that since school leaders are increasingly held accountable for the academic outcomes of all students, school leaders must be mindful of and responsive to how aspects of the instructional

leadership dimension intersects with other dimensions of leadership in manners that affect student learning (p. 3).

Effective principals promote an instructional climate that strongly values and reinforces learning and achievement (Parker & Day, 1997). Marling and Marling (2015) found homogeneous grouping to be ineffective in improving academic achievement and too often results in an inferior quality of education with respect to instructional practices (p. 43). The authors explain that educational leaders can provide a firm foundation that supports the creation of heterogeneous ability groupings that challenge all students with a rich, engaging curriculum. Marling and Marling (2015) identify de-tracking as a key step toward achieving high levels of academic success for all students, which involves dismantling structures of schooling that perpetuate racial and class inequities that beset schools (p. 44). The authors clarify that implementing high curricular outcomes for all students requires thoughtful leadership focused on systemic change (p. 44). This kind of leadership will transform the “low-expectation curriculum typically provided to students in poverty to high status learning while simultaneously making challenging content relevant, meaningful, and accessible by situating learning in language, culture, and experiences” (Marling & Marling, 2015, pp. 44-45). The school principal is, thus, charged with the responsibility of promoting culturally relevant, high-expectation curricula in mixed-ability classrooms.

Alongside encouraging heterogeneous grouping, school leaders must ensure that classrooms are crafted and are characterized by both high expectations and strong support for students to meet these expectations (Tomlinson et al. 2003, p. 1). Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) add that culturally responsive educational theories recognize and build upon the wealth of cultural and linguistic knowledge that all students bring to school with them (p. 2). Similarly,

Marling and Marling (2015) explain that culturally responsive approaches to education are based on sociocultural learning theories in which learning is seen as a process heavily steeped in and influenced by culture (p. 46). The authors explain that these theories emphasize that children learn by interacting with members of their culture and using cultural tools, ways of communicating, and language to frame and support learning. Ryan (2003) explains that learning and teaching are key components of inclusive leadership in diverse contexts (p. 157). Culturally responsive leaders work with teachers to adapt their methods and strategies in ways that enable all learners to be successful (Marling & Marling, 2015; Ryan, 2003; Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015).

Non-academic challenges. Creating inclusive, safe, and caring schools presents ongoing challenges for sustainability. However, students need to perceive that their school is safe; that is to say, that the school is free of any potential harm or danger, both environmentally and socially (Barton, 2009). Learning cannot occur when safety issues distract students. Barton (2009) explains that through a proactive approach to addressing safety issues, students develop both academically and socially (p. 3). The author defines safe schools as places where the process of education can be conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear (p. 6). Barton (2009) describes that such a setting provides an educational climate and culture that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for every child. The author further explains that in these schools, behavioral expectations are clearly communicated, consistently enforced, and fairly applied. Hernandez and Fraynd (2015) focus on the role that school leaders can play in protecting students. These authors promote innovative and entrepreneurial leadership that is supportive of a safe learning environment and that is inclusive and protects children from harassment and crimes related to race, religion, poverty, gender, disability, and LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning) affiliation. As well, Sautner (2008)

identifies bullying as a widespread, persistent, and serious problem in schools (p. 138). She adds that harassment and bullying have been major problems in public schools. She (2008) goes on to conclude that if the purpose of the education system is to foster and maintain respectful, responsible behaviors in students, educators need to develop such character traits in themselves and others. To this end, the goal of inclusive safe and caring schools should be the achievement of consistently better academic and also non-academic student learning outcomes for all students (Barton, 2009; Hernandez & Fraynd, 2015; Sautner, 2008).

Schools need leaders who are committed to creating environments that are safe and inclusive of students across multiple dimensions of diversity (Hernandez & Fraynd, 2015). Principals are in an ideal position to promote inclusion in diverse school contexts (Ryan, 2003, p. 171). School principals must develop strategies for creating safe schools, according to Barton (2009). Similarly, Horsford and Clark (2015) describe how leaders should engage in such work to the same end, and they present five tools and strategies for creating a safe school: a) dialogue, b) film/video screening, c) book circles, d) curriculum transformation seminars, and e) parent involvement (p. 64). Ryan (2003) also supports that dialogue is key in establishing a safe and inclusive school community. The author explains that if principals are to promote inclusive education, they need to initiate, foster, sustain, and reciprocate dialogue of respect for differences in ways that everyone in the school has a voice (p. 171). Similarly, Sautner (2009) affirms that it is important that school principals create cultures that support healthy interactions and problem-solving (p. 156). The author explains that schools that are successful in providing a safe environment are inclusive places where individual differences are celebrated and valued (p. 157).

External Challenges

Some of the challenges faced by principals who aim to create an inclusive environment are initiated externally and interfere with otherwise supportive relationships between the school and the surrounding community. These challenges include building effective relationships with parents, building supportive relationships with community stakeholders, and overcoming external risks that may serve as threats to the school community, such as aspects of a culture of poverty, which may include low expectations for student achievement, gang activity, and a need for and associated lack of enhanced governmental commitment. Osterman (2000) explains that community is not present until all members experience feelings of belonging, trust in others, and safety (p. 323). For meaningful inclusion to occur, Ryan (2003) suggests that parents need to take on governance activities in ways that enable them to have genuine voice (p. 169). The author explains that the ways that school principals approach school-community relationships, the manner in which they position themselves in teaching and learning, and the nature of school administration can have an impact on inclusion (p. 168). Parents need to occupy positions with which they are comfortable and positions from which they are able to affect the course of events of their school communities (Ryan, 2003). Similarly, Scanlan and Johnson (2015) call for respectful alliances among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship-building, dialogue across differences, and sharing power in pursuit of a common purpose in socially just, democratic schools (p. 167).

Involving parents. The primary external relationship between the school and the community is with parents and families. The challenge of creating strong relationships between home and school is an important task for the school principal. Traditionally, schools were set apart from the busy environment of the community. Morris and Taylor (1998) explain that,

historically, parents were even persuaded not to interfere with educational efforts and policies, that educating their children was the school's business (p. 220). This attitude led to defensiveness and frustration in parents that sometimes remains today. As education becomes more complex and ubiquitous however, opportunities to learn outside of the school walls have increased, and the curricula has become wider, broader, and deeper. As a result, the traditional isolation of schools has faded. For example, activities like the learning of practical skills takes students outside of the classroom and the increased need for resources and volunteers make the school reach out to the community for support. Educating children is now seen as a cooperative effort that requires mutual respect and trust among the parents, the school, and the community (Morris & Taylor, 1998).

Although parents have responsibility for their children's lives, they still often lack sufficient voice within the educational community (Morris & Taylor, 1998). When parents are included in their children's education however, student learning outcomes and school effectiveness increases (p. 3). Scanlan and Johnson (2015) articulate different types of involvement of parents and community members in schools: parents providing health and safety education and support for children; parents volunteering in schools and extending the learning from school to home; and schools communicating effectively with parents about teaching and learning goals and about the progress that is made towards these goals (p. 167). Additionally, Scanlan and Johnson (2015) affirm that parental interactions with the school occur in both school-based spaces (such as academics and non-academics) and home-community spaces (such as church-based groups and community organizations) (p. 168). The authors explain that these interactions begin with developing processes that demonstrate that the educators and school leaders listen carefully and communicate respectfully with parents. Schools need to demonstrate

a willingness to meet with families outside of the school in community spaces. This strategy will build strong relationships between the school and the parents, as well as provide a level playing ground for communication.

Involving community. Building effective community engagement strategies is another challenge confronting schools. Lack of community engagement leads to reduced academic and social support available to students outside of school, as well as adverse conditions that diminish student's health, safety, and well-being (Scanlan & Johnson, 2015, p. 168). If schools are to overcome these challenges, schools and school leaders have to work together both with the parents and with the larger community (Ryan, 2003). Community engagement has many benefits: a) helping children to start school better prepared to learn, b) fostering participation from more stakeholders to support the school, and c) building public support for education (Scanlan & Johnson, 2015, p. 169). Scanlan and Johnson (2015) and Ryan (2003) call for more balanced and collaborative partnerships between schools and community organizations and residents. Scanlan and Johnson (2015) explain that these partnerships have the potential to enhance the school's core understanding and to increase the role that the school plays in promoting a more democratic society (p. 168). Strong relationships between schools and communities can lead to more effective problem-solving when the community faces challenges that permeate the school community, as well.

Overcoming external risks. It is important for school principals to understand the causes of external risks that may serve as a challenge to the school community; for example, aspects of a culture of poverty, which may include both low expectations for student achievement and gang activity, as well as a lack of needed commitment on the part of various levels of government. There are serious consequences for living in poverty, particularly for children. Marling and

Marling (2015) describe that adverse experiences in early childhood, including poverty, have been shown to have a lasting negative effect on children's developing brains, including "capacity to learn new skills, the ability to regulate stress, and the ability to make healthy adaptations to future adverse situations" (p. 39). The authors explain that in the past, the overriding views for explaining high levels of school failure among children living in poverty has focused on presumed deficiencies in children's language, culture, families, and communities that have left them ill prepared for academic learning. Children that are from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to also experience an impoverished curriculum that focuses on low-level skills and abilities. Students who attend schools in low socio-economic areas are much less likely to be offered the same rich, engaging learning opportunities commonly provided to students in more affluent, high achieving school communities (Marling & Marling, 2015).

Public schools exist to give all children equal educational opportunity, no matter their background, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. School leaders must ensure that children that are from impoverished backgrounds are given equal and in many instances equitable opportunities to learn in school. Marling and Marling (2015) explain that the antidote to the pedagogy of poverty that plagues the schooling of children that are from impoverished backgrounds involves the types of rich, engaging, high-expectations curricula and pedagogy commonly found in high achieving schools (p. 40). The authors elaborate that a high-expectations curriculum is not sufficient to completely overcome the incapacitating effects of poverty, but that a rich, challenging curriculum is a necessary component in a comprehensive program aimed at improving the academic achievement in schools that are located in low socio-economic areas. Inclusive, socially just leadership ensures that children that are from

impoverished backgrounds receive all-round rich educational opportunities that will allow them to succeed and achieve academically.

Sometimes schools encounter externally initiated challenges that are more extreme, such as the presence of gangs. Gangs play a significant role in violence in schools. Singleton et al. (2006) explain that gangs tend to confine their activities to their own communities (p. 2). The authors explain that gangs create a tenacious structure within which school violence can take root and grow. They (2006) note that schools not only suffer from gang-related violence spilling over from the community, but that schools are rapidly becoming centers of gang activities, functioning particularly as sites for recruitment and socialization (p. 3). Edwards (2008) sees peer pressure as the largest influence on a student's gang involvement (p. 8). He explains that students turn to gangs for protection from neighborhood crime, abusive families, and/or other gangs. Understanding how gangs recruit students needs increased attention by schools so as to better respond to such challenges. Singleton et al. (2006) describe four factors that are primary in the formation of gangs:

1. Youth experience a sense of alienation and powerlessness because of lack of traditional support structures, such as family and school. This can lead to feeling of frustration and anger and a desire to obtain support outside of traditional institutions.
2. Gang membership gives youth a sense of belonging and becomes a major source of identity for its members.
3. The control of turf identity is essential to the well-being of the gang, which often uses force to control both its territory and its members.
4. Recruitment of new members and expansion of territories are essential if a gang is to remain strong and powerful. (p. 2)

These four factors interact to support gang infiltration that becomes increasingly powerful and ruthless within the school and within the community.

Despite the huge influence or challenge from gangs from within the school community, Singleton et al. (2006) explain that it would be a great disservice to portray gangs as so potent that schools are powerless to respond to them (p. 3). Ryan (2003) explains that principals need to provide appropriate educational strategies to work with staff, students, parents, and the community to tackle any issues that might arise within the school and its environment, and that would also apply to the issue of gangs. Singleton et al. (2006) affirm that the school principal must provide strategies that mobilize the school's and the community's resources to offer viable alternatives to youth gang membership. The authors explain that these strategies must be built with understanding of the reasons why gangs develop and attract youth, as well as ways to address students' feelings of powerlessness and low self-esteem that leaves them vulnerable for gang recruitment (p. 3). Singleton et al. (2006) propose eight interventions that the school principal can use for combating gangs:

1. Targeting students that are vulnerable to gang recruitment for special assistance. The use of peer counselors, support groups, mentoring, conflict resolution programs and tutoring can be effective in providing assistance to students.
2. Establishing moral and ethical education, values clarification, and conflict resolution as important components of the curriculum.
3. Creating an inviting school climate where every student feels valued.
4. Educating all staff, including support staff, about how gangs develop and how to respond to them.
5. Offering special programs for parents on gangs and how to deal with them as the parent.

6. Presenting information in a culturally sensitive way and in a variety of languages to reflect the diversity of the community.
7. Monitoring youth who are not enrolled in school but are found near school property. This monitoring will help school officials assess the existence of gangs in the neighborhood, and anticipate and prevent their infiltration in the school.
8. Offering educational programs for students about gangs, their destructiveness, and how to avoid being drawn into them.
9. Providing regular opportunities for students individually and/or in small groups to discuss and to express their feelings comfortably. (p. 3)

These strategies can be used for a comprehensive school-wide intervention for combating school infiltration of gangs. It will also make gang affiliation appear less attractive and prepare students to effectively resist gang pressure (Singleton et al., 2006).

The lack of governmental commitment to its citizens may also serve as a threat to inclusive school communities, particularly for at-risk children. The majority of children in poverty continue to make their way through life impoverished, abandoned, uneducated, malnourished, discriminated against, neglected, and vulnerable (UNICEF, 2006). No matter where they are located, in the rural or urban areas, life for these children is a daily struggle to even survive, let alone thrive. These children are excluded from essential services that they need from institutions such as hospitals and schools, and while also lacking the protection of family and community, they are often at risk of exploitation and abuse. As a result, they miss out on their childhood. For these children, the perception that childhood is a time to grow, learn, play, and feel safe and loved is, in effect, meaningless.

The international community, comprising of 192 countries, has made a series of commitments to children to ensure that their rights to survival, health, education, protection, and participation, among others, are met (UNICEF, 2006). These organisations lay out in specific terms the legal duties of government to children. The survival, development, and protection of children are not considered matters of charitable concern but of moral and legal obligation (UNICEF, 2006). In this regard, governments are to be held accountable for the care of children by the international body to which they agree to report regularly. School administrators can serve as liaisons between the school and various levels of government to lobby government to uphold their responsibilities for the freedom and well-being of their young citizens. Ryan (2003) affirms that principals need to assume roles as advocate if they wish to help their school communities become inclusive places (p. 185). The author explains that school principals are in a unique position to do this because their formal positions in the educational organization confers on them a certain amount of influence.

Since the school does not exist in isolation from either its smaller or its world-wide community, for a school to achieve its goals and objectives it must endeavour to maintain good relationships with the community at all levels. The community must also see the school at all times not as an isolated entity, belonging to the government or any other agencies, but as part of the community whose welfare should be the concern of the entire community. To foster community relationships and to build inclusive cultures, the school principal should take responsibility for engaging families and the external school community. School principals need to work collaboratively to build effective relationships with parents and communities (i.e., residents and organizations) so as to build support for student success. These relationships will provide a foundation for overcoming external risks that may serve as threats to the school

community and to the school. Thus, the school alone cannot do the job of education nor can the parents or the community alone. Everyone must join hands to make the achievement of socially just and democratic schooling realisable.

Summary

This chapter deliberated on the five elements of critical inclusive praxis: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. It broadens our understanding on how these elements intersect with one another and also shows how the principal engages in reflective, critical, and dialogical action. This process enables the school principal to create democratic, equitable schooling for all students. The principal works collaboratively with teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, and the community to transform the school and create inclusive, just education for all.

The school principal's role as the builder and shaper of culture is significant in order to sustain a strong positive school that fosters student learning. The principal serves as a change agent who moves the school in an envisioned direction, as well as the person who mobilizes the search for solutions to challenges that may arise in the school. The leadership of the school principal is an imperative symbol and practice that is a crucial determining factor in the success of a school. Leadership includes both direction-setting and inspiring others to the desired end. School leaders in their work with teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, and the school community utilize a variety of leadership approaches to create just, democratic, and inclusive schools and communities. These approaches may include transformational, moral, servant, shared, and transformative leadership approaches. Furthermore, inclusive education is aimed at eradicating social exclusion that is a result of negativity towards diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability. In building inclusive schools, school leaders must embark

on three important tasks: 1) fostering new meanings about diversity, 2) promoting inclusive practices within schools, and 3) building connections between schools and communities.

Building and fostering an inclusive school to meet the diverse needs of students can be a complex and challenging task. Nevertheless, effective principals work with everyone in the school and in the community to overcome these challenges from within the school, the community, and beyond. School principals' knowledge, skills, and disposition allow them to provide support for the success of everyone. The critical inclusive praxis framework is an appropriate model that allows the principal to engage in practices that create and sustain socially just schools.

The next chapter will provide details about the methodology of the study. It elaborates the research approach, research sampling within a population, the research instrument, relationship and rapport building, trustworthiness and triangulation, and ethical considerations, as well as data analyses. As such, the following chapter will give well-detailed information about each of the research procedures employed in the study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the different leadership styles or ways that selected school principals use: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. To this end, in order to develop an understanding of how the school principal uses different approaches, I sought to understand these five elements: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. I developed an understanding of how these elements intersect with one another as the school principal engages in a critical inclusive praxis (See Figure 1, p. 11). The research was guided by the following research questions:

- How do principals in diverse schools conceptualize and vary leadership styles to encourage and sustain an inclusive culture in the school?
- How do principals negotiate the politics of school change to deal with difficult issues and challenging people in the school while sustaining a positive school culture?
- How do principals build cohesive cultures in their schools while addressing challenging situations?

Research Design

Qualitative research is used to address research problems where the variables are not known, but where there is the need to explore for understandings and meaning (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). Qualitative research relies on the personal perspectives of participants in the research study. The need to learn from the participants and the need to understand the lived situation through exploration are best situated for qualitative research. Qualitative research studies attempt

to establish the meaning and importance of the central phenomenon(a) in a study, in this instance a critical inclusive praxis. This research study explored the experiences of five school principals and how they used different leadership styles to build an inclusive school culture.

Case studies are used when one wants to explore the observable and learned patterns of behaviour, customs, and ways of the culture-sharing group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The case study approach typically involves some extended interaction with members of the group during which the researcher may be immersed in the lived experiences of the group. Stake (1995) explains that sometimes researchers identify “case” as an object of study. Merriam (1998) argues that case study is a procedure of inquiry. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on data collection (Creswell, 2012, p. 465). Activities, events, processes, or individuals are examples of bounded systems. This case study was intended to garner insights from five selected principals of schools in southwestern Manitoba, Canada. I engaged in an interaction (i.e., interview) with these principals to learn about their lived experiences, particularly their patterns of behaviour related to their leadership approaches within the five articulated aspects of a critical inclusive praxis. The interviews provided a detailed description of the studied phenomena within their school context and enabled me to develop a deep understanding of how principals lead and develop an inclusive school culture. A case study like this one uses themes as the entry point to explore the interaction and insights of members of groups that develop over time (Creswell, 2012, p. 465; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 33). Identifying themes that are considered as aspects of a critical inclusive praxis were used to explore the experiences of the five school principals as elaborated in this study, those themes being culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge.

Research Sampling within a Population

The interviewees for this study were chosen through purposeful sampling, which occurs when the researcher intentionally selects persons and places through which to learn or understand the central phenomenon(a) (Creswell, 2012). Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to select sites and/or individuals to be participants in a research study. In qualitative research, a researcher purposefully selects participants or sites that will help to build an understanding of the problem and the research question; thus, qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling to select participants and sites that are believed to be information rich (Creswell, 2012). The researcher may decide to study a site, several sites, individuals, or groups, or some combination. One objective of qualitative research is to present the complexity of a site, as well as the complexity of the information provided by individuals. Thus, purposeful sampling applies to both individuals and sites. Purposeful sampling in qualitative research involves choosing participants and sites that will provide the greatest insight into the topic at hand.

As the researcher, I used a purposeful sampling approach to select the five school principals participating in this research study. These school principals were selected from two public school divisions in southwestern Manitoba and one private school. Factors such as gender balance and varying school demographics were considered in selecting the school principals. There was an effort to include equal male and female participants, both elementary and high schools, and both rural and urban schools. As it turned out, two of the potential female participants did not respond to three different requests for their participation; thus, the intended gender balance was not achieved. Also, the selection was based on my own and my thesis committee's knowledge of the principals in southwestern Manitoba, in particular those who are

known to have a candid and open approach to school leadership that includes a critical inclusive praxis embracing of change and challenge.

Instrument

Interview questions were developed to gather information for this study (See Appendix A). Interviews are a very common form of data collection in case study research (Creswell, 2012; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Interviews of individuals or groups allow the researcher to attain rich, personalized information. A qualitative interview occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. Open-ended questions are asked in qualitative research so that the participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher. Interviews can be classified as structured, semi-structured, and/or unstructured (Creswell, 2012; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Seidman, 2013). Hancock and Algozzine (2006) explain that semi-structured interviews are well-suited for case study research. The authors elaborate that by using the semi-structured approach, the researcher asks predetermined but flexibly worded questions. The responses provide the interviewee's answers to the research questions. In addition to posing predetermined questions, Seidman (2013) explains that researchers using semi-structured interviews may ask follow-up questions designed to probe more deeply into issues of interest to interviewees. I used a semi-structured approach to interview the participants for this study. Open-ended questions were posed to gather information and probe deep issues of interest to the interviewees, especially pertaining to the area of this study (See Appendix A).

Seidman (2013) elaborates that interviewing is a powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues through an understanding gained of the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues (p. 13). As a method of inquiry, Seidman

(2013) notes that interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language (p. 8). To understand human behaviour means to understand the use of language.

Seidman (2103) explains that the use of language contains within it the paradigm of cooperative inquiry and that language is the primary tool whose use enables human interpretation of meanings to occur. At the heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experiences with language. In-depth interviewing reflects an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they construct out of those experiences.

Being interested in others is the key to some of the basic assumptions underlying interviewing techniques (Seidman, 2103). Seidman (2013) explains that at the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are worthwhile. The author further clarifies that such an approach requires that the interviewers keep their own egos in check. The interviewers realize that the interviewees are the important knowers with reference to the research. Through the interviewer's actions, they demonstrate and indicate that others' stories are important. Interviewing, then, is a basic mode of inquiry that helps in recounting narratives of individuals' lived experience in a way that allows humans to make sense of others' experience.

The conceptual framework in this study (See Figure 1, p. 11), that of a critical inclusive praxis, provided a base for the interview questions. The five elements included in the framework—culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge—were incorporated into the interview questions to gather an understanding of how the principals used different leadership approaches to build an inclusive school culture. Designing and presenting the instrument in this

manner helped me, as the researcher, to learn of the principals' views with respect to the research questions.

Relationship-Building and Rapport

Seidman (2013) explains that interviewing is both a research methodology and a social relationship that should be nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully (p. 97). Seidman (2013) suggests that each interviewing relationship should be individually crafted, since it is a reflection of the personalities of the participant and the interviewer and the ways they interact (p. 19). The author further notes that relationship-building is also a reflection of the purpose, structure, and method of in-depth interviewing. An individuals' intersubjective understanding of another depends upon creating an "I – Thou" relationship (Seidman, 2013, p. 97). Lindlof and Taylor (2011) affirm that this inter-subjectivity is always produced in the relationship with others (p. 38). Seidman (2013) describes "Thou" as "another alive and conscious human being" (p. 97). In an "I – Thou" relationship there is a shift from the interviewer seeing the interviewee as an object or an 'informer' who would be described in the third person, to a perceived mutual connection that becomes a "we relationship" (Seidman, 2013, p. 98). In such a way, the interviewer would become an equal participant, and the resulting discourse would be more a conversation, not the mere giving of information from one person to another. In building relationships however, Seidman (2013) warns the interviewer about keeping enough distance to allow the participants to fashion their responses as independently as possible.

The building of rapport with interviewees is essential in the process of mutual understanding. "Rapport implies getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, an affinity for one another" (Seidman, 2013, p. 98). It is important for the interviewer to develop a positive relationship during in-depth interviews so that the interviewee feels comfortable

enough to respond openly to the interview questions. Bloom and Grabtree (2006) explain that rapport involves trust and respect for the interviewee and the information they share. Similarly, Seidman (2013) suggests that the interviewing relationship must be marked by respect, interest, attention, and good manners on the part of the interviewer (p. 99). Establishing rapport could also mean creating a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee's personal experiences and attitudes as they occurred (Bloom & Grabtree, 2006). This means that the interviewer must be constantly alert to what is appropriate to the situation. Seidman (2013) explains that the kind of rapport an interviewer must build in an interviewing relationship needs to be controlled. The author clarifies that too much or too little rapport can lead to distortion of what the participant reconstructs as their experiences within the interview situation.

While I had initially contacted each potential participant by e-mail and received their consent (see Appendices D), I started my interview with the principals by introducing myself once again so that they would be reminded of my research and would get to know me as the researcher. At the same time I ensured that I attained their consent and clarified issues of anonymity and confidentiality. I reviewed with the interviewee the purpose of the interview, the approximate amount of time needed for the interview, and how and when the interviewee might expect to receive results of the research of which their interview was a part. While I was conducting my interview, I asked open-ended questions that provided me with insights into deeper issues. As the researcher, I limited my comments as much as possible to allow more time for the interviewees to offer their perspectives. I spent more time listening, and writing notes while listening to the interviewees. I did not look into the eyes of the interviewees so as to allow the interviewees to gather their thoughts and to express themselves freely and with time to

reflect. I built a good rapport with the interviewees and made them feel connected to the research so that they might answer the questions to the best of their ability.

Trustworthiness and Triangulation

Trustworthiness is a determinant of the accuracy of the findings in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). One method for ensuring trustworthiness in a study is by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to the participants for accuracy. This procedure involves conducting a follow-up interview with participants in the study and providing an opportunity for them to comment on the findings.

The trustworthiness of this study's data rested on skillful interviewing of the participants. I openly presented my position as a researcher, as one of the inherent perspectives also manifested in the report. At this time, I also explained the process of consent to the participants once again, noting that their agreement with their signed consent would then lead to their data being knit into the formal thesis document, particularly in Chapter four, and that consent could be withdrawn up to the time of thesis completion.

Triangulation is the process of validating evidence from different individuals, different types of data, and/or methods of data collection that will make the researcher's report accurate and credible (Creswell, 2012, p. 259). As the researcher, I examined all the information sources, primarily from the literature and from the interviewees, and drew evidence to support them. This helps to guarantee that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, and/or processes. Triangulation of this study was also addressed by collecting data from five different people. The primary source of data for this study was interviews and associated field notes, along with the knowledge gained from the literature

review. I examined all this information and drew evidence to develop and to confirm my findings.

Ethical Considerations

In any research study, it is important to respect the participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 23). The researcher must inform individuals participating in a study about the purpose and aim of the study before participation, how the results of the study will be used, and the possible implications of the study on their lives and on the profession to which they belong. Protecting participants' anonymity is of high importance, and researchers must ensure that while information is being shared, the identities of the participants are protected. Participation in a research study must be voluntary. Participants volunteering in a study have the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw at any time noted in the consent form, which is usually up to the time that their data are incorporated into the researcher's final thesis document. In conducting a study, a researcher must not engage in any form of unnecessary deception about the nature of the study. The purpose of the study must be elaborated by providing well detailed information. To reiterate, a researcher must educate participants about the purpose and aim of the study, must respect participants by protecting their identity as the source of information in a study, and must not engage participants in any unnecessary deception about the study.

Ethical consideration is important throughout the research process (Creswell, 2012, p. 23). It is the first aspect to consider, rather than an afterthought. In conducting a research study, a researcher must put the following ethical issues into consideration before embarking on the study: confidentiality, respect for individuals and for the site, informed consent, consideration of cultural and personal boundaries, and beneficence of the treatment of participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 230). The following sections detail the ethical issues that were considered in this study.

Confidentiality

Throughout the process of the research, I took the following steps to assure the confidentiality of my participants: 1) I ensured that the interview could take place at a time when the principal would not be disrupted and, therefore, would not run the risk of having someone overhear her/his interview; 2) I used initials as pseudonyms in place of the names of the principals who participated in the study; 3) I made sure that the data were stored in a safe place and I did not share the data with other participants or individuals outside the project other than my supervisor; and 4) Once the thesis was completed and approved, paper copies of the information were shredded and digital copies were securely erased.

Respect for individuals and for the site

I did not engage participants in any deception about the study; participants were clearly informed about the purpose and aim of the study. Also, I did not disrupt individuals or groups at the school during my interview with the participating principals. I showed good manners to the school receptionist and viewed my role as a guest at the school.

Informed consent

To begin my research, a letter of introduction and a request for permission to invite principals to participate in my study was sent to the superintendents of two school divisions and board of directors of one private Christian school in southwestern, Manitoba (See Appendix B). The letter explained that the purpose of my study was to develop an understanding of how principals utilize different leadership approaches to build an inclusive school culture during times of challenge and change. In response, I received correspondence from each of the superintendents and from the board of directors, giving me their consent to proceed with approaching principals in their school division to participate in my study.

Next, I sent a letter of invitation to each of the five principals that were identified to participate in the study (See Appendix C); as well, I included the consent form and the interview questions. Five of the contacted principals responded via email to let me know that they were interested in participating and I proceeded to set times with each of them for the interview. As noted, an initial consent form had been sent via email to the participating principals (See Appendix D). Prior to the face-to-face interview, I took time to review and verify the consent form with each of the participants to ensure that they understood their rights before they signed the document and agreed to participate. For example, I explained and clarified to the principals that given the small population of south-western Manitoba, and the connections among schools and principals, it was still anticipated, despite all precautions, that their identities might become known to the broader educational public.

Consideration of Cultural and Personal Boundaries

Norms and policies of the schools were respected during the process of my research. I respected each participant's personal boundaries by allowing the principals to set the time and place that was convenient for them for the interview to take place. I reminded participants a day or two before the interview date with them. My relationship with the participants was marked by respect, attention, interest, and good manners. Lastly, during the interview I kept enough personal distance and gave enough time to allow the participants to fashion their responses as independently as possible.

I ensured, as well as I could, that the participants had a good feeling about my study by treating them well. The interviewees in this study did not participate because of any financial reward, as they were not offered remuneration to participate in the study. However, electronic

copies of the thesis were sent to the principals after the completion of the thesis as a way to give back to the participants.

Permission from the Ethics Committee

The study was conducted according to the research protocol and consent forms approved by Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC; see Appendix E for copy of ethics certificate). Brandon University also requires all researchers to complete the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) tutorial and to submit a copy of their certificate with each ethics proposal (see Appendix F for a copy of my TCPS2 certificate). The tutorial gave me an in-depth understanding of ethics with reference to research involving humans. This knowledge was used to address the ethical considerations of conducting the entire process of the research.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis requires organizing the vast amount of information, transferring data from spoken or written words to typed files and deciding whether to analyse data by hand or by computer (Creswell, 2012, p. 238). In qualitative research, the researcher organizes data into file folders and computer files for analysis, which could take several forms, such as: developing a matrix or a table of sources to organise the material, organising the materials by types, and/or keeping duplicate copies of all forms of data (Creswell, 2012, pp. 238-239). Attention to this process is crucial in qualitative research because of the large amount of information that is gathered during the research study. The researcher will transcribe all interviews (as written and/or as recorded), field notes, and visual materials into text data for analysis. In qualitative research analysis, data could be analysed by hand. This means that the researcher will read the data, mark them by hand, and divide them into parts (coding). The researcher codes data to generate descriptions and broad themes for analysis. To build additional layers of complex

analysis, the researcher interconnects themes into story lines, develops data into theoretical models or across different case studies, and shapes data into general descriptions to form complex theme connections.

I advanced the data analysis into a description of themes that was then represented in the form of a qualitative narrative. The final step in qualitative data analysis, which is interpretation of the findings or results, is also usually in the form of a narrative discussion (Creswell, 2012, p. 254), which was the direction followed in this research. The narrative discussion includes an elaboration of the researcher's learnings from the study. These learnings or lessons constitute the researcher's interpretation of the data analysis. As such, the narrative incorporates the understandings that the researcher brings to the study from their own personal education, culture, history, and experiences. The narrative includes the perceived meanings derived from a comparison of the findings with information from the literature or theories. As such, the interpretation, included here within Chapter five, brings the thesis together in a connected story that relates back to each previous chapter in the thesis document.

I personally organized and prepared all data for analysis in this study. I did a full transcription of the interviews from the field notes, with reference to the recordings as needed. I captured patterns and themes while I was taking the exhaustive field notes. After each interview, I transferred the notes to computer as soon as possible, either the same day or the next day, so that I would miss neither the words nor the essence of the interview. I checked back to the recorded interview when I had missed writing some of the interviewees' words. This procedure helped me in sorting and arranging data into different types. I analysed all data in this study by hand, using open coding and by computer, using N-vivo software, although the latter method was not extensively used. During coding, data were coded by segmenting sentences based in the

actual language of the participants. That process included compiling the participants' answers to each question in separate documents. That coding process was used to generate a description of the presented themes for analysis and understanding. The description and themes were preceded by descriptive information about each participant in my study that would provide a context for the information that they provided. The interpretation and findings were then presented in the form of a narrative discussion, as noted. This was the procedure taken when writing about lessons learned and personal interpretations that I developed during the study.

Summary

In this third chapter, I have elaborated the study with reference to the research approach, research sampling within a population, instrument, relationship-building and rapport, trustworthiness and triangulation, and ethical considerations, as well as data analysis. In the next chapter, I will report the findings, which comprise the analysis of the five principals' interviews. In the final chapter, I will synthesize the results of the research, note the significance of the study and make recommendations for further research, as well include my final reflections on the study.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

This study examined the different leadership styles or ways that selected school principals used: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. This qualitative case study garnered insights from five selected principals of schools in southwestern Manitoba, Canada.

Participants: Demographics and School Context

The participant principals were selected because they were known to have the leadership skills that had led to the development of inclusive school cultures. The group of principals included four males and one female. These principals were from both elementary and high schools, and from rural and urban schools.

Participant A. B.

A. B. is an experienced educator, having worked in the field of education for 20 years. A. B. worked as a teacher for the first seven years of his career, then moved on to the role of vice principal for the next four years, before spending the last nine years in the role of principal. A. B. has experienced a full scope of school environments as a principal. He worked in three different schools that ranged between K-8 and also high schools, the latter that extended in size from 200 students, 12 teachers, and 12 support staff to 1100 students, 88 teachers, and 50 support staff. These schools have included inner city schools and technical/vocational schools.

Participant C. D.

C. D. has gathered a wealth of knowledge from his 32-year career in education. He was a classroom teacher for 26 years and then has served six years in the role of principal. For this

research, he was interviewed at the end of June in his final year in his current school and was able to reflect back on his experiences in building an inclusive environment. C. D.'s school was a grade 9-12 school with a student population of 218 students that included approximately 60 percent Aboriginal students. The majority of these students came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Currently, the school community is experiencing significant rural-urban migration. As a result, the community is losing population, businesses, and support agencies. C. D. explained that the school has had to become a leader within the community because they "are one of the institutions in town that has not disappeared due to depopulation; where other institutions are struggling, we are still here." C. D. explained that racism is not an issue in the school; students get along well with one another regardless of their racial backgrounds. He complimented the school staff: "We have a strong committed staff, and it's a beautiful thing to be a part of."

Participant E. F.

E. F. has worked in education for 27 years. She was a classroom teacher for ten years before moving into the role of a principal for the last 17 years. Her current school is a K-8 school with a student population of 360 students, 60 teaching staff, and eight educational assistants. E. F. described her school as being isolated physically from other parts of the community and remarked how that seemed to make a difference to the way the community supported the school. She also pointed out that the majority of her students' families could be described as middle class and Anglo-Saxon in background. A few students, who live in public housing within the community, come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Participant G. H.

G. H. has worked in education for nine years. He was a classroom teacher for three years, and then served as a vice-principal for a year before having moved into the role of principal for the last five years. His current school is a K-8 private Christian School with a population of 124 students, 11 teachers, and five educational assistants. He described his school as having a family atmosphere with harmony around values and beliefs, as well as having a caring environment with a high standard of excellence. The school is culturally diverse in the sense that students come from every part of the world, which makes the school unique: “It is very multicultural; we have students from 20 different countries [from within] Europe, Asia, South America, Central America, North America, and Africa.”

Participant I. J.

I. J. has been in the field of education for 24 years. He had 12 years of experience as a classroom teacher before he served as a vice-principal for one year. He has been in the role of principal for the last 12 years. I. J.’s current school is a grade 9-12 school with a student population of 1100 students, 90 teaching staff, and 50 educational assistants. I. J. described his school as being vocational, offering a variety of programming ranging from heavy and light vocational training, as well as academic programming. The school has a wide range of demographics, with students coming from different socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, and with varied learning needs and ability.

This section described the demographics and the school context, as well as the participants in the study. The following section describes the themes that emerged from the data. The data were analyzed based on the five elements in the conceptual framework of the critical inclusive praxis: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. First, I read all the data

from each participant, then I created new documents, one for each interview question posed, thus grouping all the responses of the participants into one document for each successive question. That practice allowed me to concentrate on each section with clarity without floundering in the sheer amount of data. Secondly, I coded the data by hand and then transferred the emerging themes into N-Vivo software for further coding.

Culture

After reviewing their careers in education, the five principals were then asked to describe the culture of their schools, how they went about building an inclusive culture, and the initiatives they have led that promoted inclusion. The themes that emerged from the data within the area of culture include attention to: collaboration and communication; leadership; building positive relationships; a sustainable renewal process; and taking responsibility for students. These themes are supported by the data from the participants so as to develop an understanding on how the selected principals built an inclusive school culture.

Collaboration and Communication

The participants were asked to describe the culture of their schools. All the participants described the school culture as collaborative. Such a culture supports the principals in working together with the teachers, students, parents, and the school community to best serve the students in their care. The participants explained that they make wiser and better decisions when they work together with teachers, students, parents, and the school community in matters that affect the students. E. F. elaborated:

The school culture is a very collaborative culture. The expectation is that we make team decisions, and the community expects to be part of the decision-making in a way that is different from other schools. It is a good thing; it is not negative.

E. F. explained that she encourages and supports collaboration among teams to promote collective decision-making on different issues affecting the school: “I think the biggest thing I have done at this particular school is promoted and supported and actually expected decision-making to be collaborative and with a team. I practice that myself.” E. F. stressed that she makes some less important decisions without any consultation but that she creates teams to solve the most significant issues affecting the school:

I tend to gather teams of people that have some understanding of what a particular issue is and talk through it with them. In the end, often I own the decision myself but if I feel that I have collaborated enough, [and] I usually feel that I have come to a better and wiser decision.

G. H. placed emphasis on partnering with parents as important in building the culture of collaboration. He described his school as an independent Christian school; the school was formed by passionate families who wanted to provide an education for their children that was grounded in Christian values: “I will describe the school culture as...family, very much like a family because the core beliefs are founded in Christian beliefs.” G. H. explained that because of the family-like atmosphere, the school constantly works with the parents to provide support for the students:

We are a very small school. We are constantly doing things together, and we are needing to rely on one another because there is much to do....There is a lot of partnership with the parents:...We include parents in our building to volunteer, and so they are in the library, they are in the resource room, they are in the classroom, and they are in the hallways. They are constantly involved, so it is really that everyone is giving in that family atmosphere.

G. H. believes that the school culture in his building is unique because of that strong partnership with parents. Stoll (1998) confirms and describes school culture as the traditionally communicated pattern of meaning that comprises the values, norms, beliefs, myths, rituals, ceremonies, and customs understood by stakeholders of the school community (p. 10). G. H. would agree: “We always emphasize a strong partnership with parents.... We say we are a triangle. I mean partnership with the parents and the church, but that the partnership with the parents is pivotal, so that affects everything we do.”

Participant A. B. has worked in a full range of school environments as a principal. He explained that in each of these school environments, the cultures were different, noting the size of the school as one variable that affects culture. A. B. explained that he attempts to work on collaboration: “I can say that for the schools I have been in, one of the areas we work on is that collaborative approach.” According to Theoharis and Scanlan (2015), school leadership for equity, change, and diversity necessitates a bold vision, and significant knowledge and skills, as well as the collective efforts of many people (p. 1).

Participant C. D. described the Seven Habits initiative that was followed in the school. (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* was a book written and then a subsequent program developed by Steven Covey, 1989, which was extended to school organization). The initiative allowed teachers and students to take responsibility for one another. It also created a culture of leadership and of taking personal and collective responsibility in and for the school. C. D. explained that the initiative was successful because he encouraged collaboration among the teachers: “I believe the classroom teacher is the backbone of any school system. And we have to listen to what classroom teachers are telling us and be responsive to it.” C. D. described how he got the full support of the teachers before leading the Seven Habits initiative:

When we decided to go ahead with this, it was with the unanimous consent of the teaching staff. We actually held a vote by secret ballot and we made it very clear that unless there was overwhelming support we would not go ahead. The secret ballot [was held] so that we would not make anybody feel badly for not believing in it, but then it [the vote] was unanimous.... We began to teach the kids about the Seven Habits and the inclusivity comes in now and [involves] finding leadership roles for them.

Participants A. B. and I. J. explained that building a culture of collaboration involves lots of communication among stakeholders. Keeping the communication lines open between and among every group in the school involves on-going interactions, transparency in roles, and support for students, as well as the sharing of knowledge from one another. The participants explained:

You cannot rely on a formal structure to move that [i.e., communication] forward, so [the] process becomes more important than the structure, so it is the idea of, “How do we get communication between the team...so that we can best support the students?” That means a lot of conversations as we work through as opposed to formal sit-down meetings. (Participant A. B.)

We did lots of work bringing those two groups together as best we could...[although] we have lots of work still to do. I mean to continue the work of maintaining open communication lines between classroom teachers and student services and staff, and drawing from each other’s expertise and acknowledging each other’s expertise and being sensitive to each other’s needs or situations, so that there is no energy lost in human conflict, but rather that all energy is spent helping kids. (Participant I. J.)

Some of the participants described SOS as the system of communication used to work with all groups in the school. The SOS is a system whereby the teacher can click on an icon and send a message that a particular student needs support right away. Participant A. B. explained that the SOS system was set up to enhance communication among staff and students, to listen to concerns of every group, and to enhance information: “The SOS was there to ensure that we have accurate information...; that is part of what we really espouse to our staff, but culturally, it is to also create that inclusiveness, to bring everybody on the same page.” The participants believe that this system creates a way to work with every group and to help problem-solve any issue that might arise in the school:

We created an SOS system and the SOS system looks like [this]: every adult in the building has that icon, they just click on the student that they want, that they have that concern about; it is like raising your hand [in that your message] automatically goes to the case manager. The case manager goes in with a very tight timeline and like that day, [or] if they are away, [then] the next day, the case manager will talk to the teacher, gather information, like a triage type of approach. All of those structures are getting everyone involved and bringing clarity to what their roles are and bringing values to their piece. (Participant A. B.)

We had a system that we set up, a communication system that we set up, I mean it was a work in progress,...one that they called [the] SOS system, where SOS means the teacher is sending an SOS to the student service team saying, “I need help with these [individual] students because they are in need of whatever, and...that is the first step [that] opens up the communication line. They just started [that] here last year, kind of mid-way through the year, so I am very excited about getting on that and continuing forward with it and

seeing how we can improve it and continue the work of bringing all groups together.

(Participant I. J.)

The literature provides support for the participants' data. Deal and Peterson (1990) explain that school leaders can nudge the process of shaping culture through their actions, conversations, decisions, and public announcements (p. 202). Through their words, their nonverbal messages, their actions, and their accomplishments, administrators shape school culture (Barth, 2002b). Schein (1992) confirms that through myriad of daily interactions, careful reflections, and conscious efforts, school leaders can shape positive cultures of schools.

Leadership

The participants explained that building an inclusive school culture starts with the leaders in the school. The principal plays a significant role in building and shaping the culture of the school. Peterson and Deal (2009) affirmed that strong, positive school cultures do not just happen; they are built and shaped by those who work in and attend the school and by the formal and informal leaders who encourage and reinforce values and traditions. The interviewed principals described that school leaders must strengthen values and traditions to create and nourish a strong, positive culture that fosters students' learning:

Building a positive and inclusive culture; I think it does start with leadership.... We emphasize the value of children and we really believe that children are precious when they walk into our schools, that we are there to care for them as members of society and to honour them. (Participant G. H.)

Schein (1992) explains that organizational cultures are created in part by leaders and that some of the most vital duties of leadership are the creation, the management, and sometimes the obliteration of culture (p. 6). Participant C. D. was a strong advocate for servant leadership, as

also emphasized by Sergiovanni (1995). C. D. explained that creating a culture where every student takes on leadership responsibility was at the forefront of his school. He described that teachers and students were taking on responsibility for one another and taking on different leadership roles in the school: “I will say it’s a really quickly developing culture of leadership and [that includes] taking responsibility for oneself.” Participant C. D. went on to explain:

I guess, [for] myself, I am a great believer in servant leadership. My job is to serve, not always to be the strong leader who tells everyone what to do.... We want to find a way next year for every kid to have a leadership role and we will display [the student examples]. We are going to put up a display [about each student] and say, “I am the leader of this or I am a leader of that.” [That is] positive and inclusive.... We are always here for the kids.

Participant G. H. added:

We really take a mindset of servant, so we are there to serve. We are professional educators, but we are there to serve, so that goes further than what anyone can imagine, just because you are constantly putting yourself in a position of humility. Humility is not self-deprecation or anything demeaning, but it is a relational disposition towards the person beside you and the child that you are teaching, and the authority above you as well.

The participants explained that the principal is key in building a strong positive school culture. They described modeling as one of the ways by which school principals build this kind of environment. Huber (2004) affirmed that school leadership serves as an appropriate standard for staff and students by modeling desired dispositions and actions, and enhancing others’ beliefs about their own capacities and their enthusiasm for change (p. 5). Peterson and Deal (1990)

outlined eight symbolic roles that school leaders assume in shaping a school culture of responsible shared leadership. They explained that one of those roles was to be a *model*. School leaders affirm values through modelling behaviour, attention, and routines (p. 207). I. J. stressed his approach when saying, “I believe strongly in modeling. If I am going to talk the talk, I have to walk the walk”. G. H. agreed:

You are constantly modelling what you want to see or striving to model what you want to see in the children because you want them to know all those things you want for them...cognitively, and just in becoming a critical thinker, and you know, 21st century problem solvers.... [Students should see modelled] the people that you want them to become, like those people in society who love learning and who can learn in whatever context they are in. I think that is huge and just to have that positive attitude that nothing will faze them, that they are confident in who they are; they are confident in who God is, and that they walk in a position of just never giving up.

Participant I. J. also stressed that modeling is important in building a positive school culture. He gave an example of how he encouraged exemplary dispositions in his school:

Modeling is huge; I have to put that as number one. So, here is an example, I mean, I have been told several times since I have been here, that it is only been a month of school and how impressed people are with me knowing people's names. And I mean the biggest work that I have [yet] to do is learning all kids' names, and I am not sure that is achievable or not, but if you want to build positive culture in a building, everybody is referred to by name, everybody knows that they are a person, and everybody feels that belong as a result of that. That makes me think about this school; I mean I recognise that

it is big, but that should not be an excuse for not going to that effort to make sure that we know each other here.

Participant I. J. also considered sincerity as important in building a positive school culture, while also noting that setting a direction for the school and supporting the vision is vital. Leaders help to create shared meanings and understandings to support the school's vision. Competent leaders' focus their attention on key aspects of the school's vision and communicate the vision clearly and strongly (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 4). I. J. further explained that being honest and transparent in one's communication is important in building a strong positive culture and school vision:

I also believe in being transparent. I actually had two different people come to me following Friday's PD session and thank me for being transparent. I am not sure exactly what their definition of it is, but to be completely up front and to be honest with people at all times with regard to the functioning of the school and the decisions that have to be made; those are words that I have lived by in this job and hopefully I have avoided significant conflict in my job as a result of that [approach to leadership].

All the participants established that the leadership of the principal is key in building an inclusive school culture. Peterson and Deal (2009) explain that sturdy, positive cultures that are rich in purpose, and abundant in tradition and meaning, are supported and nourished by school principals who deliberately and unconsciously reinforce the best that the school and its staff can become (p. 8). Ryan (2003) explains that principals need to approach leadership not as sets of skills or activities associated with one individual, but as a communal process involving people working together for just, democratic, and inclusive schools and communities (p. 171).

All the participants noted their belief that building inclusive school cultures starts with the leadership of the school. The participants explained that by varying leadership approaches depending on the situation, leaders build a culture where everyone succeeds. The participants identified servant leadership and modeling as the styles they utilized in working with everyone while building a positive and inclusive school culture that was also supported by strong relationships.

Building Positive Relationships

The participants explained that a positive, inclusive school culture begins with building positive relationships, which includes being seen in the school as someone who is positive. As C. D. noted:

It starts with a lot of smiling. It starts with being happy! It is very hard to be positive around others who are negative. And I believe it is incredibly important for the principal and school administration to not just be positive but to be seen to be positive. Let's just start simply with smiling.

Participant C. D. encouraged the teachers and other staff to build strong and positive relationships with students in the building and ensured that the teachers spent time outside of instruction with their students. He also encouraged consistency in this manner. He believed this approach builds a positive inclusive culture, as he always took time to greet the students:

Same thing with teachers; they don't do it every day; it is not perfectly consistent, but we ask our teachers to greet their kids, to be there in their classroom when the kids arrive and not have the kids come in to a locked door and you show up later and let them in. It shouldn't work that way. We want our kids to know that they are welcome.... We try to make sure that the building is a positive place to be.

All the participants supported that building positive relationships with staff and students, as well as with parents, is key to an inclusive school culture. Participant A. B. explained that positive relationships must be built among all adults in the building and among students, as well as between adults and students in the school: “We say that [collaboration] is built on the foundation of relationships, so we need to establish the relationships among the adults and also the relationships between the adults and the students.” A. B. described how he went about building positive relationships among the adults in the school:

So, [at] the very first meeting in our new building, I had everybody just introduce themselves, what they taught, where they are located in the building, and something about themselves.... There are staff that came and said that it was the first time they [had done that], that they actually all work in the same building but they didn't know people around them.... Other times you can do things if you have smaller buildings that again build more collegiality and collaboration but again, it is always [with a] focus on the school culture. We might have brought lunch in on a PD day and eaten together around that versus [having a] staff party.... We focus on trying to build that [kind of] collaboration because it is a different process.

Participant G. H. described how he developed an initiative that built a positive and inclusive culture based on relationships in the school building. He designed a reward system for students who are seen as acting in a positive way in and outside of the classroom. He encouraged selection from the teachers as well as from the other students. The selected students have an opportunity to dine with the principal. As a result, the positive relationships among everyone in the school promoted a positive and inclusive school culture:

[That initiative was meant] just to reward them, just kind of to say like, “This is how we want you to act and whether there are people watching you or not, this is the goal for how you should act or speak. But if we do see or hear you acting or speaking positively and serving in that sense, then your name goes in the draw and you can end up having lunch with the principal.” And I think it really builds and promotes an inclusive culture [built on relationships].

Participant E. F. also stressed the importance of relationships as well, particularly with oneself: “I personally have to know myself very well around my values, my beliefs about the education of students. I need to be very clear within myself and then I believe it is all about relationships from there.” E. F. added that:

You [also] need to develop relationships with the entire community—and that includes staff, students, and parents—that are positive, collaborative, and supportive. You need to be a good listener; people need to feel heard, so I think that is sort of the beginning of it, knowing yourself well and then being able to build positive relationships [with others].

Building positive relationships is important in creating an inclusive school culture in an atmosphere that is positive, supportive, and collaborative. All of the participants explained that they used this approach to encourage everyone to take responsibility for supporting one another.

Taking Responsibility for Students

Some of the participants explained that there is a major shift in the culture of their schools from previous times, where everyone in the school is currently taking responsibility for one another: the teachers taking responsibility for students, as well as students taking responsibility for themselves. “Kids are taking ownership and responsibility,” as participant C. D. noted. He described that the changes that took place in the school were as a result of the

Seven Habits initiative that was developed in the school: “We are seeing already the beginning of a major change where students are taking on more responsibility for themselves, the teachers are taking full responsibility for themselves, and they are really learning to work together, basically living the Seven Habits.” C. D. explained that the school had been experiencing a vast amount of absenteeism, but when the Seven Habits initiative was combined with the attendance policy in the school, students started taking more responsibility for attending school:

We have seen a huge drop in absenteeism; it’s been hugely successful but throughout that we have been talking to kids saying, “You don’t get to blame your parents if you don’t come to school; you don’t get to blame the school: you are responsible for coming to school.” At the same time, we are taking responsibility for it too, because it’s a joint effort. If I had to describe the school culture now, I will say it’s really quickly developing into a culture of leadership while taking responsibility for oneself.

Participant I. J. described that there are different programs designed to meet the needs of students in the school. These programs are developed to provide support for all the students in the building. As a result, the culture of the school illustrates a high degree of care for students:

There is a breakfast program; there is a lunch program; and there is lots of programming that is offered to students here for all the needs, all the concerns, and all the challenges that they have. So I mean there is certainly a high degree of care in this building based on the programs that are offered.

Participant G. H. also emphasized a high degree of care for the students in the school. He explained that everyone in the school worked hard, beyond what is expected of them, to contribute to the success of the students. The culture of the school emphasized a high standard of

excellence in terms of academics and helping the students to grow and to become responsible members of the society. As G. H. noted,

Everyone gives and gives and goes beyond their job description, so [there is] a high standard of excellence and trying to emphasize academics, and also growing these children to contribute to society and to grow to love Jesus; I mean, that is one aspect that makes us unique.

Peterson and Deal (2009) emphasise that, “School culture impacts what people pay attention to (focus), how they identify with the school (commitment), how hard they work (motivation), and the degree to which they achieve their goals (productivity)” (p. 10). A school’s culture guides the focus of daily behaviour and increases attention to what is considered important and valued (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 2009). Such cultures may change over time, but they will incorporate a process of positive and sustainable renewal.

Sustainable Renewal Process

Participant A. B. described the sustainable renewal process as the concept he uses in building a strong positive and inclusive school culture. That concept referred to change processes that can evolve and be sustained during the process of evolution so that they can become a part of the culture of the school. The process involves moving the state of affairs of the school from where it was, which may have worked in the past, and taking it to an improved state for present and future needs. According to A. B., this concept entails five stages:

The process that I use is sustainable renewal. So everything we do in the school culture is really about the renewal process. Taking where we are at, and then building this concept of renewal, the idea of culture versus structures, Response to Intervention [a behavioural and/or learning intervention approach], strategic abandonment, growth versus fixed

mindset, and form follows function. So that is the process I use. It is not a recipe; it is not like you do this and this, and then you get that, but it is very much the same process, [as it involves] taking where we are at culturally and then moving it forward.

Participant A. B. further explained that the concept of culture versus structure is important in building an inclusive school culture. He clarified that culture requires good structures but that structures will not lead to re-culturing unless there is a good change process. He believes structures alone are not effective in solving the problems that we have in the field of education: “I think we rely too heavily on structures and that doesn’t solve anything. You cannot rely on a formal structure to move that [change] forward, so process becomes more important than the structure.” He added:

So a lot of the problem when people try to create inclusive cultures is that they rely on structures to do it rather than process. [But] we can never structure our way out of a problem; structures will not lead to re-culturing, but re-culturing [still] requires [good] structures to support it.

A. B. also referred to an initiative entitled Response to Intervention. According to the Response to Intervention Action Network (RTI) (2015), Response to Intervention “is a multi- tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behaviour needs” (para. 1). As an application to illustrate his position, A. B. described that the Response to Intervention process is all about acknowledging the needs of the students and providing support, as well as monitoring them in the school:

When I speak of Response to Intervention, [although] we see a wide variety [of ways] of how people interpret it, it is really about recognizing what students’ needs are. Everything can be viewed on a continuum and our response is really about both the

intervention and the monitoring. The more intensive the support, the tighter the monitoring.

A. B. also explained that the sustainable renewal process is about building capacity. He described that the process has helped in building a strong and inclusive school culture in the schools in which he has worked. Peterson and Deal (1990) affirm that every behaviour or trait of school leaders does have symbolic meaning that can help reaffirm, redirect, or damage cultural values and beliefs within the school. The authors further explain that school leaders, in their role, must act as sentries to know which aspects of culture to shape, which to respect, and which to change. Thus, the shaping, enhancement, and maintenance of a school's culture are the primary responsibility of the school's leader.

The school principal is key in creating a positive inclusive culture in the school. They employ different approaches to build a strong positive school climate. The leadership of the school principal is charged with the responsibility of creating an atmosphere that is supportive of everyone and of crafting an environment where everyone can thrive. School leaders work together with everyone, including staff, students, and parents to communicate meanings and to reinforce traditions and values that nourish a strong positive school culture. The school leader can reinforce values through behaviour, attention, and routines that are needed for positive, emancipatory change in the school.

Change

A knowledge of the importance of school culture leads toward a greater understanding of how to approach change initiatives in a school. The principals were asked to describe a change initiative that took place in their schools and how they had led the change with reference to school culture, inclusion, and engaged voice. The themes that emerged from the data included:

approaches to leadership; teachers' and parents' involvement and support; attention to concerns; and resistance to change. The themes are supported with data from the principals that provide a clear understanding on how they led the changes in their schools.

Approaches to Leadership

As Barth (2004) pointed out, school cultures cannot be changed from without; they must be changed from within (p. 162). As a result, the principal is crucial to the process of change, particularly to changes in the underlying culture of the school (Fullan, 2007). Participant C. D. explained that the leadership of the principal was key in leading a change initiative in his school. The initiative was around student assessment in the division and C. D. described how he was influential in moving the initiative forward:

In the second year that I was here, we started to look at assessment and started to read more about assessment. I started my first twitter account; I started to follow people who are instrumental in thinking about assessment and I joined [them]. It is a Canadian group called Canadian Assessment for Learning Network (CAFLN) and that includes some of the people here in North America who are central in the thinking about assessment. So, that change initiative [in our school] really began with me; nobody else was petitioning for it but I started to think about...some of the things we do that are not just sustainable. C. D. explained how he engaged in dialogue with the teachers in leading the change initiative. He held several meetings with the teachers before the initiative started. With that approach, he was able to ensure that all the teachers supported the initiative before it started. Fullan and Hargreaves (2013) describe how teacher development and successful implementation of innovation are connected. The authors observe that effective implementation consists of

alterations in curriculum materials, instructional practices and behaviours, and beliefs and understanding on the part of teachers involved in a given innovation. C. D. would agree:

Like I said, particularly with staff, I didn't tell them we had to do it; they came to that conclusion. All I had to do was crystalize it for them. Once I was convinced just from the conversation we had that they were ready for it, I looked at them in a particular staff meeting and said, "I think we need to go ahead and do this. I know it is going to be crazy. We have talked a lot about all the reservations, but I think we need to do this."

C. D. described how he worked with the teachers to find solutions to the challenges with assessment in the school. He used different approaches to bring about the successful change in the school, approaches that he believed supported the initiative:

I started to bring it up with the teachers in the staff meeting; that is where the conversation started was with the teachers and I brought readings to them, DVDs, photocopied articles, chapters out of this book that showed how you can do assessment differently and over the course of a year, we eventually said, "We're going to do something."

Participants A. B. and E. F. described that a change initiative has to be on-going in the field of education and that the leadership of the principal is key in directing any type of change in the school. A. B. explained that the change initiative must aim at improving the present condition of the school:

We [must] continually look at change but it is not change for the sake of change; it is the strategic abandonment; it is that whole culture of improving. Find out where you are, where do you want to be, always have a clear vision, and [articulate] the non-negotiables and our responsibility that all students are improving.

E. F. added:

Change initiatives are happening all the time in schools. I mean if you are not involved in a change initiative, I don't even know how you are existing in the school. So they are happening all the time. The current one for us is, again, multiage classrooms. So that has been a big change. But I really think change initiatives need to be continuous in ...education; they really need to be continuous.

Change is an ever-present feature in organizations and has become a constant in school life.

Evans, 1996; Kin & Kareem 2015; Peterson & Deal, 1998). Thus, the process of change is necessary if an organization is to continually improve. The school principal is responsible to set out and mobilize the search for solutions to challenges and to move the school in an envisioned direction. However, the support and input of staff and parents are crucial.

Teachers' and Parents' Involvement and Support

All the participants explained that teachers' and parents' involvement and support are keys to the success of any change initiative. C. D. described how the teachers were involved and how they used their expertise to support the innovation that was led in the school:

The change initiative came because, first of all, like I said the classroom teacher is a backbone [of any change]; they needed to be convinced [of the worth of the suggested change]. I didn't order them to do anything, just kept making the case and the staff meetings are mine [to oversee]; you know they can bring up their own things too but I lead the staff meetings. I say, "I would like you to read this and talk about that," and they came around, "Yes, we need to do this." I sold it, but I also made the case for them, that it is going to be a lot of work upfront....Now it's pay off at the end and teachers use their professional judgement....[But initially] we had to sell it to parents and students.

According to Sergiovanni (1991), sometimes the decision to embark on school improvement efforts develop from a teacher or group of teachers, but often such efforts result from deliberate action by the school principal, as C. D. noted in his example. Similarly, Calabrese (2002) notes that the consciousness of the need for change is the starting point of the change process. Participant A. B. described the English as an Additional Language Program initiative that was developed in the school. He explained that the support that he received from the teachers led to the success of the program:

I said [to teachers that] that if you say what is working really is working, then we are going to go forward, but ask questions around that [initiative]; look at the data. What happened was that, or the result [of that questioning], was that we developed a change in programming.... I don't know if I have the numbers right but of 98 students, 40 of them had graduated or moved into the mainstream programming, where in previous years we didn't have that type of success, not even close. So it is overwhelmingly positive and shows direct results because we were clear in our outcomes; we had everybody involved in the development of that [initiative]. It wasn't led by one or two people, but there was collaboration.

Calabrese (2002) identifies four ways that school principals can use to promote change: encouraging participation, providing ongoing professional development, encouraging failure, and story sharing (pp. 79-80). Kotter (1998) describes two skills leaders can use to understand the change process: building coalitions and creating a vision (p. 30). The author explains that school leaders must win the support of staff for any successful change initiative to occur. Participant G. H. explained how they changed the schedule of parent supervisors to provide more supervision both

inside and outside the school at lunch and recess. As a result, teachers felt supported and relieved, and then focused on other important aspects in the school:

There is a lot of parent involvement, and so we used to have three parents in the building over the lunch hour to supervise the eight classrooms. They will be in and out but we didn't feel like it was adequate enough. They would move outside and it would be the [same] parents supervising the students outside at recess [as inside] and we didn't feel it was consistent enough or good enough in general and so we made some changes. It is partially to give teachers more of a break at recess, or lunch, so that the early years teacher could actually leave their class at 12 o'clock to get a lunch, instead of trying to leave at 12:25 after all the students are outside, and they are left with maybe 15 to 20 minutes of a lunch break. So that was the kind of change initiative.

Participant E. F. also added that leading change requires building connections with everyone involved in the change process and, by doing so, you win their support: "It requires you to approach change on all different fronts. You need a differentiated approach. Leading change is all about relationships." Hargreaves (1997) affirms that a central task in creating cultures of educational change involves developing more collaborative working relationships between principals and teachers, and among teachers themselves. Fullan (1991) encourages the principals to talk with teachers about their views and also to critically reflect on their own positions, particularly by modelling that critical praxis themselves, and thus becoming more aware of areas of concern.

Attention to Concerns

Fullan (2007) points to the importance of an empowering and collaborative work environment, an environment where teachers believe they are important and where their voices

are heard (p. 241). Four of the participants explained that listening to the teachers and the school community with reference to their grievances, as well as acting on those concerns, had led to the success of the change initiatives in their schools. Participant C. D. explained:

I knew we had to do this [start the initiative], and I got the teachers to understand that first. I taught for 26 years, and I knew what their reservations were going to be. I had lived the life of a teacher, and they knew that. I listened to the teachers when they said they are ready to do it [start the initiative].

The initiative C. D. led in his school thus was actually started by the teachers. He listens to his teachers whenever they come up with a new idea or are ready to adopt a suggested initiative, as he believes teachers are the “backbone” of any change initiatives in the school.

Participant E. F. explained that people react to change initiatives differently. E. F. clarified that you have to provide additional opportunities for the individuals who are slower to respond to the change. That includes listening to their fears and allowing time for them to recognise that the need for the change is vital:

Also recognizing that everybody responds to change differently, so you have to allow those people that are slower to respond; you have to work with the people that are into it, and focus on them, but don't give up on the others. Let them be brought along, you know, so that [involves] a lot of working with individuals, listening, providing all the support that you can.

Participant I. J. also described how he provided opportunities for teachers to express their concerns and how he provided the necessary support for engaged voice:

And we needed to do exactly that, we needed to provide opportunities. We provided opportunities for voice: ...hearing their concerns, being able to share their concerns, and at the same time we acted on those concerns and that made everyone feel supported.

Participant G. H. reasoned that change affects all stakeholders and explained that to offset anxiety that the school sent lots of letters home to parents: “It is [often a] bigger change than you realize for everyone, and so there were lots of letters that went home just for communication [about the new change].”

Fullan (2007) explains that change involves a dynamic, open, self-examining, interactive structure. The author describes that one way that change can be implemented in schools is through the pathways around which they are organised. Successful structures provide stakeholders with an opportunity to work together, often in an inter-disciplinary fashion, to help meet the needs of the students (Fullan, 2007). However, as participant A. B. noted, good structures still need to be accompanied by attention to function; otherwise, resistance to change may persist from teachers and from parents.

Resistance to Change

According to Zimmerman (2006), the first step in overcoming resistance to change in schools is to determine who is struggling with the change and why (p. 239). The author explains that school leaders need to take a systemic perspective that recognizes a teacher’s attitudes and behaviours within the context of the social norms of the school. Attitudes towards change are a variable that have been linked to staff acceptance of new procedures (Zimmerman, 2006). Three of the participants explained that they experienced some resistance in the process of their elaborated change initiative. Participant E. F. identified that fear was a major barrier to her staffs’

acceptance to the new initiative. She explained that recognising this barrier was the first step in overcoming it:

People who resist change, you always have to remember, no matter what they say, that it is all about fear. It is all about fear always. They can say it is because we did that 10 years ago and it didn't work; they can say I have got too much work to do; they can say all they want but at the bottom line, it is fear. And if you keep that in your mind, it helps you to be less fed up with them.

Participant C. D. experienced some resistance from the parents and students before they finally accepted the change initiative. He explained how he used different procedures to persuade parents and students to accept the initiative:

There was a lot of objection because parents and kids [often] don't like change and we didn't have the time like we do in staff meetings; but again I created the flyers and the presentation and met with kids and explained it to them, and we met with parents and explained it to them. Now most people will say, "Why would you ever do it the other way?" But that has taken all of the last two years to convince them; but we are there [now].

Participant A. B. also encountered some objections in moving everyone towards supporting and accepting the needed change. A. B. explained that they got the support from everyone when the school started witnessing a huge success as a result of the initiative:

There was some resistance around that [initiative], but again people supported it when they start seeing successes. It was all built on building the capacity of the people in that [initiative], so teachers are going through and making sure that they have the skills

around guiding reading centers, all of those pieces. It sounds repetitive but it is the process.

Participant E. F. explained how she created an environment that is supportive of the needed changes in her school:

I use the word pressure and support because it cannot all be about talking nicely in the office and [then] you still are not doing anything you are supposed to do.... There comes a time when I have had to say to people, "This is the way it is." I have had to say to people, "This is the direction of the school." They have to know what you stand for, and know that there are things that are non-negotiable.

Participant A. B. explained how he involved everyone in the change process in order to overcome the barrier of the English as an Additional Language changes in the school. He explained that this approach involved creating an environment that was supportive of the desired change, involving those participating in the change, and re-educating stakeholders in the change process (See Calabrese, 2002, pp. 30-31), as well as building the capacity for the needed change:

We should not allow language to be a barrier [to learning]. We need to remove that barrier.... What is the way to remove that barrier? Building capacity and building structures to support that process, and that is going to be our Response to Intervention; it is going to be on the continuum of universal to highly individualized [support], and that we have a responsibility to monitor as tightly on the intervention [to make it] parallel.

School principals, as agents of change, must address aspects of resistance to change. Kotter (1998) explains that successful school leaders must work with staff to figure out the challenges and what to do to resolve those issues. Zimmerman (2006) suggests that school principals can encourage change readiness by being sensitive to teachers' potential change

barriers. She goes on to say that school principals should model risk-taking and a willingness to change in order to earn teachers' trust (p. 241). Kotter (1998) warns that leaders need to reduce negative emotions that slow and suppress the needed changes and enhance positive feelings that motivate constructive actions (p. 8). Attention to leadership is crucial.

Leadership

The need to understand how leadership affects organizations and how leaders use different approaches to build a culture where everyone feels valued, accepted, and included has intensified the quest for knowledge in this area. The five principals were asked to describe their leadership styles in practice, their personal philosophy of leadership, what they thought that their teachers perceived as their leadership style, and challenging situations they used their leadership styles to address. The themes that emerged from the data included: decisive approach; supportive style; visible and inviting approach; servant leadership; and value-based situational leadership. These themes are buttressed by data from the interviewees to intensify our knowledge on how these principals lead and affect their schools, particularly how they demonstrated the critical, inclusive praxis approach.

Decisive Approach

The participants were asked to describe how the teachers in their schools would perceive their leadership styles. Some of the participants explained that their teachers would describe them as decisive. Participant C. D. explained that making firm decisions is one of his attributes, but he prefers that teachers make decisions that concern them. Harris (2005) and Huber (2004) affirm and explain that school leaders enhance the performance of their schools by providing opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is crucial. C. D. elaborated:

One thing I am good at is making decisions. I can make decisions and I can stick to them, but I want those decisions to be based on what is good for [the school], not what serves me. But I think [the staff] would describe me as decisive. I think they would say that I have a clear planning mind, beginning with the end in mind.

Participant I. J. added that the teachers would agree that he involves them in decision-making on issues affecting the school: “[I am] willing to consider shared decision-making, absolutely; Decision-making based on research.” Participant E. F. also expressed that the teachers would describe her as finding solutions to issues in the school by collaborating with the stakeholders: “I think people would describe me as solution focused. I think they would tell you that I am all about finding positive solutions, collaborating, and compromising.” A. B explained that the teachers in his school would describe him as someone who focuses on the process of decision-making that leads to clarity in roles of all stakeholders. “So I would believe that they would say that I strive for clarity, and that I focus on the process [of decision-making].”

According to Davies and Davies (2005), and Harris and Lambert (2003), sharing leadership responsibilities helps schools to become more inclusive and self-reflective because more people are exchanging important information, discussing issues, and making decisions collaboratively. Mulford (2003) affirms that student outcomes are likely to improve where leadership resources are shared throughout the school community and teachers are empowered in the areas important to them (p. 38). This kind of environment helps the leader to provide support for teachers to contribute to important issues relating to them in the school.

Supportive Style

Four of the participants explained that they provided support for their teachers and students on matters affecting them in the school. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) explain that

school leaders provide intellectual stimulation by encouraging reflection and challenging their staff to examine assumptions about their work and to reconsider how it can be performed (p. 4).

The authors explain that school leaders provide individualized support by showing respect for staff and concern about their feelings and needs. Participant C. D. explained that often teachers are faced with challenges and/or conflict in the school and that he worked hard to provide the support needed for the teachers to succeed. Sometimes the conflict might be with students or parents, but he supported the teachers as they worked through those challenges. He ensured that everyone involved in the conflict was pleased with the outcome:

I am very supportive because teachers will find themselves in many different situations, with parents or students, and occasionally with each other but not very often. My job is to support them, to back them up, and I believe in that, and because we believe in a win-win philosophy backing them up doesn't have to mean somebody else loses. It is all about saving face for everyone and making sure everybody walks away happy.

Participant G. H. also elaborated how he provided support and how he helped teachers succeed in the school:

I do my best to support the teachers, to get them what they feel they need to do the best job they can, to be [present] in their classrooms, to know their students, to know them [i.e., me knowing the teachers], to show that I care about them. It has to be through action; talk needs to be backed up with action. And sometimes, it is just to stop in the morning to say, "Good morning, how are you?" and at the end of the day, "How was your day?" It is just those little things, that they know that I care. When I ask what they need, and they tell me that, and then it is going to be followed up. And I do my best to get them what they need.

Participant E. F. also explained that the teachers would describe her as supportive for the students under her care: “I think they would tell you that my leadership style would be built on a very strong advocacy for children.” I. J. explained that he provided support for the staff by helping them to discover who they are and that he encourages individual input, and at the same time he provides support for their areas of need. His approach involves “finding the strength in all and celebrating the strength in all team members while also attempting to address the challenges [felt by] all team members.” Participant I. J. encouraged the teachers to be reflective in whatever they do and he also demonstrated the behaviours he expected to see:

I have to go back to modeling. I would hope that if you ask, “What is my leadership style?” the response would be, “He leads by example.” I would hope that [their response] would be, leading by example [and being] reflective.

School leadership serves as an appropriate example for staff by modeling desired dispositions and actions, and enhancing others’ beliefs about their own abilities and their zeal for change (Huber, 2004, p. 5). Leaders provide encouragement and structures to promote change, as well as opportunities for individual learning and appropriate means for monitoring progress toward improvement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In order for such modelling to be effective, principals need to be seen and to be inviting in their leadership approach.

Visible and Inviting Approach

According to Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphey (1995), leadership is a social process shared among all members of a group (p. 43). The authors elaborate that leadership is not restricted to the influence exercised by someone in a particular position or role, and that followers are part of the leadership development, as well. Three of the participants explained that the teachers in their school would agree that they, as principals, are approachable and visible so as to support them in

their work as teacher leaders. Participant A. B. explained that he is always available to hear teachers' concerns, and that he encourages teachers by recognizing their input and placing them in leadership positions in the school:

I believe that they would say that I strive for clarity and that I am approachable. I am on the surface humble. I don't think people would know that I don't like the limelight. In fact, I shy away from that and I try to position teachers into those spots, again to build capacity.

Participant I. J. added that the teachers would describe him as "visible, which is huge for a lot of them, [and also] approachable." Participant C. D. described how he used different techniques that encouraged teachers to communicate their worries and anxieties. C. D. explained that he engages teachers by sharing his own stories, using a humorous approach; as a result, they see him as someone with whom they can share their concerns:

I think they will say that I have a sense of humor. I do love to laugh, and I am afraid they would say that I love to tell stories and I do. I can go on and on and I tell them just to tell me to stop talking after a while.

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) explain that leadership approaches shape organizations, which then produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that members attach to organizational events (p. 39). Bogler (2001) confirms that school principals who are successful in their roles have used a wide range of methods to influence and motivate their staffs to bring about changes in their school culture. Effective leaders who are open and inviting provide opportunities for the success of the school community, as they recognize that they are there to serve the needs of others.

Servant Leadership

The participants were asked to describe their leadership styles in practice. One theme that emerged from the data was servant leadership. Greenleaf (1995) explains that a servant leader is servant first (p. 22). He elaborates that this form of leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. After making that choice, one may come to aspire to lead. Greenleaf (1995) further explains that this form of leadership is manifested in the choice taken by the servant to make sure that other people's highest needs are being served. Three of the participants described their leadership styles in practice as servant leadership. Participant C. D. explained that he provides support for the teachers by ensuring that their needs are being served. C. D. affirmed that teachers are crucial to the success of any school and he believes that being attentive to teachers' needs allows them to be successful with the students under their care:

I would say that I try very hard to be sensitive to what they [teachers] need....I believe the classroom teachers are the backbone, resource teachers serve classroom teachers, administration serves classroom teachers, the secretary serves classroom teachers, and so on. They [the staff] are the ones with the responsibility for leading kids every day. We better make sure that we serve them.

In practice, participant C. D. described that he strives to ensure that teachers feel comfortable and inspired to be at their best. "I ask myself every day, 'How can I make their lives better? How can I help them to feel more supported? How can I help to nudge them when they need a nudge?'" This practice was built around C. D.'s personal philosophy of leadership: "To lead in any way necessary and to love people by serving them." He provided an example of a challenging situation in which he used his leadership style to his advantage. He explained that absenteeism was a huge challenge confronting the school and that this challenge was reduced

drastically by recognizing the needs of the students and ensuring that the school met all their needs. “Part of servant leadership is not seeing yourself as the head, [the] strong leader, but serving people.” C. D. explained that as he serves the student needs, he is making sure they are in school by removing obstacles to their regular attendance. As a result, parents are also relieved of anxiety.

Participant G. H. described his leadership style in practice as helping people to achieve their potential through communicating with language that is filled with encouragement. G. H. does this by having a one-to-one conversation with individuals:

I would describe it [my leadership style] as servant leadership. [It is] very personable, [I] try to communicate a lot. I try to have as much face-to-face conversation as I can, whether it is informal or formal. I try to keep [a] sense of humor. I try to inspire people by constantly having a perspective and a talk that is filled with hope, that is filled with perseverance, [and] that is filled with a caring tone and kindness.

G. H. also explained that his leadership style in practice would be to help people to achieve their potential while exchanging ideas and inspiring one another to a higher level of motivation. G. H.’s leadership style in practice is supported by his personal philosophy of leadership: “To be a good leader, you have to be a good follower.” As well, G. H. explained that his personal philosophy embraces empathy for people and that it emanates from his personal beliefs in how Jesus Christ served:

I want to be someone who can mobilize a group of people with the zeal and passion that I carry, understanding that they have different gifts, passions, and talents that I do not have. So that reciprocity, where you give and they give and so that no one ends up being burnt

out because you are constantly being ‘filled up’ by someone, and so I try to do that. It is serving but it is not servant; it is servant leadership.

G. H. shared a challenging situation that provided an example of his leadership style. He explained that a recent challenge involved listening to different stakeholders and deliberating on an issue affecting the school from a collective approach, and then moving ahead to make a sound decision:

I think just that balance of communicating clearly worked, while we are having conversation and explaining what I wanted to accomplish while still hearing everyone; but the challenging part was the good arguments, like when you hear good arguments from [the stakeholders] on both sides of things. So I think my leadership [style] came through just in my ability to be patient and my ability to listen for [a] very long time on an issue, [with] lots of communication but still making a decision.

Participant A. B. also explained that his leadership style is built around some aspects of servant leadership. He described his leadership style in practice as being humble and confident. He explained that you need to embrace your core values and beliefs when you are dealing with issues:

You need to be humble but you need to be extremely confident inside. You don’t want to be second guessing yourself with those challenging situations but you never want to expose that confidence other than in how you handle the situations.

A. B. explained that his personal philosophy of leadership is manifested from the sustainable renewal process and that everything he does as a leader comes down to that concept. He described an example of a challenging situation that he handled that illustrates his leadership style by explaining how he designed interventions for at-risk youth. He clarified how he engaged

in conversation with multiple participants who were involved and identified the cause of the problems, and then he designed an intervention based on the needs of students:

Once you have the people identified, and then engage in dialogue to get to where the problems are, as opposed to [you] identifying the problems for everyone,...[then you] come to a collective understanding of what is happening, and then looking at the issues, coming up with a process to [address] that challenge but making sure the process actually solves what we trying to do; that is to say, form follows function.

Greenleaf (1995) explains that servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that while serving others is important, the most crucial aspect involves serving the values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community (p. 22). Servant leadership is the approach by which leaders develop the necessary legitimacy to lead (Sergiovanni, 2007). Thus, school leaders must be sensitive to the needs of everyone in the school and provide support for them to succeed. That approach recognizes the leadership capacity of everyone in the school.

Value-based Situational Leadership

Situational leadership approaches allow for leaders to change their style based on the circumstances. Two of the participants explained that they considered their leadership style to be situational. Participant E. F. explained:

I practice all kinds of leadership styles based on the needs of the situation. Sometimes you need to be authoritarian; other times you need to be softer. I always think about the situation and then I listen; I figure out what people need.

E. F. described her personal philosophy of leadership and explained that leaders need to recognise the effect that they have on people and to use this guidance to honour and respect

people in a manner that is true to their moral values and beliefs. Huber (2004) confirms E. F.'s approach as he advises school leaders to be aware of how influential they can be and to use the opportunity given to them judiciously (p. 3). E. F. also voiced that having empathy is at the very core of her values and beliefs: "It is that heart, and I think that my personal philosophy of leadership includes tapping into that heart, and that spirituality around the importance of your work." Participant E. F. explained that often there is a divide between people's values and beliefs and what they actually practice. She worked hard towards her core values and to decrease the gap between her values and her leadership practice, while emphasizing that one must recognize the uniqueness of each challenge:

What we always fight against is the disconnect between what you say you believe in and your practice, but I would say that how you can reduce that disconnect is by always remembering your fundamentals and keeping that at the core of all of your leadership practice—your beliefs and your values. Try to always bring yourself back to that [the fundamentals]. But I would say my leadership style would be situational.

Bush, Glover, and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) (2003) confirm that leadership needs to be grounded in firm personal and professional values (p. 4). The authors' report illustrates that leadership begins with the personality of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capacity (p. 5). Thus, the primary role of any leader is the unification of people around key values (Bush, Glover, & NCSL, 2003).

Participant E. F. provided an example of a challenging situation to demonstrate her leadership style. She explained that the issue was around a new initiative introduced to the school, the multiage classroom. E. F. noted that convincing teachers and parents to support the new change was challenging, adding that she did a lot of presentations and a series of group

discussions with teachers and parents around the initiative. E. F. supported the teachers by involving them in dialogue and providing them with professional development around the new initiative. She explained that she organized community meetings that enabled parents and the school community to voice their concerns on the new change. E. F. described small group discussion as a way she got the parents to support the initiative:

When it comes to a difficult issue, my basic rule of thumb is to keep your group small. If you have a large community meeting on multiage, it never goes well, ever, on a topic because you will have four to five people with a rant on, and that sort of takes everyone down on a wrong road....I think your best work comes with smaller groups.

E. F. explained that while utilizing the small group discussion technique, she understood parents' concerns and also recognized their fears about the new change. This understanding allowed her to provide solutions to their concerns. E. F. also explained that she encouraged teachers and parents to express their concerns until they all came to an understanding, concluding that, "It takes patience." Burke (2014) confirms E. F.'s approach, explaining that if leaders are to lead change successfully, they need to be transparent, non-defensive, and persistent yet patient in their endeavors. The author explains that taking a direct frontal approach to changing values is fraught with difficulty, resistance, and strong human emotion. Leading change needs to start with changing behaviours, including one's own, and with changing people's mental sets or frameworks for thinking about the addressed problem. Thus, the needed aspects of change are not likely to happen in the school organization without positive, patient leadership (Burke, 2014).

Participant I. J. also expressed that his leadership style in practice is situational. "I found myself, when in this position, to be considerate of all perspectives in any situation." He explained that it is important for a leader to know which leadership style fits each situation in

order to avoid setbacks. He stressed that he is comfortable with shared leadership and building leadership capacity among staff in the school:

[You] really [have to] be careful that you don't bog yourself down with too many perspectives, but I am considerate of all perspectives. I am comfortable with shared leadership, absolutely. I am very comfortable with that role, as opposed to like keeping everybody down because I have to be at the front. In fact, I don't think you can survive in a job like this if you don't embrace the idea of building capacity. My leadership style is practical, thoughtful, and reflective.

Participant I. J.'s personal philosophy of leadership supported his leadership practice. I. J. said that he believes that everyone is gifted. He also believes in modeling. He expressed that leaders must work collaboratively with staff and seek their expertise for the success of the school.

Principals who share leadership responsibilities with others will be less burdened than principals who attempt the challenges and complexities of leadership alone (Tongneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 168). As I. J. noted,

I also believe that part of the definition of true leadership is knowing when you need help, knowing when you need support with finding answers, as opposed to forging it alone, thinking "Because I am the leader, I have to have the answers so I will have them." No, you turn to [people],...finding and using or utilizing the expertise that surrounds you, absolutely.

Harris and Lambert (2003) describe situational shared leadership as a form of collective leadership in which school staff members develop expertise by working together (p. 86). They explain that shared leadership, which has a significant effect on student learning, is attained when each staff member of the school shares the responsibilities in a collective manner,

depending on their area of expertise, skill, and input. Shared leadership is crucial to school success. It makes the job of the principal more manageable, increases teachers' contributions and participation, and enhances student achievement (Harris, 2004, p. 6; Harris & Lambert, 2003, p. 56; Spillane, 2006, p. 343). Shared leadership approaches support a sense of everyone being included in the important aspects of the school and the surrounding stakeholder community.

Inclusion

Inclusion is connected to the principle of equality in beliefs that are held by all students and staff within the educational community. The need to understand how school principals work to create inclusive school cultures that serve students and staff, as well as the school community, has increased the quest for knowledge in this area. The principals were asked to describe the common challenges to an inclusive school culture, and how they addressed issues involving inclusion with their staff and with their student body. The five principals were also asked to describe how they encouraged members of their school community to voice their opinions, and to describe an example of how they addressed an issue regarding inclusion within their school community. The themes that emerged from the data included a focus on: a growth mindset; dialogue; a supportive environment; and a safe and caring environment. These themes are supported by data from the participants to strengthen an understanding on how these principals work to serve diverse students within inclusive schools.

Growth Mindset

A growth mindset refers to the view that people hold about themselves or of other people that their basic abilities can be developed with effort or hard work (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2013, Growth Mindset, Para. 4). The participants were asked to describe the common challenges to an inclusive school culture. Some of the participants described that deficiency of

diverse perspectives in one's mindset is the major challenge to an inclusive school culture. In particular, participant C. D. explained that the major challenges to an inclusive culture in his school involve poverty and its associated debilitating aspects:

[In my current school it is] poverty and a lack of educational history/background in the families. I can say it's a mindset in the families that school does not really hold much for them [families]. If you haven't had any personal experience of what a full education can give you, why would you believe that it's possible for you and your kids, if you have never had that personal experience? Poverty is what gets in the way here. I can say it is directly a challenge for inclusivity, in that those are the ones we struggle with the most to get to school. We have tried to increase the value an education by putting a value on it and saying, "You lose its [benefit] if you don't attend."

Riehl (2000) elaborates, explaining that schools embody a complex array of understandings, beliefs, and values that find legitimacy through their acceptance by the broader public and that these elements (i.e., understandings, beliefs, and values) are coded in school structures, culture, and routine practices. Thus, schools are, in effect, constructed around meanings that people hold about them (p. 61). Riehl (2000) confirms that the development of inclusive structures and practices must be accompanied by new understanding and values for such development to result in lasting change.

Participant G. H. sees the lack of right mindset as the common challenge to an inclusive school culture. He explained that educators must reflect on how they approach one another, as well as the students in the school, by:

Reflecting on your own behaviour, putting yourself in check, making sure you have the right mindset when you come into the building and just where you need to be mentally

and emotionally. Sometimes that is hard to do because all the other parts of life are happening around you, but you have a job to do, and the focus needs to be on the kids. Participant I. J. agreed, explaining that attitudes from the teachers, support staff, and/or other groups in the school can be a challenge to an inclusive school culture. He also explained that students develop some biases from home that pose similar challenges:

Sometimes opinions, frustration, fatigue—and I say frustration and fatigue because the challenges to an inclusive school culture would be that there is a staff or a group that is frustrated, and tired from spending so much energy helping a particular group or helping that kid, and they ran out of gas; that is a challenge. There also can be some beliefs that can come through the door from home, some cultural beliefs can come in the door about their view of other cultures, which is difficult to work through.

Participant E. F. explained that the major challenge to an inclusive culture is that teachers do not feel supported to provide adequate care for the students under their care. Thus, a growth mindset needs support to develop and to be sustained. E. F. elaborated that when teachers are supported, they are better prepared mentally and emotionally for the students:

One of the things is that teachers become overwhelmed. So the challenge is to get the supports in so that the teachers feel supported whether it is a child with excessive, or poor behaviour or it is a child in medical need, like in a wheelchair, and there is an EA with them all day, or a child with significant learning difficulty. It is supporting that teacher and helping them feel prepared.

Building and sustaining an inclusive culture is a complex and ongoing process that requires continuous self-examination and thoughtful reflection by leaders and all members of the organization (Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman, 2006). Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) explain

that if the schools are to serve the common good and promote social justice, the principal needs understanding, skills, and dispositions to provide support for the success of teachers, students, parents, and the community. The school principal must provide support for teachers to adapt methods and strategies in ways that enable all learners to be successful. In that work, principals need to be in constant communication with teachers, students, parents, and the school community so that they know what is needed for the students to succeed.

Dialogue

The principals were asked to explain how they address issues regarding inclusion with their staff and with their student body, as well as challenges that arise within their school community. Some of the participants voiced that they address concerns regarding inclusion through dialogue. Participant C. D. explained that he communicated to staff the need to have the right attitude towards whatever they do: “We talk about it often in the staff meetings; we have talked a lot about mindset, and that one can have a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.” C. D. stressed the significance of a growth mindset. He explained that the school has had a lot of conversations around developing to one’s potential by having a growth mindset:

It will be focused a lot on how important it is to have a growth mindset, to believe that everybody is capable of growth....Everybody can do art, everybody can be creative, and everybody can play sports and get to be good at those things. So we talked a lot about growth mindset.

Participant C. D. described how he advocated for a family in the school community that was in poverty. C. D. expressed that he engaged in dialogue with the school community to tackle the issue of labelling: “So the remedy in that case is that there has been a constant public relation campaign that this is a family that has been in poverty with huge challenges.” C. D. thus

communicated that the issue related to the situation that the family was currently experiencing, thus encouraging support rather than judgment and labelling. Ryan (2003) affirms that school principals can employ a variety of rhetorical and dialogical strategies in communicating new meanings, such as official ceremonies, public relations events, and meetings (p. 171). C. D. also described that he addressed the issues of racism uncompromisingly in the school community:

I included racism explicitly in the student handbook and I held meetings with students, addressing it [racism] head-on; if people are biased and want to exclude those native kids, I am taking it on, head on. You don't get to do that. You don't get to exclude people like that. It is wrong; it is wrong every time.

Participant G. H. explained that he addressed issues regarding inclusion with the staff by communicating to them the kind of attitude he would like them to display in the school; how the staff should relate with students and parents, as well with one another in the school:

I think it is setting and casting the type of vision at the beginning of the year of the type of staff and the type of team that we want to be: how we want to interact with students, how we want to interact with parents, how we want to interact with each other. And constantly trying to back each other up and if we have issues, then you address them professionally and one-on-one and also using the Biblical model. It is just lots of communication.

G. H. also addressed the issues of inclusion with the student body through talking to students about how to relate with each other in the school. He encouraged the staff to support students by talking to them about their problems and to show the students love and affection. As a result, the students see the school as a community where they can express their worries:

[It] is up to the teachers to address something when they see it and whether it is a student that is isolated to go and talk to that student and to ask what is going on: “Are you okay”? It is amazing what you will learn from that simple action or question. So that the students as a whole understand that as classroom you are a community; as a school you are a community. So how do you interact with peers? How do you interact in a way that creates an inclusive school culture?

G. H. continued, describing how he addressed issues of poverty that involved one student labelling another student as poor. He explained that meetings were held with the staff, students, and the parents to find solutions to this behaviour. Parents were encouraged to have conversations with their children about how to display appropriate behaviours in the school:

I got involved just meeting with the teacher and [I] met with the student to address [the issue] while communicating with the parents to make them aware of how it is addressed at the school. More emphasis was put on the parent to address it at home with their child about what is appropriate to talk about and what is not. So that would be an issue of inclusion; [that is], regarding poverty in the school.

Participant I. J. explained that issues related to inclusion can be addressed through policies and procedures and by communicating why the policies were developed. He expressed that this could be done by one-on-one conversation and directly with groups in the school:

You have to deal with them [issues] face-to-face. Policy is something you develop; policies and procedures, you develop those, but it has to be open and honest conversation too and putting in systems or building in structures that are already inclusive.

Participant I. J. expressed how he addressed the issue of racism in the school community. He explained that the school community witnessed migration of other nationalities into the

community. As a result, the school had students from different cultures and backgrounds. I. J. explained that with these new groups of students in the school, some parents felt like their own children would be neglected in favour of the immigrant students who may have more immediate needs. Participant I. J. explained that there was lots of conversation with the parents to tackle the issue:

It was interesting to have that [issue of fear of neglect] coming from that population. I recall that it was [within] conversation that we just had to turn that [concern] around and make sure that all groups felt that they are being attended to, that they are valued, and that their needs were being addressed.

Ryan (2003) affirms that inclusion promotes and values a cohesion that is based on the complementary of similarity and diversity (p. 19). Villa and Thousand (2005) explain that the underlying assumption is that inclusion is a way of life, or a way of living together, that is based on a belief that each individual is respected and belongs (p. 10).

Participant E. F. also described that addressing issues of inclusion involves lots of education. The school provided education for students around certain behaviours displayed by other students in the school: “We would talk to the kids about autism, or ADD.” E. F. explained that the school supported inclusion by giving students what they actually needed to be successful and to be productive members of society. She also communicated to parents the kind of support available to their children, so that they would not feel that some students are receiving better education than the other students:

We gave kids what they need: it is not equal, it is equity, and it is what you need. Not everybody gets the same thing, but you get what you need. That’s sort of how we handle those issues of inclusion. You just have to talk them through about the support we have

for that child and how [that support] is actually going to enrich your child's education, not going to be a detriment.

Participant A. B. explained how he addressed a particular issue of inclusion with the student body in the school. He elaborated that he engaged in dialogue with the student body and involved them in the decision-making process in matters affecting them. A. B. facilitated a focus group with students and engaged in dialogue with students to find solutions to their areas of concern. As a result, the student council was perceived to have voice in the affairs of the school:

What can [we] do that is going to get student voice in this? So their first reaction was to have all the students, like for them [students] to make all the decisions. Instead, I asked questions to help them get focus groups, get in students from all grades, all demographic backgrounds, different classes, things like that, brought them into the focus group. What came out of that [the focus groups] were some definable actions that I supported. The student body saw the student council as having voice, the students saw themselves as having voice, and the school was able to use resources in the appropriate way.

Parker and Day (1997) confirm the role of the instructional leadership as supportive, facilitative, and/or catalytic. The authors clarify that this role entails dialogue around helping to establish the school goals, obtaining resources, stimulating new understandings, changing the structures, and promoting practices that improve learning experiences and outcomes for students (p. 84). Ryan (2003) affirms that inclusion means addressing the problem of representation, which necessitates that multiple perspectives be entrenched in the academic discourse, knowledge, and texts of the school (p. 17). Similarly, Theoharis and Scanlan, (2015) explain that inclusion involves the removal of barriers that might avert the enjoyment of human rights, and requires the establishment of appropriate supportive and protective environments.

Supportive Environment

A culture of inclusion is nourished within a supportive environment. Participant E. F. described that providing adequate support for teachers would help to address issues with inclusion in the school. E. F. believed that teachers must be supported to address any type of issues that might arise from students' challenging behaviour:

Inclusion issues mostly focus around students with severe behaviour problems. What I found is that kids with huge behaviour issues are the ones that teachers start pushing back against. One child can just create havoc in a room, causing so much stress for a teacher. So, I think when you need to address the issue of inclusion, you need to acknowledge the struggles of the teacher. Acknowledge that, and you need to put in supports.

Participant E. F. explained that students with behaviour issues are supported with a separate behaviour plan to address their challenges. She explained that the school works hard to provide a supportive environment for this group of students, instead of sending them out of the school:

I don't like throwing that out at people but here is the bottom line [that you explain to students and parents]: we don't keep those kids out of school. It is inclusion; it is law in Manitoba. Those kids are in schools and are being provided with what they need.... You have to have a separate behaviour plan for them.... We have to figure out what to do here. It is not a matter of kicking them out.

Inclusive education aims at removing social exclusion that is a consequence of negative responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability (Kugelmass, 2003, p. 3), and, as E. F. explained, also diversity in behaviour. Similarly, Ryan (2003) supports that inclusion seeks to counter all the tendencies to exclude some people (p. 17). School leaders

must create a supportive environment that is welcoming and friendly for staff, as well as students.

Participant A. B. elaborated that providing adequate support for groups of students that are labelled would help to address challenging issues for inclusion in the school. A. B. explained that removing the labels regarding the types of support students are receiving and providing students with individual support would help them to be more successful:

In terms of the student services piece, changing ways that students are labelled [would help us toward inclusion]. Sometimes our structures in schools—where students will have labels to indicate what type of support they are receiving—sometimes it can be quite explicit, like level 2, level 3; sometimes it can be a grey designation; sometimes it can be in the courses they take. Removing some of those [labels] will be the best examples that create that more inclusion....Let us make sure they have the support to be successful though, not changing the outcome.

According to Manitoba Education (2015), an inclusive community consciously develops to meet the changing needs of its members (para. 2). Through acknowledgment and support, an inclusive school community provides meaningful involvement and equitable access to its benefits by everyone (para. 2). Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that enables every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe (Manitoba Education, 2015, *Philosophy of Inclusion*, para. 2).

Safe and Caring Environment

The participants were asked to describe how they encouraged members of their school community to voice their opinions rather than be silenced by the cultural norms of the school community. All five of the participants explained that they established a safe and caring environment that allowed members of the school community to express their feelings. Participant

C. D. explained that he spent time with students and staff and encouraged them to express their worries, and he also noted that he made time to listen to their concerns:

People talk about an open door policy; I try to keep it open unless there is a meeting going on here where it needs to be closed. Otherwise the door is open and everybody is always welcome. I make the time to listen to everyone. I make the time for both staff and students. They just need to talk and be listened to, and [have me willing to] hear stories. I think it is just putting in the time.... They have as much of my time as they want any time they want. I will never say no.... If you want people to express their voice, you have to give them time.

Participant A. B. agreed, adding that in order to encourage members of the school community to express their opinions rather than be silenced, it is important for the school principal to be open-minded and listen to staffs' and students' concerns, as well as providing solutions to their anxieties. As a result, everyone feels safe to express their feelings:

In those cases you have to, not only in words but in actions, show that you are receptive to that [their concerns], that you hear. You use language to show that you hear and understand; [and also] listening to what they say, repeating what they say, demonstrating that you understand, as opposed to saying, "This is why." You show that you are using their information in the process, the same type of process we talked about before [i.e., sustainable renewal process].

Participant I. J. described that the school leader must create an atmosphere where everyone feels free to share their opinions with open-mindedness. I. J. believes in providing a caring and conducive environment that accommodates openness:

You have to provide that opportunity. They have to feel comfortable with you and that comfort starts with me as the leader of the school. I can help to create that culture that it is okay to share openly and honestly your concerns and that that would be a very good thing. That would be a culture of openness, a culture free of being chastised for a thought that you might have; also modeling what is acceptable to talk about; open mindedness—all of this is in the spirit of open mindedness.

Participant E. F. also expressed a belief that school leaders need to establish a safe and caring atmosphere where members of the school community can express their opinions rather being silenced. She explained that principals need to model this kind of action:

I think you need to encourage that [openness] by saying your own opinion out loud, [expressing] your vulnerabilities or your questions out loud. If the leadership is saying things [openly], it becomes easier for other people to [also be open].

Participant E. F. added:

If you find someone with a really cool idea that you think may be outside the cultural norm of the school but that it is a great thing, maybe say to them, “I am going to give you two days to work on that [by providing you] with a sub, or could you use some other resources?” Encourage them [staff] with professional development and encourage them with this novel idea by saying, “I will provide you with something that you need [to flesh out your idea].”

Participant G. H. explained that the school leader needs to create a safe and caring milieu where members of the school community can voice their opinions. He added that school principals need to create an appropriate channel for the members of the school community to

voice their thoughts. In particular, he elaborated that he organized meetings and surveys where he asked for opinions of parents about issues affecting the school:

I think there are formal and informal ways [for voice]. Formal ways: we can have parent meetings—we have called them society meetings—twice a year. Our board and myself, the principal, we report to the parents, to the society. It is kind of unique in that sense but I think you've got to create formal places for people to voice their opinions, and also informal. I think that [the informal way] is by talking to people and asking them, "What do you think?" I think another formal way is through surveys and that is important to hear [opinions expressed that way too]. The challenge is in using the right medium so that you actually get people to participate, so you have good ideas [coming forward about] what your parent body actually wants or were concerned about.

Ryan (2003) concludes that in inclusive schools, all members of school communities are involved or represented in equitable ways (p. 18). The author explains that such a process is inclusive in that everyone has the right and the opportunity to contribute. As a result, everyone will be motivated to work towards a just and democratic school community, as well as to address any challenges that may pose as threats to inclusive practices in the school.

Challenges

Educators face enormous challenges in building a culture where every student, along with everyone else, feels valued, safe, respected, and included. An understanding of how school principals respond to these challenges from a wide array of educational stakeholders leads towards a better knowledge of how they articulate and incorporate the values of inclusionary practices in the school, as well as in the school community. The five principals were asked to describe how they address conflict in their schools, to provide an example of conflict they

addressed recently in their schools, and to provide an illustration of a time they addressed bullying and how they controlled it. The themes that emerged from the data included: facing conflict with a positive attitude; resolving conflict with the use of a mediator; and empowering by-standers to address bullying. These themes are supported by the data from the participants to deepen our knowledge about how these school principals created an inclusive school culture during times of change and challenge.

Facing Conflict with a Positive Attitude

The principals were asked to describe how they deal with conflict in their schools. Some of the principals explained that they addressed conflict with a positive attitude. Participant C. D. explained that he addressed conflict in the school with positivity and understanding. He expressed that he created this understanding in the staff and students, and worked to provide an environment conducive to success for all. Parker and Day (1997) affirm that the school principal is charged with the responsibility of fostering a school climate in which all members share a clear understanding that the school stands for the success and achievement of all students (p. 84). In that endeavour, C. D. emphasized the importance of one's approach:

Win-win situation: we try to find that in everything we do. Seeking first to understand.

We get to know our kids and encourage them to be patient. What kids go through at home can be challenging. This might have nothing to do with the teacher or school. We find ways for kids to win at school.

C. D. provided an example of a conflict that he addressed in the school that was between a parent and the vice-principal in the school. The parent questioned that her child was placed in a class with a particular student in the school, and there was disagreement between the vice-principal and the parent around the issue. The principal had to intervene by demonstrating the right

attitude and creating a mutual understanding with both the vice-principal and the parent to reduce the tension:

You need to give people a chance to process what is really going on and to de-escalate because when the vice principal talked to that mom, they were butting heads; they were already yelling. It was not ugly, but they are already butting heads and, if one wins the other loses.

We talk about the emotional bank account, the vice principal will get to make a deposit into the mother's emotional bank account, the principal will get to make a deposit into the vice-principal's emotional bank account; there is the win for [both of] them. You are helping them to see that there is a different way to win.

Participant A. B. explained that he approached every conflict as an opportunity to learn and used it to strengthen the purpose of the school. He described that he uses the right attitude to resolve conflict in the school:

If someone comes into [my office] and [is] aggressive...and I react the same way, then they are less likely to come in and be able to express that [conflict in a positive way]. Again try to understand what they are saying and what their motivation is around that [position], what led to that.

Participant I. J. explained that he addressed conflict directly by paying attention to staff members' and students' emotional needs and views. He ensured that he provided staff and students with a safe and caring atmosphere where they could share their concerns. I. J. explained that he deliberated with staff to clarify the reasons for a conflict and to provide solutions:

We have to deal with it head on; we have to deal with it directly; and we have to make sure that we are sensitive to the feelings and thoughts of all parties. We have to deal with it quickly to make sure that there is safety and that the situation is secure and everybody is safe, but in terms of decision-making, we take our time. Some decisions are pretty significant; very rarely on a day-to-day basis do we have decisions that need to be made on the snap, within seconds.

Participant I. J. described an example of how he addressed a conflict that happened between staff members in the school:

Conflict between colleagues, coming together as a group: a conflict that existed between staff or misunderstanding, what I did: 1) You try to create a meeting space that is safe for all parties. 2) You are trying to maintain an objective atmosphere where it doesn't become personal, and it doesn't become anything hurtful, that kind of thing. And, 3) everybody has their chance to share their concerns but then all parties are involved in the resolution, as opposed to [me saying], "I am going to decide; this is how I am going to handle it and this is what I need you to do."

Participant G. H. described how he addressed conflicts in his school by elaborating that he dealt with conflict one-on-one when resolving it, either with the staff or with students and with the right attitude. G. H. also confirmed I. J.'s approach, noting that he addressed conflicts head-on with the people involved, in an atmosphere of care and respect:

The way I address conflict in my school; if it is with another staff member, then it is always private. I try...and establish that I care for the person in the sense that it is not about me, and that it is not only about them either, that it is something bigger and so if we can work together on what it is, then we can make the school a better place. I want the

person to understand why I am talking, so I address it directly but hopefully in that context of caring and respect, and the bigger picture of how is it going to affect the student, how is it going to affect the school; and [also talk] face-to-face.

G. H. provided an example of how he handled a conflict that involved a staff member and a parent in the school. He explained that the parent expressed that she was not comfortable with how a particular teacher treated her child and that she was in school to report the situation to the principal. G. H. engaged the teacher, involving the teacher in the conversation, asking a number of questions to determine what might have led to the situation. He also engaged the parents in conversations in the same meeting around the issue. G. H. elaborated:

I feel like I established a context of caring and respect for the teacher as a professional and also as an individual....[I] brought up the concern and identified the main point of the concern, [and I was] kind of feeling the teacher out too, reading the body language, how they were responding to the conflict. Part of it is asking questions. I addressed it directly with the teacher head-on without yelling, without breaking her spirit or coming across as disrespectful. That is one of my best teachers in the school, I believe, and so I think it went well. She was receptive, and I feel like it was a successful [approach] to address that situation.

Barton (2009) explains that through a proactive approach to addressing safety issues, students develop both academically and socially (p. 3). The author defines safe schools as places where the business of education can be conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear (p. 6). Barton (2009) describes that such a setting provides an educational climate and culture that fosters a spirit of acceptance and care for everyone in the school. The principals stressed the importance of one's approach when addressing conflict.

These principals addressed conflict in a positive way, making those involved feel valued and safe, all while facing the issue head on, and with the right attitude. They also approached every conflict as an opportunity to learn and used it to strengthen the purpose of the school. Such a setting may occasionally need the contribution of mediators.

Resolving Conflicts with the Use of a Mediator

Mediators can sometimes serve a crucial role in a school, especially in that their approach as an outside party may be seen to be as objective. One participant voiced that when she addressed conflict, it was sometimes with the use of a mediator. Participant E. F. voiced that sometimes conflicts require that you call on an expert or find someone who is more knowledgeable to address the conflict:

There are other times that I have actually brought in a mediator, because if I have a strong relationship with teachers and I want to keep that intact, it is very hard to be a mediator.

You dabble around it, but we [have] brought in a mediator from the outside [at times].

Participant E. F. provided an example of conflict that was addressed in her school using a mediator. She explained that she had a specialist come to the school to gauge how the teachers were using assessment tools. She explained that some teachers did not understand the concept behind the new assessment process. E. F. expressed that she could perceive some conflict from the teachers from the conversation she then had with the expert. Given what she learned, she then engaged in conversation with the teachers to find remedies for their areas of concerns:

So, anyways, we talked it through and I got to a point when I said to them, “It sounds to me like we have a few teachers not applying the procedures correctly. Why don’t we hold a mini workshop to review guidelines and our expectations?” And I said [afterwards], “Now we have a base-line; everybody knows [how to score assessments correctly].” So

that in November if teacher B is not doing it correctly, then I go to them directly and say, “We all understand how to score this assessment, apply them, and do the process.” That is how I managed that conflict, talking and thinking about how we can go about solving this conflict [in a way] that is not confrontational.

Sautner (2009) affirms that it is important that school principals create cultures that support healthy interactions and problem-solving (p. 156). Similarly, Scanlan and Johnson (2015) call for respectful agreements among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue across differences, and sharing power in pursuit of a common purpose in socially just, democratic schools (p. 167). Ryan (2003) concludes that if principals are to promote inclusive education, they need to initiate, foster, sustain, and reciprocate a dialogue of respect for differences in ways that everyone in the school is empowered to have voice (p. 171).

Empowering Bystanders to Address Bullying

An issue that continues to challenge inclusive, caring environments in schools involves bullying in all its manifestations. The participants were asked to describe how they handled bullying in their schools. All five of the principals explained that they addressed bullying through empowerment and awareness. Participant C. D. explained that bullying is real and that it does exist in schools. He explained that it is important to encourage students to speak up when they experience any form of bullying:

I think our basic philosophy is to try to empower by-standers because most bullies are very good at it; they are very good at being subtle and doing it where they won't be seen or in a way that the victim isn't going to speak up. The kids see other kids doing things and we have talked a lot with our kids about their responsibility to speak up and say something.

Participant C. D. explained that the school supported different initiatives around anti-bullying and provided staff and students with information about bullying:

We support, for example, the Day of Pink initiative, which is an anti-bullying initiative.

We talked about what the consequences can be for both bullies and victims if bullying is allowed to continue, and how they have a responsibility to their peers to speak up on behalf of not just the victim but also the bully, because bullying can make lives miserable.

Participant E. F. explained that she provided interventions around issues of bullying by enlightening students about the dangers of bullying. E. F. noted that she created anti-bullying awareness to provide support for students:

It takes a ton of levels of intervention, so you need school-wide education of kids around what bullying looks like, how to deal with it, give kids strategies. So you need that whole school-wide [approach], so [that] the education piece happens. The focus for us is the by-standers or what we would called the ‘up-standers’; that is kind of a new term they talk about for kids, and really focusing on them because they are key to getting bullies to stop.

E. F. also explained that she worked with staff to design strategies and methods to empower students that are being bullied in the school:

That is what I do; I work with the team around the kid, I find out as much as I can. You focus on the bully but you have to attend to the victims and attend to the by-standers who observe this. This is [attending to] all levels of intervention.

Participant I. J. believed that bullying exists in schools and that it is very serious, yet I. J. stressed that bullying is a vague term and it is being misused in the educational setting:

We have to be very careful as we navigate through this, but when there is an instance of bullying and I know this is hard to [say]; for many people this is hard to hear: in education, in certain schools, they have used the phrase, zero tolerance.

Participant I. J. explained that zero tolerance does not mean kicking students who bully out of school. He explained that schools need to provide support for both the victim and the bully in order to address the issues of bullying in the school:

We have to work with everybody, like nine times out of ten, if not ten out of ten, the kid that is sitting here, that has been bullying this kid here [using hand gestures], we need to provide help for this child, but we also need to provide help and support for this [other] child, because the background the child is bringing to the table has led to the behaviour that he is engaging in, as opposed to casting him from the island. In this school I am interested in getting the message out, making sure we are truly clear on what bullying is, how we can help, and all parties, whoever is involved in it; please remember that all parties need to be helped.

Participant G. H. elaborated that he confronted bullying in the school by creating anti-bullying awareness to encourage students to speak out whenever they experience any types of bullying in the school. He also explained that he provided a safety and discipline intervention to confront bullying in the school:

So, I mean in general, we do bullying awareness or anti-bullying in our school. We have some presentations that we do, and some information that we send to parents, as well, and put it in our school handbook and also on the school website. You have to handle it quickly, I feel like, in terms of timely fashion. Put the discipline in place and the safety plan in place and check in with parents and students in the following weeks and the

weeks to come, too, just to make sure you follow up, and with the teachers. Make sure that there is no evidence of re-occurring in or outside of the classroom.

Participant A. B. explained that he addressed bullying in the school and developed structures that provided a safe and supportive environment that discouraged bullying to occur in the school:

Everybody should feel safe in the building, and the building should be secure.... You can have suspensions related to bullying, things like that, but that won't be enough because again you cannot structure your way out of a problem.

A. B. stressed the importance of relationship-building in the school. He explained that he encouraged the adults in the school to spend time with students, to get to know them, and to develop a rapport. A. B. explained that this attitude will reduce unpleasant behaviours, like bullying, in the school:

So, I mean as an example, students have said to me that every single day, when I left one school they said, the one thing they wrote in their going away thing was that, it looked like every single day was the best day of my life because I am always smiling and saying hello. So that is really part of the social-emotional learning that needs to be in place. The main part of it is built on relationships, but again you have to have your non-negotiable structures that address that when [negative] behaviours come that you, deal with it. It is about the renewal process, not allowing the conditions to deteriorate further and continually improving.

Sautner (2008) concludes that if the purpose of the education system is to foster and maintain respectful, responsible behaviours in students, educators need to develop such character traits in themselves and others. To this end, the goal of inclusive, safe and caring schools should be the

achievement of consistently better academic and non-academic learning outcomes for all students (Barton, 2009; Hernandez & Fraynd, 2015; Sautner, 2008).

School leaders can be faced with different challenges when working with staff, students, and parents to create inclusive schools and communities. The school principal can develop various strategies and methods to address conflict and to make everyone feel valued, safe, respected, and included. School principals must react to conflicts with a positive attitude, draw strength from others' expertise (e.g., using a mediator), and allow everyone in the school to express their thoughts freely without fear of any punitive actions. This approach to conflict will enable the school leader to tackle external or internal challenges that might pose as threats to the school and to the community.

Conclusion

Building and sustaining an inclusive school culture during the times of change and challenge requires that the school principal engage the five elements of the conceptual framework of the critical inclusive praxis: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. The interviewed principals described that they used these elements to create and sustain inclusive practices that enabled everyone, including the staff, students, parents, and the community to feel valued, safe, respected, and included. All of the five principals acknowledged that the leadership of the school principal is crucial in creating this supportive kind of atmosphere. To that end, the critical inclusive praxis framework as a model empowered these principals to engage in dialogue around practices that created and sustained socially just and democratic schooling.

The following chapter, chapter five, concludes the research study. The chapter provides the summary and conclusion of the study, as well as recommendations and implications for

future studies. It also gives overall significance of the study. Final reflections complete the chapter.

Chapter Five

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the leadership styles that five selected school principals used to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that refrained from group-think; embraced difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and built a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. This final chapter integrates a discussion of the literature review with the research findings of the lived experiences of five selected school principals regarding how they utilized different leadership styles to build an inclusive school culture. The conceptual framework—critical inclusive praxis, including culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge—provided a base for the literature review, interviews, and data analysis in this study as the five facets were used to explore the principals’ experiences. Critical inclusive praxis was developed to draw attention to important aspects of schooling that create a socially just and democratic society for everyone. The conceptual framework reinforced that the principal is required to continuously transform the school through reflective, critical, and dialogical action in order to nourish and sustain a strong culture that embraces diversity and supports change. As this chapter will summarize the Chapter four interview findings with reference to the previous research in the area as explored in Chapter two, and as discussed in relation to the elements in the conceptual framework, it will serve as an executive summary. To end this final chapter, I will summarize the significance of the study to the field while also making recommendations for further studies. Summarizing statements will conclude the thesis.

Integrating the Literature and the Field Research

This next section integrates a discussion of the literature review concerning the five elements in the conceptual framework and examines the parallel voyage of the school principals as they constructed their school cultures. I analyzed the data, seeking an understanding on how the principals embraced the critical inclusive praxis and worked towards a just and democratic school community. During the field study, I started by examining the data for themes as they emerged, while looking for agreement with the preceding literature research. I also compared common practices that emerged as these principals described their lived experiences in building inclusive school cultures. Within this section there is a final integrative discussion of the five aspects of the critical inclusive praxis.

Culture

With reference to culture, the principals stressed their belief that collaboration and communication were two of the major factors in building an inclusive school culture. They established that they supported and encouraged a collaborative culture that promoted collective decision-making in their schools and the larger community. The principals agreed that the development of strong partnerships with parents, in conjunction with a collaborative school team, were fundamental to the successful implementation of change initiatives within a positive school culture. These principals maintained open communication lines between and among staff, students, parents, and the community in their efforts to meet the needs of the students in their schools. Some of the principals built SOS systems to communicate and work with groups, and to help problem-solve major concerns within the school. These findings support the research of Schein (1992), who indicated that through a myriad of daily interactions, careful reflections, and conscious efforts, school leaders can shape positive school cultures. The findings lead to an

understanding that teachers and students are more likely to succeed in schools with cultures that encourage hard work, commitment to value-based ends, attention to problem solving, and a focus on learning for all students (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 11). In this kind of environment, Peterson and Deal (2009) describe that the culture of the school reinforces collaborative problem solving, planning, and data driven decision-making (p. 12). Affirming this position, these school principals promoted an inclusive school culture through partnerships that were based on constructive relationships.

Each principal agreed that building strong and positive relationships was crucial to creating an inclusive school culture. The principals encouraged staff and students to be positive in their schools and to relate with one another with care and affection. Staff members were encouraged to demonstrate constructive attitudes with students in and out of the building and to provide support for them. The principals believed that this kind of positive, supportive, and collaborative environment built an inclusive culture. These findings also support the research of Deal and Kennedy (2000), who indicated two characteristics of a strong culture: a) As a system of informal rules, culture spells out how people are to behave; b) As well, culture may enable people to feel better about what they do, and thus, they are more likely to work harder (p. 17). The principals utilized a positive relationship-building approach to encourage staff, students, and parents to take responsibility for supporting one another in the school community.

The principals in this study are attuned to a vision of their schools that emphasized that everyone take responsibility for the students under their care. The literature provides support for these findings, as various authors noted that a school's culture directs the focus of daily behaviour and increases attention to what is considered important and valued (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Peterson & Deal, 2009). The school culture influences and shapes the way that teachers,

students, and administrators think, feel, and act (Peterson & Deal, 2009). The principals promoted an environment where everyone was supported to be accountable for one another. They also created various initiatives that provided for students' needs. These change initiatives developed a culture of commitment and a high degree of care for students in the school. Peterson and Deal (2009) indicated that "school culture impacts what people pay attention to (focus), how they identify with the school (commitment), how hard they work (motivation), and the degree to which they achieve their goals (productivity)" (p. 10). The principals attended to the vision of the school and supported everyone to achieve the school goals.

The principals thus stressed their belief that they are charged with the responsibility of creating an atmosphere that is supportive of everyone and of crafting an environment where everyone can thrive. One principal integrated the sustainable renewal process in his work to build an inclusive school culture. The process moved the state of affairs of the school culturally from the existing form to an improved state for present and future needs. This process involved five steps: culture versus structures, Response to Intervention, strategic abandonment, growth versus fixed mindset, and form follows function. As noted by the principal, culture requires good structures but structures will not lead to re-culturing unless there is a good change process. These concepts were used by the principal to develop an environment where everyone feels valued, safe, respected, and included.

The principals established that the leadership of the principal was a key factor in building a positive and inclusive school culture. They utilized different leadership approaches depending on the situation in order to serve the needs of everyone in the school. The principals all agreed that they could not have achieved a strong, positive, and inclusive school culture without utilizing a servant leadership approach, modelling positive behaviours, and paying attention to

the concerns of everyone. The principals supported the research that contends that strong, positive school cultures do not just happen; they are built and shaped by those who work in and attend the school, and by the formal and informal leaders who encourage and reinforce values and traditions (Peterson & Deal, 2009). Huber (2004) also indicated that school leadership serves as an appropriate standard for staff and students by modeling desired dispositions and actions, and by enhancing others' beliefs about their own capacities and their enthusiasm for change (p. 5). These principals displayed sincerity and communicated their dispositions in building inclusive cultures. Peterson and Deal's (2009) work supported this finding, as they explained that sturdy, positive cultures that are rich in purpose and abundant in tradition and meaning, and that they are supported and nourished by school principals who deliberately and consciously reinforce the best that the school and its staff can become (p. 8). The principals utilized these approaches to leadership to build and sustain a strong, positive and inclusive school culture that supported the needed changes.

Change

The principals in this study agreed that the implementation and management of change is a function of leadership in the school. The change initiatives in the schools often started with these principals, and they were influential in leading the changes. As Fullan (2007) indicated, the school principal is key to the process of change, particularly to changes in the underlying culture of the school. The principals engaged teachers in dialogue, encouraged them to read books on proposed change initiatives, and held meetings with teachers to earn their support before embarking on innovations. These findings are supported by Fullan and Hargreaves (2013), who noted how teacher development and successful implementation of innovation are associated. The principals also agreed that effective implementation consists of alterations in curriculum

materials, in instructional practices and behaviours, and in beliefs and understanding on the part of teachers involved in a given innovation, which is also supported by the work of Fullan and Hargreaves (2013). The principals acknowledged that the change initiatives in their schools were successful as a result of teachers' support and involvement.

Evans (1996), and Kin and Kareem (2015), together with Peterson and Deal (1998), all noted that change is an ever-present feature in organizations and has become a constant in school life. This resonated with the principals as they engaged in processes of change that led to constant efforts for improvement in their schools. They believed that change has to be continuous in the field of education and that the principal is charged with the responsibility of envisioning and moving the school in the right direction. Having said that however, the principals also established that the change was successful because of the support they received from teachers and parents on every aspect of the change process. They encouraged input from both teachers and parents and developed more collaborative working relationships between the school and parents with reference to the introduced change. The findings support the research of Calabrese (2002), who elaborated four ways that school principals can use to promote change: encouraging participation, providing ongoing professional development, encouraging failure, and story sharing (pp. 79-80). These findings from the field research also agreed with Kotter's (1998) writing, as he identified two skills leaders can use to understand the change process: building coalitions and creating a vision (p. 30). As a result of this practice, the principals were able to attend to concerns of teachers and parents.

The principals were responsive to teachers' and parents' apprehensions. They created opportunities for teachers and parents, as well as the larger community, to voice their concerns. They utilized different methods to provide support for engaged voice in the school community.

All the principals afforded time to listen to everyone's concerns. They also sent letters home to explain the change initiative and process, and created avenues where people expressed their worries (e.g., via letters). Paying attention to concerns allowed teachers and parents the time to understand the reasons for and realities of the new change initiative. The literature by Fullan (2007) supports the principals' beliefs about the importance of an empowering and collaborative work environment, an environment wherein teachers and parents believe they are important and where their voices are heard (p. 241). The principals' understanding, dispositions, and skills allowed them to support a good structure where all stakeholders worked together and addressed resistance to change (Fullan, 2007).

Managing change was an important part of the work that these principals did during the change process in their schools. They understood that everyone reacts to change differently, and while working through the change process, they experienced different reactions from various groups, staff members, students, and in some cases, parents. The principals' responses agreed with the work of Zimmerman (2006), who indicated that the first step in overcoming resistance to change in schools is to determine who is resisting the change and why (p. 239). They recognized that some staff members reacted negatively to change out of fear, that others may not like the hard work of change, and/or that they had formed alliances with someone who was resisting the needed change. As noted from the literature, attitudes towards change are a variable that have been linked to the degree of staff acceptance of new procedures (Zimmerman, 2006). Zimmerman (2006) elaborated several reasons why people have difficulty with change: 1) failure to recognise the need for change; 2) habit; 3) previously unsuccessful effort at change; 4) fear of the unknown; 5) security; 6) perceived threats to teachers expertise; 7) threats to their power relationships; 8) threats to social relationships; and 9) threats to their resource allocation

(pp. 239-240). The school principals managed these reactions as they worked through the change process. They used different techniques to provide support and to encourage stakeholders to accept the needed change. Flyers, presentations, dialogue, and pressure and support, as well as stakeholders' involvement in every stage of the change process, were the methods used by the principals to get everyone committed to positive change initiatives. These findings support the research of Kotter (1998), who indicated that successful school leaders must work with staff to figure out the challenges around change and what to do to resolve those issues. The principals encouraged change readiness by being sensitive to teachers' potential change barriers, as noted by Zimmerman (2006). As school leaders, these principals were responsible for school change and also for mobilizing the search for solutions to removing change barriers and focussing their schools in the intended direction.

Leadership

Harris (2005) and Huber (2004) both indicated that school leaders enhance the performance of their schools by providing opportunities for staff to participate in decision-making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is crucial. The principals in this study established that they could not have done the work alone. Although the principals have the leadership capacities that recognize and attend to the need for ongoing individual decisions, they acknowledged that their best work emanated as a result of involving all stakeholders. The principals worked with groups to establish and to implement the vision for their schools. They collaborated with all constituents, particularly in shared decision-making so as to serve the needs of everyone, while working to find solutions to challenges in the school. These findings support the work of Davies and Davies (2005), and Harris and Lambert (2003), who indicated that sharing leadership responsibilities help schools to become more inclusive and self-reflective

because more people are exchanging important information, discussing issues, and making decisions collaboratively. These findings also support the research of Mulford (2003), who indicated that student academic outcomes are likely to improve where leadership resources are shared throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered in the areas important to them (p. 38).

The principals provided support for teachers and students in their schools, particularly in matters affecting them. They afforded intellectual stimulation, encouraged reflection, and challenged their staffs to examine assumptions about their work and to reconsider how it could be performed, an approach supported by Leithwood and Riehl (2003, p. 4). The principals thus agreed with the research of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) that indicated that school leaders provide individualized support by showing respect for staff members and concern about their feelings and needs. The principals acknowledged that the teachers were faced with a lot of challenges; however, these principals provided support for teachers by taking actions to resolve those challenges, and by providing teachers with what they needed to succeed in their schools. The principals believed in modeling, which they utilized to provide support for everyone in the school. They also encouraged individuals' input and celebrated individuals' strengths in their schools. Huber (2004) supported this finding and explained that school leadership serves as an appropriate example for staff by modeling desired dispositions and actions, and by enhancing others' beliefs about their own abilities and their zeal for change (p. 5). These leadership styles assisted the principals to provide the needed support for everyone in their schools.

The principals believed that they were both approachable and visible so as to provide the needed support for staff and students in the school. They utilized these leadership dispositions to encourage interactions, to increase input, and to build leadership capacities that promoted an

inclusive school culture. The findings support the research of Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphey (1995), who noted that leadership is a social process shared among all members of a group (p. 43). The principals agreed that leadership is not restricted to the influence exercised by someone in a particular position or role, and that followers are part of the leadership development as well (see Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphey, 1995, p. 43). The data confirmed the work of Bogler (2001), who elaborated that school principals who are successful in their roles have used a wide range of methods to influence and motivate their staffs to bring about changes in their school cultures. In this work, the principals utilized different leadership approaches to serve the needs of everyone in their schools.

Three of the principals noted specifically that they practiced servant leadership to serve the needs of staff and students in their schools. The literature by Greenleaf (1995) confirmed the practice of the principals that a servant leader is a servant first, and that after making that choice, one may come to aspire to lead (p. 22). The research work expounds that this form of leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve (Greenleaf, 1995). All three principals who focused on servant leadership said that it is crucial to serve the needs of teachers, as they acknowledged their roles in the development of students and of the school as a whole. These principals were sensitive to the needs of teachers and students, and were committed to supporting and serving those needs, as well as removing barriers that served as obstacles to success. The principals agreed with the research of Greenleaf (1995), who indicated that this form of leadership is manifested in the choice taken by the servant to make sure that other people's highest needs are being served. The principals encouraged and communicated with teachers with dialogue that was filled with purpose, hopes, caring tones, and kindness. The principals demonstrated empathy for staff and students through understanding their own and others'

personal values and beliefs, and understanding that there are different views. In that work, the principals assisted staff and students to achieve to their potential by exchanging ideas and inspiring them to a higher level of motivation. These findings support the research of Greenleaf (1995), who explained that servant leadership is more easily provided if the leader understands that while serving individuals is important, the most crucial aspect involves serving the values and ideas that help shape the school as a covenantal community (p. 22).

Two of the principals indicated their understanding of the different approaches to leadership by varying their styles to suit the situation, while remaining consistent to the underlying cultural values of the school. The principals utilized the value-based situational approach to meet the needs of staff and students, as well as the school community. They recognized the impact they had on individuals in the school and they applied this awareness to honour everyone in a way that is respectful of each person's moral values and beliefs. The principals' approaches to leadership support the work of Huber (2004), who advised school leaders to be aware of how influential they can be and to use the opportunity given to them judiciously (p. 3). The principals were cautious to recognize the gaps between their own stated beliefs and what they actually practiced. They operated to reduce any disconnection and to function so as to keep their values and beliefs at the core of their leadership practice. Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006), as well as Riley (2013), all noted that successful leadership is underpinned by core values and beliefs. Gurr et al. (2006) expounded that these values and beliefs inform the leaders' decisions and actions, as well as their underlying visions (p. 381). The field research findings also support the work of Bush, Glover, and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2003) that indicated that leadership needs to be grounded in firm personal and professional values (p. 4). The principals noted their belief that leadership begins

with the personality of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capacity (see Bush et al., 2003, p. 5).

Two of the principals noted that they utilize a small group discussion technique to understand parents' concerns and also to address their fears about any changes in the school. The literature by Burke (2014) supports the principals' beliefs that leading change needs to start with changing behaviours, including one's own, and with changing people's mental sets or frameworks for thinking about the addressed change. These particular approaches to leadership allowed the principals to provide solutions to individuals' concerns inside and outside of the school. The principals supported and utilized shared leadership approaches to work with staff and students in their schools, as well as with parents. These findings also support the research of Tongeri and Anderson (2003), who indicated that principals who share leadership responsibilities with others will be less burdened than principals who attempt the challenges and complexities of leadership alone (p. 168). The principals believed that shared leadership is crucial to school success. It makes the job of the principal more manageable, increases teachers' contributions and participation, and enhances student achievement (see Harris, 2004, p. 6; Harris & Lambert, 2003, p. 56; Spillane, 2006, p. 343). The principals utilized different leadership approaches to work with teachers, students, parents, and the school community in their work to build inclusive school cultures.

Inclusion

The principals in this study encountered common challenges in their work in building an inclusive school culture. The participating principals identified poverty, racism, labelling, and conflicts around diversity as concerns that they encountered within their school community. They indicated that, occasionally, attitudes of staff, students, and parents posed a challenge for

them during times of change. Two principals experienced issues connected to poverty in their schools. One principal believed some of these issues stemmed from the impoverished parents' lack of understanding of the value of education. Many of these parents had not experienced what a full education can offer, and as such, some had passed the mindset on to their children and that had led in some instances to students' absenteeism from the school. However, the principals developed a supportive structure that communicated the value of education, and that connected with students and parents to increase their understanding of the benefits of education. The findings support the research of Riehl (2000), who indicated that schools embody a complex array of understandings, beliefs, and values that find legitimacy through their acceptance by the broader public and that these elements (i.e., understandings, beliefs, and values) are coded in school structures, cultures, and routine practices. The data confirmed that the development of inclusive structures and practices must be accompanied by new understanding and values for such development to result in lasting change (see Riehl, 2000).

The principals established that it was crucial to challenge themselves and their staff to examine their beliefs and attitudes, to reflect on their behaviours, and to be mentally and emotionally stable whenever they are in the school. The principals acknowledged that teachers needed adequate support to develop and sustain a growth mindset in the school. They encouraged their staffs to reflect on their attitudes, and to focus their energies on every student under their care. These findings support the research accessed from the literature that explained that building and sustaining an inclusive culture is a complex and ongoing process that requires continuous self-examination and thoughtful reflection by leaders and all members of the organization (Wasserman, Gallegos, & Ferdman, 2006). The findings also support the work of Theoharis and Scanlan (2015), who indicated that if the schools are to serve the common good

and promote social justice, the principal needs understanding, skills, and dispositions to provide support for the success of teachers, students, parents, and the community. The principals adapted practices and strategies (e.g., dialogue) that allowed reflections on individuals' attitudes and that supported positive ways that enabled everyone to succeed in the school community.

Dialogue with their staffs, student body, and within their school community was a significant strategy and important practice that the principals utilized to address the issues that might threaten inclusion (e.g., poverty, racism, labelling, and diversity in behaviour). The principals communicated with staff, students, parents, and the community about the importance of having a growth mindset. The principals in this study addressed the issues that challenge inclusion directly. They held meetings with teachers and students to discuss how they were to behave with one another in the school. They included attention to racism explicitly in the students' handbook. Some of these principals initiated changes in policies and procedures, as well as engaging in ongoing open and honest conversations, to address the issues around inclusion. They also encouraged parents to communicate with their children the appropriate way to act in the school. The principals also engaged staff, students, parents, and the school community in many educational initiatives regarding behaviour issues, and explained to them about the kind of supports available to those students who feel victimized and/or invisible. One principal organized a focus group discussion that encouraged students' voice on matters related to them. These findings support the work of Ryan (2003), who noted that school principals could employ a variety of rhetorical and dialogical strategies in communicating new meanings, such as official ceremonies, public relations events, and meetings (p. 171). The principals' beliefs were supported by the literature on inclusion that indicated that addressing the problem of representation necessitates that multiple perspectives be entrenched in the academic discourse,

knowledge, and texts of the school (see Ryan, 2003, p. 17). The data supports the research of Parker and Day (1997), who confirmed the role of the instructional leadership as supportive, facilitative, and/or catalytic. The principals were committed in their role and built appropriate, supportive, and protective environments.

The principals in this study promoted a supportive atmosphere for teachers with regard to issues around inclusion. They acknowledged the struggles that teachers had concerning students with severe behaviour problems, and they provided support for teachers by helping to design a separate behaviour plan for individual students to address these challenges. The field data agreed with the work of Kugelmass (2003), who pointed out that inclusive education aims at removing social exclusion that is a consequence of negative responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, and ability (p. 3), and, it might be added, sometimes in behaviour as well. The findings also support the research of Theoharis and Scanlan (2015), who explained that inclusion involves the removal of barriers that might avert the enjoyment of human rights, and requires the establishment of appropriate supportive and protective environments.

Another principal removed all forms of labels on students that accompany 'levelled' support in the school. He discouraged the labelling of the types of support students are receiving and created a supportive environment where all students, regardless of academic ability, felt safe, valued, respected, and included. The data support the literature that expounds that through acknowledgment and support, an inclusive school community provides meaningful involvement and equitable access to its benefits by everyone (see Manitoba Education, Philosophy of Inclusion, 2015, para. 2). These findings support the Manitoba Government's Philosophy of Inclusion (2015), which indicates that inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that enables every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe (para. 2).

The principals built a safe and caring environment that allowed members of the school community to express their feelings rather than being silenced by the cultural norms of the school community. They afforded time to listen to everyone's concerns and provided solutions to everyone's worries within the school community. The principals encouraged openness and open-mindedness and demonstrated that it is acceptable to express one's opinions openly and respectfully. They created an environment that allowed individuals in the school to express their feelings without the fear of punitive actions. The principals utilized both formal (e.g., meetings, surveys) and informal (e.g., casual conversations) avenues that enabled staff, students, parents, and the school community to contribute to the development of the school. These findings support the work of Ryan (2003), who elaborated that in inclusive schools, all members of school communities are involved or represented in equitable ways (p. 18). The principals agreed that such a process is inclusive in that everyone has the right and the opportunity to be heard and to contribute (see Ryan, 2003). The principals promoted an environment where everyone is inspired to contribute and committed to addressing any challenges to inclusive practices in their school community.

Challenges

The principals in this study encountered some challenges in their work in building an inclusive school culture. However, they addressed these challenges with positive attitudes and created deep understandings in staff, students, and parents to resolve these conflicts in the school and within the school community. The principals established a win-win position in their schools and created a conducive environment where everyone thrived. The field data support the work of Parker and Day (1997), who indicated and affirmed that the school principal is charged with the

responsibility of fostering a school climate in which all members share a clear understanding that the school stands for the success and achievement of all students (p. 84).

The principals also approached every conflict as an opportunity to learn and embraced it to strengthen the purpose of the school. They displayed a calm and non-confrontational style in their work to understand and address conflicts in their schools. The principals also recognized the emotional needs and the personal opinions of staff members and students as they worked to create an atmosphere that allowed staff, students, and parents, as well as the school community to feel safe and open to share their concerns.

The principals addressed conflicts in their schools directly in an atmosphere of care and respect, while they attended to the feelings and thoughts of all stakeholders. They created a meeting place that was safe for conflict resolution for staff, students, parents, and the school community. The principals maintained an objective atmosphere that reduced bias and discouraged animosity in the school community. They promoted an environment where everyone had the chance to share their concerns, and where all parties were also involved in the resolution. The principals understood the impact that conflict could have on student learning and they recognized that conflict resolution is crucial to school success. Thus the principals addressed conflicts openly with the right attitude in an environment of care and respect that allowed them to respond to stakeholders' emotional needs and opinions. The findings support the research of Barton (2009), who explained that through a proactive approach to addressing safety issues, students develop both academically and socially (p. 3). The principals promoted safe schools where the business of education was conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence, and fear (see Barton, 2009, p. 6). This environment provided an educational climate and culture that fostered a spirit of acceptance and care for everyone in their schools.

One principal occasionally utilized the knowledge and skills of an expert to find solutions to conflict in the school. This principal elaborated that some situations necessitated the use of a mediator from outside of the school. Particularly in circumstances where the principal had connections with a staff member, it was difficult to remain objective in resolving the conflict. The principals also engaged in dialogue that was non-confrontational in their work to address conflicts in the school. The field data support the findings of Sautner (2009), who indicated that it is important that school principals create cultures that support healthy interactions and problem-solving (p. 156). The data also support the literature from Scanlan and Johnson (2015) that calls for respectful agreements among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship-building, dialogue across differences, and the sharing of power in pursuit of a common purpose in socially just, democratic schools (p. 167). As well, the findings support the research of Ryan (2003), who explained that if principals are to promote inclusive education, they need to initiate, foster, sustain, and reciprocate a dialogue of respect for differences in ways that everyone in the school is allowed to have opinions (p. 171).

The principals addressed issues of bullying through awareness and through empowerment of by-standers in their schools. The principals identified bullying as a widespread, persistent, and serious problem in schools (see Sautner, 2008, p. 138). They encouraged and focussed on empowering by-standers to speak up whenever they experience and/or witness any form of bullying in the school. The principals promoted anti-bullying awareness (e.g., presentations, the Day of Pink initiative, students' handbook, fliers, and school website) that provided information and enlightened everyone about the dangers of bullying. The principals worked with staff to design strategies and methods to empower students who were bullied in their schools and while affording support for the victims, also acknowledged that all parties needed support (see Barton,

2009). The principals provided safety and disciplinary interventions to confront issues of bullying in their schools. One principal also encouraged positive relationship-building to reduce unpleasant behaviours, a practice that also discouraged bullying in the school. The data support the work of Sautner (2008), who indicated that if the purpose of the education system is to foster and maintain respectful, responsible behaviors in students, educators need to develop such character traits in themselves and others. The principals in this study were committed to creating environments that are safe and inclusive of students across multiple dimensions of diversity (see Hernandez & Fraynd, 2015).

Significance of the Study and Recommendations for Further Studies

This section complements what is known in this study and provides a guide for future reference on research in this and related areas of study, particularly utilizing the elements of critical inclusive praxis. I present the significance of the study to the field and make recommendations for further studies. Finally, in the last section of the thesis, I conclude the document with some reflections on the study.

Significance of the Study

This study deepens our collective understanding of how principals negotiate the political dynamics within their schools and vary leadership styles to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture. In these times of global interaction and global conflict, it is critical for school leaders to learn how to develop school communities that bring people together and that encourage positive, supportive relationships. This study could serve as a guide for principals who desire to negotiate the critical dynamics of diverse schools and to create just and democratic schools.

The study illustrates the compatibility of the accessed literature and the field research, rather than each conflicting with each other. The five included elements in critical inclusive praxis lend meaning to the study because the selected principals were able to connect their experiences within the framework, which was also associated with the literature, as they addressed how they went about building a strong, positive, and inclusive school culture. This confirmed that the concept of *critical inclusive praxis* was the appropriate model for this research.

The conceptual framework, thus, also enhanced credibility of this research work as it helped me to engage in deep, meaningful dialogue with the participant principals. The selected principals turned out to be a good sample for this research because they embraced my theoretical framework as a vehicle for this research, and they were willing to engage in critical dialogue with me. In doing so, they increased my knowledge of the dynamics of a critical inclusive praxis and helped me to understand how they constructed inclusive cultures within their schools.

The study also pointed to the importance of building strong and positive relationships within the school community as that informed the work of the selected principals. The principals recognized the need to nurture people, to inspire people, to pay attention to people's concerns, and to build relationships of open-mindedness and care. The principals were able to demonstrate the critical inclusive praxis approach that created a school culture where everyone worked together in harmony and where everyone valued one another. This research study established that relationship-building is significant to all of the five elements within the conceptual framework.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The study leads to some recommendations for further research in this area. Based on the delimitations of this study, it is important to broaden the participation to involve more females

and to extend the demographic areas to include large urban centers. It would be valuable to compare the outcomes of this research to future research if extended to involve more participants overall and to include larger as well as inner-city schools.

The framework utilized in this study elaborated what the principals are doing well in building inclusive school cultures. I recommend further investigation of the challenges that school principals faced to sustain a critical inclusive praxis during times of change. Research in this area would strengthen our understanding about some of the pitfalls and/or intense, ongoing challenges that leaders may face in building and sustaining an inclusive school culture.

Another area for future research is to do an accompanying quantitative survey utilizing the critical inclusive praxis, including the five aspects: culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge. Similar, but more expansive short-answer questions might be included in the survey. This combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches would allow more and deeper understanding concerning what we know about the framework. This initiative could further validate and authenticate the framework as a theoretical and a practical guide to construct an inclusive school culture.

It is also important to see how other elements might fit into the concept of the critical inclusive praxis. I suggest perhaps including relationship-building as an additional element in the framework to see how school leaders would embrace this aspect in their work in constructing socially just and democratic schools. Although relationship-building permeates all five aspects of the existing model, still it may be advisable for future research to include relationship-building to see how it might be addressed on its own in the framework so as to better understand how principals build inclusive school cultures.

Final Reflections

The findings in this study indicate that these principals were key in crafting an inclusive school culture. The participating principals successfully constructed this supportive environment as a result of the knowledge gained through the relationships they built with teachers, students, parents, and their school community. Their daily interactions with everyone in the school, their attention to individuals' concerns, and their open-mindedness promoted an inclusive school culture.

The principals were also crucial in promoting and sustaining positive visions for their schools. They utilized servant leadership, situational leadership, and value-based decision-making to serve and support everyone and to create a school community that was safe from discrimination and violence. The principals created avenues for engaged voice and encouraged an environment where everyone expressed their opinions. They achieved their goals by collaborating and communicating with all stakeholders to establish the right vision for their schools. They promoted a vision that is based on collaboration that embraced individuals' values and beliefs.

I am grateful for the insights and knowledge I have experienced in this research work. The participants were open and transparent in their dialogue and allowed me to form a picture of their schools, their decision-making processes, and their leadership. Through the knowledge of these exceptional leaders, I have developed a much deeper understanding of the elements of a critical inclusive praxis as it applies within the dynamic contexts that are encountered within the challenges of day-to-day life in a school, particularly in a Canadian context.

The framework utilized was attuned to crucial aspects of the work of these principals in building socially just and democratic schools. Although I have suggested previously that the

theoretical framework might be adjusted to include relationship-building as a separate entity, I conclude that critical inclusive praxis model that includes the aspects of culture, change, leadership, inclusion, and challenge was the appropriate model to address the complexity of the work that leaders do in crafting inclusive school cultures.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Personal Information

1. How long have you been a school principal?
2. How long have you worked in Education?
3. What was your role before you became the principal?

School Context

4. Describe your school.
5. How many teachers, students, and support staff are in your school?

School Culture

6. How would you describe the school culture?
7. How do you go about building a positive and inclusive school culture?
8. Please describe an initiative that you led in your school to promote an inclusive culture.

Leadership Style

9. If I were to ask the teachers in your school about your leadership style, what would they tell me?
10. How would you describe your leadership style in practice?
11. What is your personal philosophy of leadership?
12. Can you use a challenging situation that you handled recently to provide some examples of your leadership style?

Conflict/Challenging People

13. How do you handle conflict in your school?
14. Please describe an example of conflict that has arisen recently and tell me how you addressed it.
15. Have you addressed issues of bullying in your school? Please use an example of a time that you needed to address bullying and describe how you handled it.

Inclusion

16. What are the common challenges to an inclusive school culture?
17. How do you address issues of inclusion with your staff and with your student body?
18. How do you encourage members of the school community to voice their opinions rather than having their voices silenced by the cultural norms of the community?
19. Please describe a time when you needed to address an issue of inclusion in your school community.

Change

20. Can you describe a change initiative that took place in your school while you were the principal?
21. How did you lead the change in regards to school culture, inclusion, and voice?

General

22. Is there anything else you would like to address?

Appendix B: Letter to the Superintendent

Month/Day/Year

Research Project Participants Invitation and Permission Letter

Dear Superintendent (name),

I am writing to ask for your permission to invite principals from Name School Division to participate in my study entitled The Effect of the School Principal in Creating an Inclusive School Culture during Times of Change and Challenge. The purpose of this study is to examine the different leadership styles or ways that school principals use: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. To the end, I wish to interview principals who have a candid, open approach within a critical inclusive praxis. I have included a copy of my conceptual framework for the study. I am conducting this research study in partial fulfillment of my Master of Education degree program at Brandon University. This research study is under the guidance of Professor Dr. Helen D. Armstrong from Brandon University. She may be contacted at armstrongh@brandonu.ca or at 306-373-1080/306-270-4854. My contact information is featured on the letterhead.

I would like to ask a few principals (six for my entire study) to participate in a 60 to 75 minute interview. With your approval, I will contact the principals by telephone to schedule a face-to-face meeting at a time that is convenient for both of us. This interview will help me to understand the school principal's experiences with different leadership approaches to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture. It will also help me to understand how they embrace

difficult issues and challenging people and how they build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. I plan to conduct the interviews in the latter parts of June and August, if possible.

I will ensure that the principals have a full understanding of the ethical nature of this study. Please find attached a copy of my consent form for the participating principals. This study has been approved by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC). If you have questions about the ethical nature of this study, feel free to contact BUREC via email at burec@brandonu.ca or by telephone on 204-727-9712.

Please contact me if you wish additional information. I appreciate your consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely,

Ayodeji Osiname, Master's student

Appendix C: Invitation Letter to the Principals

Month/Day/Year

Research Study Participation Invitation

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study, *The Effect of the School Principal in Creating an Inclusive School Culture during Times of Change and Challenge*.

You are being contacted to take part in this research study because you are a school principal and this research work is focused on the effects of the school principal in creating an inclusive school culture during times of change and challenge. I have contacted the Superintendent and s/he agreed that I could conduct my research in the School Division and in your school specifically. I have attached a copy of that letter for your records.

The purpose of this study is to examine the different leadership styles or ways that school principals use: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. I am conducting this research study in partial fulfillment of my Master of Education degree program at Brandon University. This research study is conducted under the supervision of Professor Dr. Helen D. Armstrong from Brandon University. She may be contacted at armstrongh@brandonu.ca or at 306-373-1080/306-270-4854.

I would like to invite you to participate in a 60 to 75 minute interview. If you are willing to participate in my study, please contact me by email at ayodejiosiname@yahoo.com. When I receive your email confirmation, I will contact you by telephone to schedule a face-to-face meeting at a time that is convenient for both of us. Please find attached a copy of the formal

consent form. If you choose to participate in the study, I will ask you to sign that form just before we proceed with the interview. This study has been approved by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC). If you have questions about the ethical nature of this study, feel free to contact BUREC via email at burec@brandonu.ca or by telephone on 204-727-9712.

I appreciate your consideration of my request.

Yours sincerely,

Ayodeji Osiname, Master's student

Appendix D: Consent Letter to the Principals

Month-Day-Year

Consent Form

Thesis Title: The Effect of the School Principal in Creating an Inclusive School Culture during Times of Change and Challenge.

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to examine the different leadership styles or ways that school principals use: to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture that eschews group think; to embrace difficult issues and challenging people while sustaining a positive culture; and to build a school community that supports diversity and embraces change. This information will help me to understand how the school principal uses different leadership approaches to encourage and sustain an inclusive school culture while addressing change and challenge. I would like to ask you to participate in a 60 to 75 minute interview. I am conducting this research in partial fulfillment of my Master of Education degree program at Brandon University. Please read the following statements. Please sign and return the form to me just prior to your face-to-face interview. If you agree to be a participant in the study, your e-mail correspondence to that effect will have allowed us to set up an interview time that works for both of us.

With my signature, I agree with the following statements:

1. **I am participating voluntarily.**

If I choose to participate, I may decide to answer all – or only some – of the interview questions. I understand that I can withdraw some or all of my information from the interview up until the time I receive, read, and approve my transcribed interview, and that

I will communicate that approval or withdrawal of some or all of the interview data by e-mail to the researcher.

2. **There are no risks in my participation.**

There are no risks associated with my participation in the interview. Whether I participate or not will not affect how I am treated in my role as principal. I am aware that by participating that I retain the right to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm. By participating in the research, there is the benefit that my insights on leadership might assist other school administrators.

3. **My anonymity and confidentiality will be protected.**

My real name will not appear in the study or in the final report. No one will know which answers are mine as I will receive a pseudonym. The researcher will take all the necessary steps to assure my confidentiality; he will not share the names of interviewees with other participants or individuals outside the project other than his thesis supervisor and committee members. However, given the size of my school and school division, I do recognize that the nature of some of my responses might lead to my being identified as a participant, and I agree to participate knowing that chance.

4 **I understand my interview data will be protected**

I understand that all audio recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential and password protected by the researcher. The hard copies of data collected will be kept in the researcher's locked office desk as well. After the research is completed, data will be kept in the above location until thesis completion or for one year, whichever comes first. After that time, hard copies will be shredded and digital copies will be securely erased.

5 **I will have access to the results of the study**

I will have access to the results once the data collection and interpretation process is completed. A copy of the results will be made available to me via e-mail. If the research results are published or posted on line, this information will also be made available to me.

6 My interview will be audiotaped

My voice will be recorded during the interview in this research study. I agree to be audiotaped during the interview for the purpose of this research study.

7 I can withdraw from this study if I wish or choose not to answer some questions

If I choose to withdraw from the study, my contributions will not be used up to the time of my approval of some or all of my interview transcript. I can refuse to answer a question if I wish.

8 I have been given access to both the researcher's thesis supervisor and Brandon University's Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) office

My thesis supervisor, Professor Dr. Helen Armstrong, can be reached at armstrongh@brandonu.ca and/or at 306-373-1080 or 306-270-4854. The BUREC contacts are burec@brandonu.ca and 204-727-9712.

I have read and understand the above consent form and by signing this form, I indicate my willingness to take part in this research study.

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher signature: _____ Date: _____

Ayodeji Osiname, Master's student

Brandon University

270 18th Street

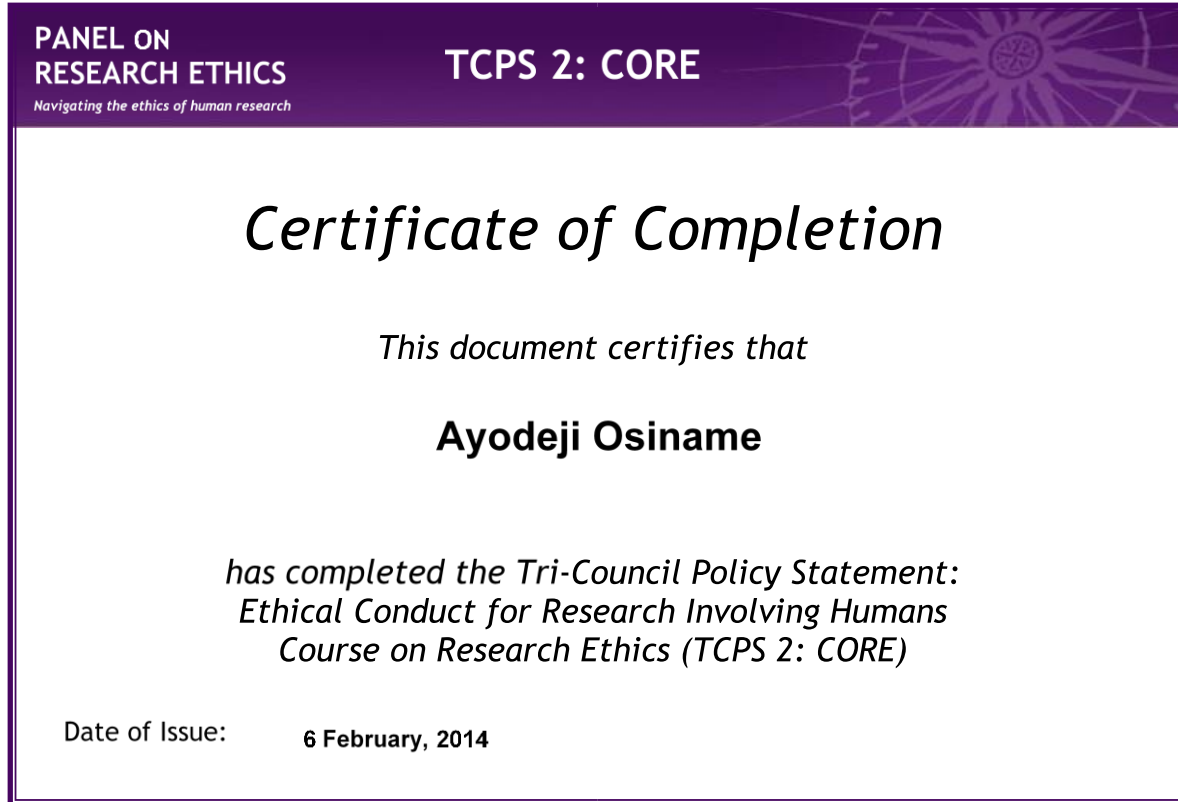
Brandon, MB

R7A 6A9

Tel: 204-571-7869

E-mail: ayodejiosiname@yahoo.com; osinamat48@brandonu.ca

Appendix E: TCPS 2



Appendix F: Ethics Certificate



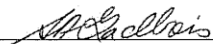
Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) For Research Involving Human Participants

ETHICS CERTIFICATE

The following ethics proposal has been approved by the BUREC. **The approval is valid for up to five (5) years from the date approved, pending receipt of Annual Progress Reports.** As per *BUREC Policies and Procedures*, section 6.0, "At a minimum, continuing ethics research review shall consist of an Annual Report for multi-year projects and a Final Report at the end of all projects... Failure to fulfill the continuing research ethics review requirements is considered an act of non-compliance and may result in the suspension of active ethics certification; refusal to review and approval any new research ethics submissions, and/or others as outlined in Section 10.0".

Any changes made to the protocol should be reported to the BUREC prior to implementation. See *BUREC Policies and Procedures* for more details.

As per *BUREC Policies and Procedures*, section 10.0, "Brandon University requires that all faculty members, staff, and students adhere to the *BUREC Policies and Procedures*. The University considers non-compliance and the inappropriate treatment of human participants to be a serious offence, subject to penalties, including, but not limited to, formal written documentation including permanently in one's personnel file, suspension of ethics certification, withdrawal of privileges to conduct research involving humans, and/or disciplinary action."

Name of Principal Investigator:	Mr. Ayodeji Osiname, Brandon University
Title of Project:	The Effect of the School Principal in Creating an Inclusive School Culture during Times of Change and Challenge
Co-investigator(s):	n/a
Faculty Supervisor: (if applicable)	Dr. Helen Armstrong, Faculty of Education, Brandon University
Research Office File #:	21756 (2015)
Date of Approval:	May 27, 2015
Ethics Expiry Date:	May 27, 2020
Authorizing Signature:	<div style="text-align: center;">  _____ Dr. Shannon Gadbois Co-Chair Brandon University Research Ethics Committee </div>