

Nova Scotia Senior High School Principals as Instructional Leaders

by

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***“Leadership is a combination of strategy and character. If you must be
without one, be without strategy.”***

(Retired General Norman Schwarzkopf in Knuth and Banks, 2006, p. 9)

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

In the wake of the current myriad of external large-scale reforms that senior Nova Scotia high schools are encountering, the concept of instructional leadership is being advocated as the approach school leaders may consider to promote a culture of change within their schools in order to improve student learning. This qualitative study examined how five senior high principals interpret and enact their roles as instructional leaders within their schools.

The five participating senior high school leaders were selected from a list of potential principals who were known to be experimenting with instructional leadership practices within their schools. The research design employed qualitative, semi-structured, audio-taped interviews. The analysis of findings was based on grounded theory methodology.

Analysis of the findings resulted in two key theoretical constructs of how instructional leadership is enacted by the five participating senior high school principals: *leadership as a relational process* and *relationality as the foundation for professional learning* as they are related to educational leadership. The study concludes that the current notion of instructional leadership must be reconstituted to allow for the use of relational leadership to build learning organizations within the senior high school structure.

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Chapter One Introduction

My teaching career has spanned over twenty-four years. During the first seventeen of these years, I was a Resource teacher, working with teachers and school administration in support of student learning. As a professional, who was ever mindful of the need to support the various learning needs of students while considering the overall working conditions of teachers, I frequently struggled to find the realistic ingredients needed to implement foundational changes in instructional pedagogy. On many occasions, my suggestions for changes met with comments insisting why those changes could not be implemented; for example: “The schedules won’t permit it”; “There is not enough time for planning and implementation”; “We need more resources”; and “This won’t help kids learn the skills they need to be successful in the outside world.”

In the last four years, I have been the English Program Consultant for grades 7 to 12 for the Halifax Regional School Board in Nova Scotia, Canada. The Halifax Regional Board serves 53,000 students and employs a teaching staff of 3458 (retrieved January, 29, 2008 from www.hrsb.ns.ca), approximately 850 of these teachers are at the senior high level. As a program consultant, I continue to support curriculum and pedagogical implementation and/or change, most often from grades ten to twelve. Teacher reluctance to consider alternative approaches to their current instructional practices has been consistent throughout my career. In my opinion, the common thread woven throughout this reluctance is the insistence that the current senior high structure of large class sizes and rigid semestered scheduling is not conducive to a climate of change. In addition, teachers appear to fear that students will be losing skills in the wake of the proposed innovation. I also interpret most teachers’ negative comments regarding change to signify their lack of understanding of what they are being required to implement, their feeling that they have insufficient support for their efforts, and their frustration with the lack of tangible resources.

As school boards across Nova Scotia embrace continued large-scale government reform agendas¹ characterized by complex change, I have had a growing concern about

¹ See Appendix C for list of most current reform proposal from *Learning For Life II: Brighter Futures Together*, Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2005.

how senior high school teachers and leaders will manage the new mandates. My school board's administrators also wonder how senior high educators will shift into response mode in order to negotiate multiple external reforms.

Realizing my limited influence on school level organization and instructional practices as a district level program consultant, I wanted to investigate how senior high schools can best build capacity to manage successive educational reforms. My research eventually led to my understanding that the dynamics of school leadership and leaders' abilities to create a climate of change are foundational to teachers embracing mandated innovations, and to becoming more resilient to the ebb and flow of sometimes competing government reforms. Research also indicates that the principal as instructional leader is the most influential leadership stance in helping teachers gain internal commitment through examining their values, beliefs, and knowledge about teaching. Given these findings, I wanted to examine whether or not senior high school principals are able to employ the strategies that the research literature suggests. If so, how do senior high school principals negotiate their roles as instructional leaders? What are the challenges they experience and what are the promising practices emanating from their attempts?

1.1 Background to the Study

While I was engaged in examining the research related to conceptualizations of leadership, I learned that the Nova Scotia Department of Education had conducted a Principal Leadership Advisory Group (PLAG) from 2005 to 2007. The purpose of this advisory group was to consult with principals regarding their role as educational leaders, to "provide exemplary practices and to identify the barriers and solutions to providing this leadership" (Education Quality Services Report, Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2006, p. 3). The Nova Scotia Department of Education wanted to place emphasis on the role of the principal since research confirmed its importance in school improvement that results in increased student achievement. Also, the expectation of school accountability through a School Accreditation process mandated by the Nova Scotia Department of Education further substantiated the emphasis on principalship. A

consultant for Principal Educational Leadership hired by the Nova Scotia Department of Education led the Principal Leadership Advisory Group.

The PLAG compiled a number of recommendations for the Nova Scotia Department of Education to implement in order to support principals as they learn to grasp the meaning and practices of educational leadership. The work of this advisory group eventually culminated into satellite projects operating throughout Nova Scotia to support all levels of principals as they move into instructional leadership roles.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education's commitment to clarify the role of educational leadership in order to provide direction for principals throughout the province further strengthened my conviction that school leadership at the senior high level needed to be explored in greater depth. It became apparent to me that if similar forms of support were to be provided to all levels of principals, recommendations regarding educational leadership would not address the diverse needs of senior high principals. Consequently, these principals would lack rich, concrete examples of best practices of educational leadership and insights into how to address multiple barriers to change at this level. In my experience as a senior high teacher and a senior high curriculum consultant, subject departments working in silos that impede whole school communication and commonality in teaching practice, and a high level of teacher autonomy have challenged change. Furthermore, teachers' ability to learn adequately about their students is obstructed by large classroom populations of between thirty-five to forty-five students and schedules broken into chunks of one-hour periods.

In creating the definition of educational leader, the PLAG determined this role to be one of the *Learning Leader*. The PLAG also established that an educational leader must be able to *craft* the following:

- Focus on student achievement
- Shared vision
- Basis for reflective professional inquiry to create goals and plans of action
- Data collection and analysis processes to inform shared decision making
- Results based orientation for continuous improvement

- Structure for professional collaboration
- Strategy for building teacher leadership capacity
- Effective two way communication practices with all stakeholder groups
- Plan to engage, encourage and support teachers in professional growth
- Personal plan to develop skills and knowledge of educational leadership that is intellectually rigorous and embedded in daily work (PLAG, 2006, p. 18).

These criteria for educational leadership closely align to those described for instructional leaders in educational research. From this point, I will be referring to educational leadership as instructional leadership as the latter is the term most commonly used in research.

My exploration of the research literature informed me that the most effective instructional leaders are characterized by the ability to create collaboration among teaching staff so that peer coaching, action research to inform instructional decision making, and opportunities to analyse student data are provided (Blase & Blase, 2000). I also learned that the traditional role of instructional leader, which demanded that principals have direct contact with teachers to improve their teaching practices, was incongruent with the managerial demands placed on senior high principals, and essentially an impossible task given the number of staff and students within a senior high school (Leithwood, 1994). Leithwood (1994), in response to the impossibility of senior high principals performing in the traditional manner as instructional leaders, suggests that these principals need to distribute their leadership among teaching staff so instructional change takes place through collaboration. Cardno and Collett (n.d.) echo Leithwood's recommendation, by suggesting that distributed leadership encapsulates the transformational qualities needed in order for high schools to engage in the complex change they are currently facing.

The notion of distributed instructional leadership is further supported by the most current educational reform taking place in all schools across Nova Scotia, the implementation of professional learning communities. Professional learning communities, a process which enables teachers to improve student learning by analysing student data, engaging in professional growth, and participating in action research

(Dufour, 2004), is highly conducive to senior high principals employing distributed instructional leadership principles in order to supplement their own role as instructional leaders.

1.2 Professional Significance of the Study

Given that the Nova Scotia Department of Education has targeted funding to clarify the role of principals and to move them into an instructional leadership capacity, my research into senior high principals as instructional leaders is timely. In addition, the realization of professional learning communities in all senior high schools across Nova Scotia creates important implications regarding the senior high principal's role in the implementation of distributed instructional leadership. A lack of research that investigates the dynamics of instructional leadership and distributed instructional leadership at the senior high school level (Klein-Kracht, 1993) demonstrates the need for my study.

As I undertook the study, I anticipated that the insights gained would support my role as program consultant in a variety of ways. Firstly, my research would expand my knowledge of the overt and covert aspects of the senior high structure, thus providing me with better understanding of the implications of change at this level. Secondly, the knowledge I acquired from the principals I interviewed would sensitize me to the challenges they face, thereby providing me with informed considerations I must be aware of as I make recommendations regarding matters of curriculum. Lastly, I would have positioned myself as a support for senior high principals as they move into the role of instructional leaders.

1.3 Research Question

The purpose of my research was to examine how senior high school principals see themselves as instructional leaders, as well as to ascertain their involvement in creating distributed instructional leadership opportunities within their schools. I explored the challenges they face as instructional leaders and successes they have had as they involve

themselves in these concepts of leadership to create a climate of change within their schools.

The question guiding my research was:

How do senior high principals in Nova Scotia conceptualize their role as instructional leaders and what practices do they employ to enact that role?

Initially, I investigated my query through a literature review and then employed a qualitative research method known as grounded theory in which I conducted two-hour semi-structured interviews with five senior high principals. The transcripts resulting from these interviews were coded for categories and themes, which ultimately led to two key theoretical constructs of leadership. These theoretical constructs provided insight into how the five Nova Scotian senior high principals enacted their personal interpretations of instructional leadership.

1.4 Definitions of Common Terms

Instructional Leadership

The concept of instructional leadership advocates that school principals should work directly with teachers to improve their teaching practices in order to increase student achievement (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Distributed Instructional Leadership:

The concept of distributed instructional leadership advocates that the role of leadership can be flexible and involve multiple individuals within a school (Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Grubb and Flessa (2006) contend that distributed instructional leadership describes a balance of “decision-making power between administrators on one hand and teachers on the other” (p. 530).

First Order Change:

First order change is implemented using lock-step, incremental procedures and is referred to as a simplistic form of change (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Second Order Change

Second order change signifies deep organizational restructuring. This restructuring transforms previously held beliefs and values of an organization, and brings about a cultural shift in thinking (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Mentorship

For the purposes of my study, the term mentorship means someone provides support to another individual that results in growth in understanding the theoretical constructs behind assuming new instructional practices. This support is structured and leads to professional development (Cordingly, n.d.). Despite the relationship between mentor and mentee being based on mutual trust and respect, there is a hierarchical element in the nature of the relationship in that the mentor is considered to be the “expert” while the mentee is considered to be the recipient of this expertise (Kochan & Trimble, 2000).

Co-Mentorship

The process by which at least two teachers work together to enhance their understanding and implementation of new instructional pedagogy to improve student learning. These teaching partners support one another’s attempts to experiment with new practices through joint planning, observation, and provision of constructive feedback (Donegan, Ostroskey, & Fowler, 2000). Co-mentorship differs from the expert model of mentorship in that the participating partners carry on a reciprocal, non-hierarchical relationship to develop and adapt innovation to suit their personal teaching style and needs ((Kohler, Crilley-McCullough, Sheerer, & Good, 1997).

Professional Development

The process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, attributes, and values that will improve the service they provide (Zwart, Wubbles, Bergen, & Bolhuis, 2007, p. 166).

Teacher Learning

Change in teachers’ cognition and behaviour (Zwart et al., 2007)

Trust

The foundation of building relationships within the school to promote shared governance. Trust is established through openness and honesty, and school members believe that they will not be treated unfairly. Trust is built slowly and is created more through actions than words (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Teacher Empowerment

The investment of teachers' right to participate in the designation and establishment of schools' goals and policies, and to exercise their professional judgement in the areas of curriculum and instructional practices. Teacher empowerment is governed by respect and dignity that assumes that teaching is a 'moral activity' and that teachers have the ability to reflect on their beliefs and practices in a democratic setting (Blase & Blase, 2001).

School Culture

Gruenart (2005) describes culture as a nebulous concept that attempts to describe how people do things and relate to one another. Culture operationalizes attitudes, actions, and artifacts which endure over time to provide a unique but common psychology for its members. While collaboration is central to school culture, individuality and autonomy are retained. Culture is considered to be the personality of the school (Lick, 2000).

Teacher Leader

A teacher leader is an individual who collaborates with colleagues for the purposes of improving teaching and student learning, not leading. This may occur in an informal or informal capacity. (Davidhizer-Birky, V., Shelton, M., & Headley, S., 2006).

Teamwork

“The willingness and the ability of group members to work together in a genuinely cooperative manner toward a common goal or vision” (Lick, 2000, p.46).

Vision

The goals and targets needed to move toward future school improvement. These are dependant on the school leader's ability to foresee a compelling ideal of the future of the school and understand the dynamic interaction among the human resources within the school setting to reach that image (Ylimaki, 2006).

Chapter Two

Reform for Senior High Schools – The Nova Scotia Context

To contextualize my research I have outlined the present and future proposed reform for the senior high schools in Nova Scotia. This information was gleaned from the following documents published between 1994 and 2005 by the Nova Scotia Department of Education delineating the business plans for Nova Scotian schools and their underlying philosophies: *Restructuring Nova Scotia's Education System – A Discussion Paper*, *Learning for Life*, *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together* and *Blueprint for Building a Better Nova Scotia*. The significance of these documents as well as their implications will be discussed within this chapter. This section will begin by addressing the nature of curriculum policy to provide the reader with a fundamental understanding of the origins and progression of curriculum policy, curriculum reform proposed by the Nova Scotia government, and the implications of these reforms for senior high schools.

2.1 The Nature of Curriculum Policy

Curriculum policy can be defined as the “formal body of law and regulation that pertains to what should be taught in schools” (Elmore & Sykes, 1992, p. 186). No matter where an educational system exists, the two major societal forces of economics and demographics (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006) drive reform in curriculum policy. Elmore and Sykes (1992) outline two views depicting policy making: (1) Policy making is the result of wanting to create larger scale social change through goal-oriented behaviour attempting to change people and institutions. (2) Policy making is the result of political bargaining stemming from competing political interests. Historically, reform has been created by individual school cultures; however, it is currently externally developed and “scaled up” to encompass a larger number of provincial or district schools (Church, 2003). I posit since schools are no longer developing their own reform agendas there are significant implications regarding how they will adopt innovation that has been created by an outside body so that it suits their unique school culture. In addition, the challenge for all schools in the province to uniformly interpret and undertake internal commitment

to reform agendas that have not originated from their school's vision may be a liability against successful implementation of reform.

2.1.1 Nova Scotia Government Policy Statements

The Nova Scotia government's educational reform agenda and its rationale are outlined in a series of public documents. The first of these documents, created in 1994, is entitled, *Restructuring Nova Scotia's Education System – A Discussion Paper*.

Subsequent documents include *Learning for Life*, published in 2002, which attempted to address the expressed educational views of Nova Scotian taxpayers and all members of the school community (*Learning for Life II*, 2005). In 2003, *Blueprint for Building a Better Nova Scotia* was published to expand on the proposed commitments outlined in *Learning for Life*. *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*, published in May of 2005, is an extension of the *Blueprint for Building a Better Nova Scotia* publication, and *builds* on the foundation and fulfills the commitments of *Learning for Life* (*Learning for Life II*, 2005).

Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together is designed to be student-centered, with the understanding that the public education is a shared responsibility of community members. This educational reform plan is based on the following belief statements:

- Students need to have a solid educational background to successfully participate in the global society and economy.
- Student success must be everyone's first priority.
- Public school education is a shared responsibility among government, school boards, schools, parents, teachers, students, the community, and many other education partners.
- Every student needs opportunities to attain his or her greatest potential, every student can achieve success, and all students need adequate time to learn.
- By living healthier lifestyles, students can become better, more engaged learners at school, and healthier Nova Scotians for life (p. vii).

Six themes set the organizational structure for The *Learning for Life II* plan:

1. **Raising the Bar:** This theme centers on improving student achievement and teaching pedagogy so that students can reach their full potential. The Department of Education sees two types of initiatives to achieve "raising the bar": (a) Whole

School Improvement (b) Improvements in curriculum and programs.

2. **Closing the Gap:** This theme recognizes that some students need assistance and different measures in order to achieve in the regular public school system. “Closing the Gap” is subdivided into three initiatives: (a) Programs to help more students succeed (b) Special Education (c) Supports for education.
3. **Developing Healthy Active Learners:** This theme establishes that the public school system has a responsibility in helping students to be healthy, active individuals who are more engaged in learning. “Developing Healthy Active Learners” is subdivided into three initiatives: (a) Health education, physical education, and student leadership (b) Healthy foods in schools (c) Safe schools.
4. **Time to Teach and Time to Learn:** This theme recognizes that today’s global society requires students to know more in order to participate; therefore, smaller class size will be implemented, as well as an examination of how instructional time is allotted and utilized. “Time to Teach and Time to Learn” is categorized under two initiatives: (a) Time on task (b) Smaller class size.
5. **Measuring and Reporting on Success:** This theme recognizes the importance of using useful data or information to make educational decisions and to report on student learning. It focuses on using appropriate information to aid in improvement for students, teachers, classes, schools, school boards, and the province. “Measuring and Reporting on Success” is subdivided into two initiatives: (a) Assessment and evaluation (b) Reporting and accountability.
6. **Strengthening Partnerships:** This theme recognizes that education is a shared responsibility with community partners and that working together will bring about successful results. “Strengthening Partnerships” is subdivided into two initiatives: (a) Direct school-community partnerships (b) Value-adding outside partnerships.

To inform the public regarding the government’s progress in relation to the proposed educational reform outlined in these documents, the Nova Scotia Department of Education annually publishes a report card and a business plan to hold itself accountable to community stakeholders.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education’s business plan for 2007-2008 asserts that

it will continue to work with its partners to affect change by responding to the Nunn Commission Report ², Healthy Eating Nova Scotia, and, more significantly for senior high schools, Skills Nova Scotia. Because of Nova Scotia's aging work force and declining population, the Department of Education has placed continued emphasis on preparing learners for the elevated education and skill requirements needed to successfully participate in the labour market. *Business Plan 2007-2008* states that goals of the Department of Education funnel into Nova Scotia's economic sustainability by being closely aligned to the government's corporate direction and priorities. Therefore, all initiatives, including the standard ones pertaining to the improvement of basic literacy, numeracy, and communication skills, serve to prepare students to contribute to economic opportunities and a skilled workforce:

Creating Winning Conditions and seizing new economic opportunities means that Nova Scotians are well equipped to contribute to and avail themselves of the economic opportunities of tomorrow. This requires a well-educated population and a skilled workforce able to take on the challenges of tomorrow. The initiatives undertaken by the Department of Education contribute to both individual well-being as well as supporting ***healthy families and communities*** (p. 1)

This declaration is further substantiated by the Department of Education's mission statement:

“...to provide excellence in education and training for personal fulfillment and for a productive, prosperous society” (p. 1).

2.1.2 The Policy Agenda for Senior High schools in Nova Scotia

The proposed reform outlined in *Learning for Life II* and *Business Plan 2007-2008*, outlines prominent changes senior high schools will be facing. These can be categorized under four themes: School accreditation and the school improvement process, globally

² In December, 2005, Justice Merlin Nunn published the Nunn Commission Report entitled, *Spiralling out of Control: Lessons learned from a boy in trouble*, as a result of a 31 day inquiry that called into question the effectiveness of the current youth justice system in Nova Scotia (retrieved July 24, 2008, from http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/nunn_commission.asp; and http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/nunn_commission_docs/NunnCommissionBackgrounder.pdf).

competitive work force, measuring and reporting on success, and technology integration.

The following is a brief description of each of these themes:

1. **School Accreditation and the school improvement process** – In its third year of province-wide implementation, this process requires that schools conduct an in-depth examination of student achievement and school performance. Accredited schools are responsible for demonstrating to educational stakeholders and partners that they have met their proposed goals for student achievement and school performance. School accreditation is closely aligned to data-driven reform and the implementation of professional learning communities.

According to the Nova Scotia Department of Education, Accreditation is:

- data-driven school improvement
 - consistent with the Department's and School Boards' stated aim to continually improve schools
 - built on a self-assessment process that is inclusive (school community)
 - a collegial model
 - a response to public accountability
 - about validating the school's improvement plan
 - an opportunity for professional growth
 - about strengthening school-community relations
 - an impetus for change
 - an ongoing process that continues over a regular cycle
2. **Globally competitive work force** – this initiative addresses career development programs and making career connections within established and new senior high school curricula. This initiative also addresses proposed improvements for literacy, numeracy, and communication skills and strategies for retaining at-risk youths in school. To strengthen overall skills of senior high students, the Department of Education is attempting to audit teachers' assignments to ensure that they are teaching within their subject specialty.

3. **Measuring and Reporting on Success** – this initiative addresses the data-driven reform movement that requires teachers to improve assessment and evaluation strategies in order to gain more accurate measurements of student progress. These measurements are then used to make decisions regarding the best instructional practices to improve student achievement and to determine the professional development needs for teachers. Professional learning communities will be used as a vehicle for developing *common assessments* to collect and analyse pertinent data, and to improve instructional methodology. According to the Nova Scotia Department of Education, common assessments are developed by a team of teachers in the same subject area; provide reliable information about students to students, parents, and educators; inform instruction; are the primary focus for learning communities within the school; and provide direction for the school accreditation process.

4. **Technology Integration** – Computers and other technological aids will be infused in schools to expand on access to information technology. This infusion of technology will be accompanied by professional development for teachers in how to use this new equipment and how to integrate technology into existing curriculum.

2.1.3 Implications of the prominent four initiatives for Nova Scotian senior high schools

When considering the four initiatives in respect to senior high schools, each one of them has powerful implications regarding curriculum programming, curriculum delivery, and instructional practices. This section discusses the implications related to each of the four prominent initiatives.

Initiative #1: School accreditation and the school improvement process:

The process of school accreditation involves schools conducting a *School Self-Assessment* process which is contingent on three questions: (1) How are we doing? (2)

How do we know? (3) How are we going to improve? By answering these questions, schools are able to build a comprehensive profile that includes student learning targets, other areas of improvement, and the means for assessing for achievement. Indicators of school performance in relation to the specified areas needing improvement are based on collecting data, which is to be analysed, interpreted and reported on during school reviews. Once a school has completed its accreditation plan, it is reviewed by representatives from the Nova Scotia Department of Education and district school board administration. The premise of effective school improvement is based on the belief that “All children can learn” (Taylor, 2002). In her article, “The Effective School Process: Alive and Well,” Taylor (2002) explains that the process of accreditation emphasizes high expectations in teaching practices and student learning, so that students can be successful in the next grade level and beyond. According to Taylor, accreditation ensures teaching staff reach consensus regarding school improvement measures and changes in classroom practices through the guidance of collected data. Parents and community stakeholders play a key role in determining school goals and priorities.

Initiative #2: Measuring and reporting on Success

Perhaps the most pervasive and challenging reform for senior schools in Nova Scotia is increased accountability for student learning through more ardent, ongoing, and common assessment practices. The notion of such monitoring of student learning speaks to the high standards now expected for improving student achievement for all learners. This type of innovation can be referred to as data-driven high school reform. Data-driven reform strategically uses data from student assessments to plot future courses for student learning, focuses on student results, and promotes continuous school improvement (Coddling & Rothman; Bernhardt all cited in Lachat, 2001). According to Darling-Hammond and Snyder (cited in Lachat, 2001), schools with high accountability implement “practices for feedback and assessment, safeguards to prevent students from ‘falling through the cracks,’ and incentives to encourage all members of the school community to focus continually on the needs of students and the improvement of practice” (p. 15).

Scholarship on school improvement asserts that the effective use of data is essential in improving student achievement. If educators do not analyze and discuss data, they will not be able to determine or solve problems, plan interventions, or know when they have achieved their goals (Coddling & Rothman; Killian & Bellamy all cited in Lachat, 2001).

According to Lachat (2001), one of the barriers to senior high schools using data effectively is that they are not experienced in using data for their own means. Usually data is collected to be sent to external administrators for their use. Consequently, senior high schools have not built the capacity and mechanisms to effectively analyse and interpret student data; therefore, secondary school educators are not knowledgeable about how reform or programs have affected groups of students. Lachat's observation has profound implications regarding the support senior high schools need in order to develop the required expertise to correctly interpret data and then to provide the appropriate interventions when necessary. It remains to be seen whether senior high schools will receive external guidance to develop expertise in data collection and interpretation.

Concomitant with learning to collect and analyse data, teachers are being requested to improve their use of formative and summative assessment practices in order to provide purposeful feedback to students regarding their learning, to inform their instruction, and to more accurately measure and report on student success. Increasing teacher expertise in the use of formative and summative assessment is integral to the *Literacy Success 10-12* strategy. The following summarizes The Department of Education's definition of the various forms of assessment described in *Literacy Success 10-12*:

Summative assessment, also known as "Assessment of Learning," is conducted at the end of an instructional period or to provide information or a mark for reporting. Teachers use this type of assessment to evaluate the student's quality of learning in relation to the learning outcomes in a specific curriculum.

Formative assessment is divided into two types of assessment: "Assessment for Learning" and "Assessment as Learning". The purpose for "Assessment for Learning" is to provide students with ongoing feedback regarding their progress toward meeting the

expected outcomes within a unit of study. Students should be aware of what they need to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of their learning. “Assessment for Learning” assessment strategies and tools allow teachers to assess students’ strengths and needs in order to inform their instructional practices and to track students’ progress over time.

“Assessment as Learning” involves students in the assessment process by providing assessment activities and tasks that allow them to self-assess their progress. This self-assessment encourages students to reflect on how they learn, to determine future steps they may take in their learning and to identify whether they need extra assistance. This self-monitoring process enables students to become more actively engaged in their learning.

Initiative #3: The globally competitive work force

In order for Nova Scotian students to adequately compete and contribute to the local and global economy, the Department of Education has built partnerships with provincial and federal governments, school boards, communities, parents, students, and employers (Nova Scotia Department of Education website, www.ednet.ns.ca, retrieved on Dec. 12, 2007). The outcome of these partnerships was the agreement that the improvement of students’ literacy, mathematics, communication skills, and career development opportunities would be priorities in developing skilled contributors to the work force.

◆ *Literacy:*

The Department of Education began to implement *Literacy Success* in the 2006-2007 school year for grade 10. This initiative is expected to extend to grade 11 during 2007-2008 and to grade 12 during 2008-2009. *Literacy Success* is a continuation of the literacy initiatives entitled *Active Young Readers*, implemented in grades primary to six, and *Active Readers*, implemented in grades seven to nine.

Literacy Success is a cross-curricular, whole school initiative in which English and content area teachers are expected to facilitate students’ growth in reading for meaning by routinely assessing their reading development in order to plan effective instructional support in all subject areas for them.

◆ ***Writers In Action 10-12:***

Writers in Action 10 -12 is to run concurrently with *Literacy Success* as it “places the ‘literacy lens’ on writing and language study” (*Literacy Success Background Paper*, 2007, p. 1). This initiative is designed to ensure students receive “structured, sequential instruction in writing and language, and that they have access to a wide range of writing opportunities including writing workshops” (*Literacy Success Background Paper*, 2007, p. 1).

Literacy Success 10-12 has extremely important implications for senior high school administrators who will be expected to have a “thorough” understanding of the English Language Arts curriculum and its underlying principles: the principles of effective reading instruction and the role of effective literacy intervention; the principles of learning; and the Essential Graduation Learnings. Administrators are also expected to support cross-curricular reading instruction, effective classroom practices such as flexible groupings and time management, and effective assessment strategies by promoting a collaborative climate conducive to sharing of resources and planning.

The successful implementation of this literacy reform remains to be seen as never before have senior high school educators been mandated to execute a cross-curricular reform in which they are all pursuing a similar outcome.

◆ ***Numeracy:***

While a cross-curricular reform is not being mandated for numeracy, several senior high schools have designated the improvement of targeted numeracy and mathematical concepts and skills as a school wide pursuit. To support their job training efforts, the Department of Education will be implementing Math: Trades and Technology 12. Math Essential 11 teachers will be offered professional development and Math 10 teachers are will be working toward the enhancement of students’ algebraic skills.

◆ ***Career Development and Preparation for the Work Force:***

Business Plan 2007-2008 outlines the following programs:

Options and Opportunities (O2):

O2 is a program offered to select senior high schools within the province. Each year funding is available for additional sites to offer this program. O2 provides opportunities for students to engage in experiences related to a field of work that interests them and provides preferential access to the Nova Scotia Community College. During 2007-2008 O2 programs will be offered in the following areas in twenty-seven senior high schools throughout the province:

- Trades and Technologies
- Business Education
- Health and Human Services
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information Technology
- Arts, Culture, and Recreation

Composite Programming:

Select senior high schools in the province will offer programs to promote hands-on learning in trade-specific areas such as Metals, Woods, Plumbing/Pipefitting, and Electrical.

Youth Pathways and Transitions:

The Department of Education will implement career-related courses such as Multi-media 12, Geomatics 12, and Tourism 12. It will introduce Keyboarding, Exploring Technology, Food Technology, and Food Handling and Production at grade 10. Content area teachers will receive a resource entitled *A Career Infusion* so that career education can be integrated across the curriculum.

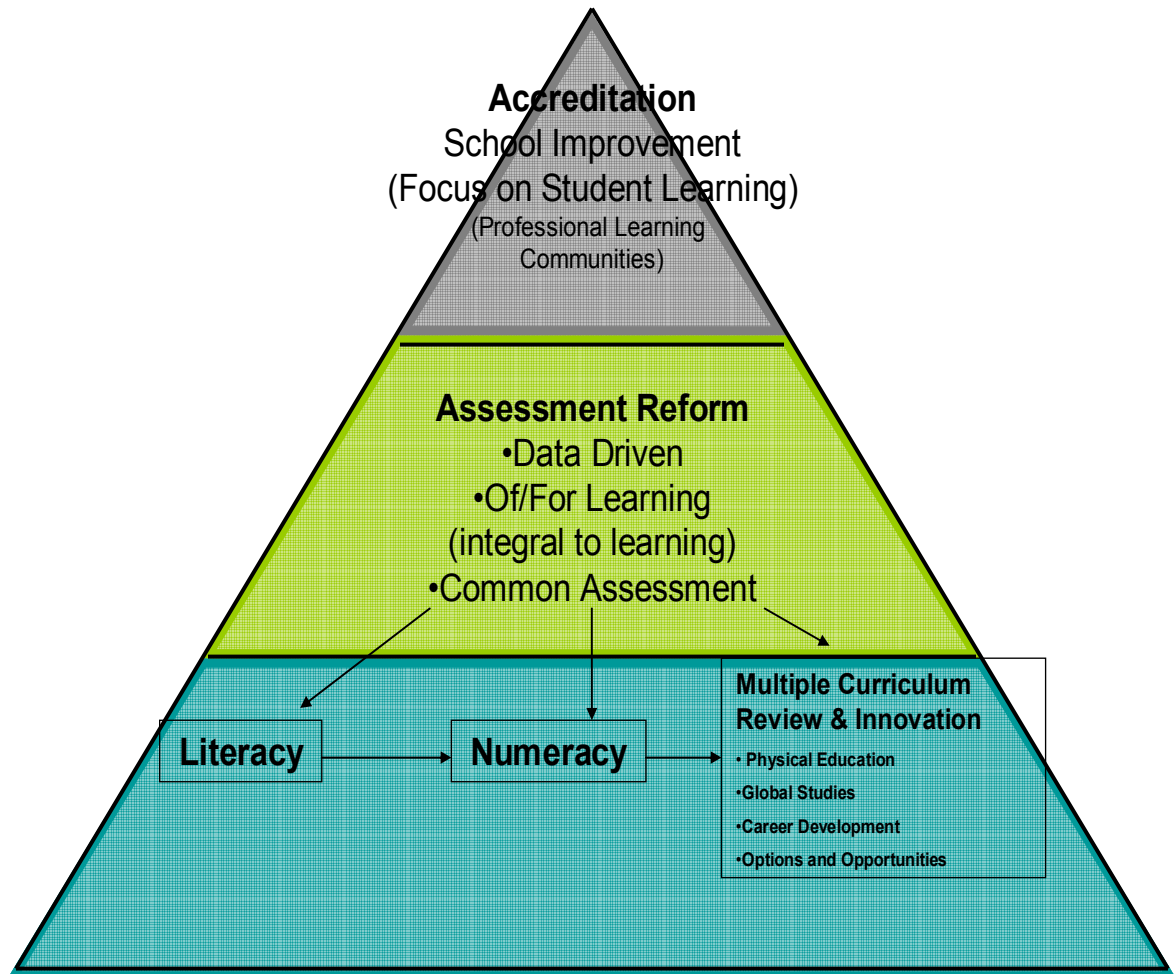
Initiative #4: Technology Integration:

Learning for Life II advocates that technology within the classroom is best utilized when it is integrated into instruction and existing curriculum. In order for technology use to be effective for students, teachers must recognize its importance and be able to

properly use it within their daily instruction. The Department of Education has committed funds to provide ongoing professional development and additional technician support to enhance classroom and school technology use.

2.1.4 Systemic Implications for Nova Scotia Reform

Under the above four initiatives exist 28 reform strategies targeting student learning at the senior high level (see Appendix C). I have created the diagram below to provide a visual representation of the positionality of these reforms in relation to each other.



Accreditation stands at the apex as this is the over all vision that guides the other reforms. Following is assessment, which provides the information for accreditation and the information for appropriate teaching strategies for literacy, numeracy and other curriculum innovation. Improved literacy, numeracy, and student learning in a variety of subject areas and programs are at the base of the pyramid since this is the intended foundation for senior high school reform.

In this chapter I have attempted to outline the Nova Scotia government's proposed reforms for Nova Scotia high schools, as well as the rationale behind the future focus of education. Clearly, senior high schools in this province are undergoing substantive reinvention in such areas as partnerships in program and curriculum development, enhancement of curriculum through literacy and numeracy, curriculum revision, new curriculum, assessment practices, accountability, and school improvement practices. Underlying all of these changes is the notion that teachers and school leaders will collaboratively work together in order to negotiate this myriad of reform in the belief that they will set the course for implementation within their unique school cultures.

Given that Nova Scotia's senior high schools have never before encountered such quick paced, large-scale reform, my research queries how senior high principals are employing their personal interpretations of instructional leadership to weather these turbulent times of change. In addition, my research touches on how senior high principals have managed to marry their schools' vision with reforms mandated by the Nova Scotia government.

2.2 Rethinking School Leadership

This literature review outlines the scholarship on current conceptualizations of leadership, the need to rethink school leadership and the characteristics of effective school principals. In addition, I describe the challenges of coping with systemic obstacles, and the dynamics of staff relations at the senior high level. I also discuss the characteristics of successful senior high schools. This literature review provided the basis for the questions I asked during the semi-structured interviews I conducted with senior

high principals.

2.2.1 A New World: The Need for a Different Leadership Conceptualization

Grubb and Flessa (2006) ask, “Why should we continue to have schools with traditional administrative structures, particularly as single principals who own a school?” (p. 543). Grubb and Flessa contend that the current role of school principal is the idiosyncratic reenactment of the notion of principal based on a traditional grammar of schooling. This concept of principal relies upon an outdated organizational structure, which creates a hierarchical division of labour. These researchers further assert that the increased complexity of the role of principal and the substantive external demands for student achievement makes this hierarchical structure no longer feasible.

In my experience, supported by the research of investigators such as Hargreaves (1994) and Fullan (2001), modern day teachers are no longer the non-questioning professionals of yesterday. The overload of demanding change has caused all generations of teachers to be suspicious of the political intentions behind new reform. This suspicion manifests itself in overt or subtle forms of rebellion and a pervasive atmosphere of distrust and negativity. I believe that exerting hierarchical pressure on the simmering pot of negativity potentially creates a staff climate that will eventually disintegrate and, thus, negatively affect student learning. I posit that these conditions call for rethinking the existing dynamics of leadership, and an investigation as to how the role can become non-hierarchical, yet still be effective in motivating teachers to undertake measures to improve student learning.

2.2.2. Six Models of Leadership

To ensure that I embarked upon my study with a broader perspective of the conceptualizations of leadership, I reviewed Leithwood and Duke’s (1999), “A Century’s Quest to Understand School Leadership,” which briefly describes six models of contemporary leadership practice. The first, **instructional leadership**, focuses on the principal’s influence on teachers’ behaviours and instructional pedagogy, and advocates

direct involvement in factors affecting student achievement. Instructional leadership, which can be distributed among teachers and administrators at all levels of the educational system, involves defining the school mission, managing curriculum issues and instruction, and creating a school climate conducive to student learning. The second, **transformational leadership**, promotes the “transcendence of self-interest by both the leader and the led” (p. 49). Leithwood and Duke describe this concept of leadership as one that touches the souls of those involved in an organization so that the heightening of human consciousness inspires meaningful decision-making, benefiting the greater good. Transformational leadership consists of seven dimensions: building school vision; establishing school goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; modeling best practices and important organizational values; demonstrating high performance expectations; creating a productive school culture; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

The third model, **moral leadership**, which centers on the values and ethics of the leader, promotes the use of high-level values when making decisions, solving conflicts within the organization or among staff, or when weighing value conflicts. The fourth, **participative leadership**, is synonymous to “group”, “shared” and “teacher” leadership in that it emphasizes democratic decision making within a group or groups. Participative leadership is advocated during a time when the increased demands of school restructuring and site-based management make it problematic for any one individual to make encompassing decisions.

The fifth model, **managerial leadership**, allocates authority to formalized positions, which must perform functions or tasks to ensure the operation of the organization. The distinguishing characteristic between leaders and managers is that the latter must be involved in tasks that promote policy implementation, organizational stability, and the completion of routine organizational tasks “done right” (March & Simon; Massie all cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Leadership theories have replaced management theories within schools; however, Catano and Stronge (2006) report that the notions of leadership that principals are expected to foster are in conflict with the “day to day managerial functions associated with running a school” (p. 225). They further contend, “The

political pressure of high-stakes accountability requires principals to improve instruction and student achievement while balancing the need to maintain facilities, supervise student conduct, and manage budgets” (p. 231). The sixth model, **contingent leadership/leadership styles**, asserts that individuals in positions of authority should have mastery of several leadership abilities in order to respond to “unique organizational requirements or problems they face” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 54).

2.2.3 Standards for School Administrators

There is very little literature that actually defines the nature of principals’ work; however, the most comprehensive descriptors of the role of school leadership are outlined in the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in the United States. The ISLLC has defined six standards for school administration, which combine Leithwood and Duke’s (1999) descriptions of instructional and transformational leadership:

1. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;
2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning, and staff professional growth;
3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment;
4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner;
6. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context (Murphy, Yff, & Shipman all cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 294).

2.2.4 Characteristics of Effective Principals

Several studies have indicated a number of abilities and characteristics demonstrated

by school administrators who are successful at implementing and sustaining reform, and leading positive school cultures. Overwhelmingly, research insists that a leader's ability to create and maintain positive relationships produces high performing schools. More precisely, Barnett and McCormick (2004) found that principals who were successful at initiating and sustaining reform demonstrated individual concern toward teachers by recognizing their personal backgrounds, being accessible, recognizing their efforts, and by treating them with respect and fairness. These effective principals also used pressure and support tactics to ensure teachers engaged students in their instructional practices (O'Donnell & White, 2005). These findings bring into question whether leadership characteristics can be taught, given that interpersonal skills tend to be “stable personal qualities that have developed over time” (Catano & Stronge, 2006, p. 429).

Tony Wagner (2001), an educator of thirty years, believes the ultimate indication of a successful leader is that he or she possesses the ability to nurture engagement on the part of all stakeholders in order to transform a school. Effective school administrators build positive environments in which excellence in student performance is promoted through networks of relationships with stakeholders who are committed to pursuing a shared vision and purpose (Sergiovanni; Hallinger & Heck; Andrews, Basom & Basom; Dwyer all cited in O'Donnell & White, 2005). Bryk and Schneider (cited in Fullan, 2007) learned that successful schools were led by principals who set an example by developing and sustaining “relational trust” among stakeholders. This relational trust, and the principal’s commitment to participate in school improvement, provided the foundation for successful professional learning communities.

Various studies (Bryk et al., 1998; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004, all cited in Fullan, 2007) indicate other characteristics that successful school leaders possess:

- an inclusive, facilitative orientation
- an institutional focus on student learning
- efficient management
- practical understanding of pressure and support
- an ability to leverage teacher commitment and support for collaboration

- an ability to broker and develop learning resources for teacher communities
- an ability to support transitions between stages of community development
- an ability to set direction for the organization
- an ability to develop people
- an ability to redesign the organization (pp. 160, 162 & 166)

Day (2004) contributes to this list by adding the following:

- rejection of a minimalist approach to leadership - “to just do the job”
- adaptability
- sustaining a sense of identity and purpose; maneuver and manage tensions
- displaying intellectual and emotional engagement with stakeholders
- establishing a clear, enduring set of values and ideologies which inform practice despite the social context

Molinaro and Drake’s (1998) findings from their study of successful Canadian senior high school reform reveal that effective principals created a climate of change, promoted shared leadership, and valued collaboration. These three strategies were used interdependently to create a comprehensive condition for school improvement. Molinaro and Drake (1998) especially noted that school leaders understood the complexity of change, thereby enabling teachers to grow and develop, and to work collaboratively with their colleagues.

dePlessis, Conley and Hlongwane (2007) posit that the greatest shift in the paradigm of school leadership is that it is now fuelled by multiple and complex reform efforts. The school leader’s new role is not to promote any particular reform effort as much as to mobilize school stakeholders to ensure student success. In other words, there is a shift from advocating the right reform to developing people and collaboration. The development of school stakeholders demands that leaders acquire the following capabilities:

- dealing effectively with local community needs and a more diverse student population
- being sensitive to culture and gender issues

- promoting tolerance and social cohesion
- using new learning technologies
- keeping pace with rapidly developing fields of knowledge and approaches to leadership and management
- accessing high quality research as a basis to develop curriculum and pedagogy
- bringing practical and theoretical knowledge together to promote teaching practices
- modeling democratic forms of leadership in schools
- locating their work in the wider community context, balancing professional and lay interests (p. 20).

On the contrary, ineffective principals undermine decisions, keep a tight reign on their subordinates, scrutinize practices, make others feel unappreciated, and deal with teachers coldly or “by the book.” Ineffective principals also do not span the boundary of the school to encompass community members and agencies, preferring isolation and secretiveness instead (Blase & Blase, 2001).

The role of senior high principal is constantly rife with tension. One of the foremost tensions is between attempting to build capacity through collaborative communities that share power and decision-making, and the bureaucratic model of external leadership that promotes pressure through an observance of a results-oriented environment. The competing demands for internal and external change place the principal in an awkward position as to how to best introduce innovation within a school. Research proposes that successful leaders have the ability to ensure that these tensions balance one another. They are also capable of finding the right balance during change between over prescribing what is to happen, which appears controlling, or under preparing staff, which creates chaos. (Day, 2004; Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2007).

2.2.5 Instructional Leadership

Since the benefits of instructional leadership on student achievement resurfaced during my research, I decided to further investigate the scholarship on this leadership concept. This investigation revealed that instructional leadership has evolved to include

transformational qualities because of the complex demands placed on schools today. In order to enhance its transformational nature, research recommends that instructional leadership be distributed among teaching professionals.

2.2.5.1 Direct Instructional Leadership

Historically, school principals have performed purely managerial tasks that are necessary to maintain school operations such as planning, collecting, and distributing information, budgeting, hiring, scheduling and up keeping the physical plant (Coldren & Spillane, 2007). In the current context in which there is emphasis on improvement of student learning, standardized assessment and school accreditation, there is a focus on engaging school administrators in instructional leadership. According to Leithwood and Drake (cited in Ruff & Shoho, 2005), instructional leadership is characterized by a role that “typically focuses on the behaviours of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of the student” (p. 555). Krug (1992) conceptualized instructional leadership in five categories: Defining mission, managing curriculum and instruction, monitoring student progress, and promoting instructional climate through modeling of teaching strategies, and teacher supervision (Krug, 1992; Peterson cited in Kleine-Kracht, 1993). These categories lend to the notion of *direct* instructional leadership, which has a “hands on and face-to-face” quality and a top-down supervisory focus (Daresh & Liu cited in Kleine-Kracht, 1993; Catano & Stronge, 2007).

More recently, the notion of instructional leadership has adopted transformational qualities driven by a sense of morality and an established vision (Cardno & Collett, n.d.). Researchers (Blase & Blase; Brubaker et al.; Lashway; Ubben & Hughes all cited in Catano & Stronge, 2006) emphasize that the current notion of instructional leadership still requires leaders to be technically competent while they create school missions, focus on student results, and evaluate teachers. Now that they are expected to work collaboratively with teachers to accomplish the school’s mission, the nature of direct instructional leadership has become overwhelming, and impractical.

2.2.5.2 From Direct Instructional Leadership to Distributed Instructional Leadership:

In the literature on educational leadership, the terms distributed leadership and shared leadership are used interchangeably. For the purposes of my study, these terms will be synonymous to one another.

The move from direct instructional leadership to models that feature indirect or distributed leadership is related to evolving understandings related to the characteristics of change. In the past, educational policy reform has followed what Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) would describe as **first order change**. First order change follows predictable, incremental steps usually pertaining to alterations in procedures or curriculum content. With patience and fortitude, first order change is often easily implemented. However, the notion of reform in the twenty-first century no longer means implementing the newest educational policy; it now signifies changing the culture of classrooms, schools and districts (Fullan, 2007). These current educational transformations are characterized as **second order change**, which is not as easily undertaken. Second order change involves dramatic modifications meaning deeper change to previously established understandings of teaching pedagogy, and cannot usually be implemented using lock-step strategies which have proven to be successful in the past (Marzano et al., 2005). According to Huffman (2003), second order change also attempts to alter the underlying mechanisms of organizations, including structures, goals, and roles. This type of change brings much chaos and confusion as educators scramble to understand what is needed for effective problem solving and implementation.

Leithwood (1994) posits that the narrow view of the traditional definition of instructional leadership does not make way for second order change reform which requires attunement to the influence of “culture on the meaning people associate with their work and willingness to risk change” (p. 501). Leithwood further contends that the original vision for direct instructional leadership is based on the values during an era of first order change, which primarily affected the core technology of curriculum. Making the concept of direct instructional leadership more problematic is the view that it must fit a “tightly defined” set of criteria that focus on the primary task itself. This view

competes with the reality that “because instruction is impacted upon by many other variables, the principal must have a wider set of concerns” (Cardno & Collett, n.d., p. 17).

Given that there are competing views and expectations regarding instructional leadership, the concept has broadened to focus on indirect or distributed instructional leadership (Cardno & Collett, n.d.). Distributed instructional leadership lends itself to transformational qualities and involves the practices of multiple individuals working within a complex network of relationships and interactions toward a vision or goal (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007). It is also defined by sharing the roles and responsibilities of leadership with appropriate others, such as department heads or teachers, acquiring resources, and maintaining the building (Cardno & Collett, n.d.; Daresh & Liu cited in Klein-Kracht, 1993). Scholarship on leadership demonstrates that effective leadership is not primarily embedded in formal roles and most often develops from relationships among people (Schribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007). Effective leaders are not defined by a set of characteristics, but by an approach to their work “that is guided by a distinctive set of beliefs about what is possible” (Krug, 1992, p. 124) and that creates an atmosphere of trust that allows for risk-taking without fear (O’Donnell & White, 2005).

The notion of shared leadership recognizes that tapping into the ideas, creativity, skills, and initiative of the majority in an organization “unleashes a greater capacity for organizational change, responsiveness, and improvement” (Woods cited in Maxcy & Nguyen, 2005). Spillane et al. (cited in Scribner et al., 2007) describe distributed leadership as having two components: (1) Leadership is “situationally” distributed through the structural aspects of schools such as teacher committees and physical placement in the school. (2) Leadership is “socially” distributed through interactions among teachers. The nature of the subtleties of these interactions influences the success of overall leadership. Gronn (cited in Scribner et al., 2007) agrees with Spillane et al. in the assertion that interaction among teaching professionals is central to attaining optimal leadership.

2.2.5.3 Evidence of the Power of Shared Instructional Leadership

The concept of shared instructional leadership is relatively new and has begun to influence empirical studies of school leadership (Bennett, Wise, Words, Harvey & Smylie all cited in Schribner et al, 2007). It is also partially inspired from reform in private industry toward the *new organization*, characterized by a flat hierarchical structure, filled with skilled and motivated professionals who group as necessary into self-managing, flexible teams (Drucker cited in Scribner et al., 2007).

Effective leaders develop leadership in others within an institution and enable members to take up their roles in relation to the primary task or vision (James et al. all cited in Fullan, 2007). Principals who do not encourage leadership in others will “quickly learn that there is not enough time for one person in a school to carry out the myriad of leadership tasks” (O’Donnell & White, 2005). Research on change indicates that innovation is more likely to be substantive and sustainable when those responsible for its implementation are included in shared decision-making (Schribner et al., 2007). Molinaro and Drake (1998) assert that strategies critical to implementing sustainable educational reform center around a “non-hierarchical” structure. Schools possessing flatter hierarchies and self-managing teams that “develop goals, curricula, instructional strategies, budgets, and staff development programs” have students with higher achievement, and more creative, improvisational professionals (Schribner et al, 2007, p. 71). It is interesting to note that principals functioning solely as managers have less successful schools than those who act as instructional leaders in collaboration with teachers (Davidhizar-Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006).

2.2.5.4 The Need for Distributed Instructional Leadership at the Senior High Level

Leithwood (1994) strongly advocates the employment of distributed or indirect instructional leadership at the senior high school level:

The size of secondary schools challenges the feasibility of principals exercising the sort of direct influence on classroom practice envisioned in early views of instructional leadership. There are just too many teachers and classrooms for the time available. In addition, the complexity of the secondary school curriculum and the amount of

pedagogical content knowledge required for expert teaching and its development defies the sort of comprehensive appreciation that would be required for direct teacher supervision, even if it were feasible to find the time (cited in Cardno & Collett, n.d, p. 9)

He further asserts that when leadership is distributed among various school staff, the principal is able to focus more on the transformational aspects of the school such as the “big picture” and the long-term vision for student performance (Cardno & Collett, n.d). The principal’s primary concern is to create a school culture, vision and goals, and to keep them at the forefront of daily school responsibilities and operations, so that students and teachers have a framework for their actions and decisions (Jantzi & Leithwood cited in Cardno & Collett, n.d.). According to Harris (2004), distributed leadership is receiving increased support because of its potential to build a capacity of knowledge and to promote the collective agency needed to sustain school improvement.

Hallinger and Heck (cited in Cardno & Collett, nd.d) envision the secondary school principal clarifying and confirming staff commitment to the school’s mission, and participating in activities that create a school culture characterized by effective learning and teaching. These characteristics of leadership promote the role as being strategic and bringing coherence to change initiatives for teachers, thereby reducing stress and frustration. It also puts the principal in the role of “resource provider” to maximize teaching learning while leaving curriculum management to teacher leaders (Cardno & Collett, n.d.).

The strength of shared leadership, combined with relational trust, rests in its power to stimulate the human potential within the school. While formal leadership must carry on specific tasks and roles pertaining to the position, distributed leadership capitalizes on collectively involving teachers to shape and guide the instructional and institutional development of the school (Harris, 2004). Despite, however, the myriad of educational research documenting the positive effects of distributed leadership (Davidhizer-Birky, Shelton, Headly, 2006; Harris, 2004; Leithwood, 1994; Fullan, 2001 & 2007; Youngs, 2007, etc.) very few senior high schools undertake this leadership approach. Perhaps it has to do with the difficulties in finding teachers who are willing to lead others, or it is

that teachers who wish to be leaders believe that they will not be valued in their role.

2.2.5.5 Barriers to Implementing Distributed Leadership

Davidhizer-Birky et al. (2006) assert that in order for teachers to want to assume leadership roles, they must believe that their voices are valued, that they are not micromanaged, and that they receive intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for what they do. Frequently, extrinsic rewards come in the form of verbal praise and public acknowledgement for their efforts. Most importantly, the senior high principal must work in the spirit of collaboration with all school stakeholders and be willing to support the teacher leaders with tangible resources such as release time, and curriculum resources. These researchers also make note that since teachers have been primarily in the role of teaching, they may need to learn specific skills that will enable them to become effective collaborative leaders to their colleagues.

Another barrier to effectively implementing a distributed leadership approach is that school principals with a hierarchical conceptualization of leadership fear relinquishing their power to others. As principals move toward letting go of their hierarchical power, they can expect to feel a sense of loss and role strain when moving to the new style of leadership. This role strain may be experienced as anxiety, general distress, fear of failure, self-doubts about personal competence, impatience, and frustration. There may also be fears of losing professional identity. In fact, as principals let go of the old hierarchical style of leadership, they will not initially feel the optimism, caring, friendliness, enthusiasm, and honesty that their more democratic counterparts share. These attributes will begin to take hold as they become more confident in their new professional identity (Blase & Blase, 2001).

In addition, issues pertaining to interpersonal relationships among staff members and between teachers and school leadership must be clearly addressed in a proactive manner. Principals must take into account that teachers who are not in leadership roles may become threatened by those who assume them; this has the potential to upset the balance of relationships within the school. Critical to teacher leaders' survival is gaining the

necessary skills to deal with hostility from other teachers who are experiencing inertia, or who are over cautious or insecure about changing their practices (Harris, 2004).

Yongs (2007) cautions that while shared leadership is a powerful strategy for school change, a school leader must expect interpersonal conflict as multiple leaders collide in their thinking. From a micro-political perspective, distributed leadership can be described as “distributed pain.” School leaders must recognize and mediate boundary issues and be able to talk staff through the “messiness” of sharing leadership for the first time. In addition, school leaders must be sensitive to teacher leaders being ostracized by other school staff who perceive them as being the principal’s favourites. In this regard, teachers can be pitted against one another in an attempt to make each other feel inferior, rather than accomplishing goals to better the school environment (Barnett & McCormick, 2004).

Decision-making helps teachers build resilience and be flexible during times of uncertainty; however, principals must be able to monitor when teachers are ready to be involved in decision-making. Involvement in decision-making may depend on where and when teachers are in their careers. In order for shared leadership to be successful, leaders must be able to work in two domains: 1) Stepping in when it is appropriate, and 2) Backing off to let teachers make decisions (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Leaders who are best at implementing shared leadership usually have the ability to network with others within and outside of the school building. Therefore, the principal who wishes to pursue this approach must have strong communication and interpersonal skills in order to build productive relationships within the school and to motivate others to lead, especially in a senior high culture in which teachers are separated by the boundaries of subject departments (Harris, 2004).

2.2.5.6 The Realities of School Leadership in the Nova Scotian Context

In order for me to gain a clearer understanding of the competencies and skills required of school principals within Nova Scotia, I reviewed the function and duties expected of school administration outlined in the Nova Scotia Education Act (see Appendix D).

Examination of the required functions and duties reveals a managerial approach to school leadership with such expectations as the following: keep attendance records respecting every student enrolled at the school; communicate regularly with the parents of the students; identify staffing needs of the school; and, evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff of the school. Other requirements involve preparations of annual reports, fiscal and budgetary concerns, assisting in the design of professional development, and insurance that provincial and school board policies are followed.

While the managerial requirements within the Nova Scotia Education Act illustrate a variety of tasks related to following policy and overseeing staff and students, a preferred philosophical foundation for leadership is not described. Perhaps the omission of leadership philosophy from the education act is due to the controversies surrounding the conceptualization of leadership. Yukl (cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1999) argues, “Like all constructs in social sciences, the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no correct definition” (p. 45). Consequently, the numerous conceptualizations of leadership create tension between implementing a leadership model and efficiently managing a school (Catano & Stronge, 2006).

References to principals assuming the role as instructional or educational leaders are non-existent within the Nova Scotia Education Act. The Nova Scotia Department of Education’s targeted funding to promote the notion of school administrators as instructional leaders is an indication of movement toward establishing this as a preferred leadership concept.

Bolding and Gosling (2006) note that despite the strong evidence that relationship building is the foundation of effective school leadership, competency frameworks within most principals' job descriptions make no mention of the interpersonal skills needed to build these relational networks. In fact, competency frameworks often build the image of leaders as individuals who “might exist in splendid isolation, with no need for meaningful relationships with others, let alone acquire their belief, commitment and acquiescence” (p.158). Lack of relational competencies is evident in the description of the functions and duties of principals in the Nova Scotia Education Act (see Appendix D). While the

words “assist”, “participate”, “communicate” and “co-operate” are used in reference to working with school advisory councils and community agencies, there are no criteria indicating that principals are the leaders in building and nurturing relationships among, staff, students, parents, and community members.

Research clearly demonstrates that school principals are the foundation for instructional leadership and the key figures in leading school improvement initiatives, especially during a time when data-driven environments demand that the developmental needs of all students are met (O’Donnell & White, 2005; Fullan cited in O’Donnell & White, 2005; Kearns & Harvey cited in Catano and Stronge, 2006). However, according to Catano and Stronge (2006), the multiple conceptualizations of leadership and management provide greater conflict and role strain during a time when principals are attempting to reshape instructional practices by empowering their staffs, while, concurrently, attempting to satisfy external reform pressures for improved student achievement. Fullan (2007) describes the role conflict as a result of two worlds colliding. The old world expects the principal to efficiently operate schools and be responsive to all stakeholders as the new world, filled with multiple new competing demands, necessitates that students will show vast improvement on test results and that the school should become a learning organization.

Mary-Lou Donnelly, President of the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union, reflects Fullan’s comment and sums up the plight of school principals in Nova Scotia in her op-ed piece in the January 21st, 2008 edition of the Chronicle Herald:

The role of school administrator continues to focus on responsibility to the educational needs of the students, interactive communications with parents, school board and staff, yet it has expanded with a new curriculum of community wants and needs...School administrators have to balance school management and student success with meaningful yet timely programs, such as school safety issues...No one will argue about the safety of students...The point made is each new requirement placed on a school staff must be taken from the same time bank.

The context of my study explores how senior high principals in Nova Scotia manage to juggle the multiple demands of their roles, while enacting their personal interpretations

of instructional leadership. Moreover, my research examines how these principals attempt to build and nurture relationships among school stakeholders in the face of role strain that can potentially sidetrack them from exercising their leadership ideals, to performing purely managerial tasks.

2.2.5.7 The Need for Research of Leadership at the Senior High Level

Regardless of the compelling research that indirect or distributed instructional leadership is advantageous in creating a culture supportive of teacher and student learning at the secondary school level, there has been little examination of principals who have deliberately chosen to cultivate other members' instructional leadership and who have decided to influence instruction indirectly (Klein-Kracht, 1993). Klein-Kracht (1993) contend that most studies conclude instructional leaders other than the principal carry out this role "in spite" of the principal, or they appear to randomly take up the gauntlet of leading curriculum initiatives.

Klein-Kracht's findings clearly illustrate that more research needs to occur at the secondary school level regarding the implementation and implications of indirect or distributed instructional leadership. My research not only attempts to ascertain how senior high principals in Nova Scotia attempt to implement distributed instructional leadership, it also explores how these principals marry this concept of leadership with their personal interpretation and enactment of instructional leadership. My study probes how teachers respond to the notion of distributed instructional leadership and how they undertake their roles as instructional leaders within their school culture. In addition, I examine the implications of distributed instructional leadership on reculturing senior high schools into personalized organizations.

2.3 Reform at the senior high school level

To appreciate the role of senior high school leaders, it is important to understand the dynamics of the senior high school structure and culture. It has been my experience that senior high schools are complex structures, which include a variety of subcultures. The

intricate and diverse characteristics of these school settings contribute to numerous challenges in leading staff and implementing reform. This section will discuss the challenges that face senior high principals and will describe the characteristics of senior high schools that have successfully implemented reform.

2.3.1 Systemic and Structural Barriers to a Paradigm Shift

Since the 1990s, the educational system has called for an “unprecedented commitment” to ensuring all students are critical thinkers, communicators, and problem solvers who will be ready to enter the global economy and technological society (Lachat, 2001). This current focus has put a strain on senior high schools since their structure was initially created to meet the needs of an industrial era, which only demanded that students find their place in society. In the past, students who did not perform well in high school still had the opportunity to gain employment upon leaving. Today, high schools are viewed as underperforming if students do not gain the essential competencies needed to compete in the job market (Lachat, 2001).

Lachat and Williams (cited in Lachat, 2001, p. 14) created the following chart to illustrate the shift in the paradigm of high schools. While this chart is representative of the high school reform initiatives in the United States, Canadian secondary schools are embarking on similar paradigm shifts:

Comparison of Traditional and New Paradigm for High Schools	
Traditional School Paradigm	New Paradigm for Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The "inputs" and process of education are emphasized over results. Curriculum is "covered," and instruction is organized around limited time units prescribed by the school schedule. Schools accept the failure of a significant number of students. ◆ Learning is organized around a standardized curriculum delivered in standardized time periods. Credentials are awarded based on "time served," and issued in "Carnegie Units." ◆ The curriculum is derived from existing content, which is most often determined by textbooks. The curriculum is organized around a set of units, sequences, concepts, and facts. ◆ Assessment is done at the end of instruction and is narrowly focused on lower-level and fragmented (end-of-unit) skills that can be assessed through paper-pencil responses. Norm-referenced standardized test results are the basis of accountability. ◆ School accountability is defined in terms of programs offered, attendance and dropout rates, the number of students who are credentialed, and the results of norm-referenced tests. There is minimal systematic monitoring of student progress on an ongoing basis. ◆ School improvement focuses on: improving the existing organization; adding new programs; changing textbooks; offering teacher workshops; improving school climate; and increasing staff participation in decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The school mission emphasizes high levels of learning for all students. Diverse abilities, developmental levels, readiness, and learning styles are addressed so that all can succeed. There is flexibility in the use of instructional time with an emphasis on learning, not how much content has to be "covered". ◆ Learning is organized around what students should know, and be able to do. Credentialing is based on student demonstration of proficiency in these knowledge and skill areas. ◆ The curriculum is derived from standards that define what students should know and be able to do. Subject matter is "integrated" around "real world" tasks that require reasoning, problem solving, and communication. ◆ Assessment is integrated with instruction and focuses on what students understand and can do. Methods assess students' competencies through demonstrations, portfolios of work and other measures. State-based assessments are the basis of external accountability. ◆ The school is accountable for demonstrating that all students are developing proficiencies that represent high-level standards for what students should know and be able to do. There is an emphasis on frequent monitoring of student progress. ◆ The emphasis is on systemic reform of school structures, curriculum, and instructional practices. Collaborative leadership and continuous professional development are emphasized. Improvement is based on sound data about student learning and achievement.

Historically, elementary schools have shown greater success than high schools in the implementation and sustainability of reform (Noguera, 2002). Despite the myriad of reform that has tried to personalize high schools for students and to improve student achievement, this level is usually impervious to change (Wells & Feun, 2007; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). In the case of innovations that have received the appropriate level of

internal and external support, few have reached the stage in which they become integral aspects of classroom instruction or school operations (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Firestone and Herriott (1982) suggest that the difference in structure between elementary and senior high calls for redefining the notion of effective reform implementation at the senior high level. These researchers further recommend that senior high schools must be viewed as complex organizations that struggle to implement a shared sense of purpose and to employ the “work group” culture that exists at the elementary level.

Vonvillas (1996) believes that change is easier to implement at the elementary level because teachers tend to be more student centered. On the other hand, high school teachers interpret innovation as a threat to their knowledge of the content area in which they specialize. Firestone and Herriott (1982) also believe that this perception of threat to the status quo results in an “it’s not my job” position regarding their desire to carry out “basic skills” instruction within their courses (p. 52). Senior high teachers may also fear that innovation threatens their expertise and established abilities, and that they lack the competence to successfully implement proposed initiatives (Fullan; Greenberg & Baron all cited in Zimmerman, 2006). Greenberg and Baron (cited in Zimmerman, 2006) suggest that teachers ingrained habits make it too much effort for them to incorporate new teaching methodology in their classrooms. The consequences of teachers’ fear of innovation has been that the senior high school structure has remained unresponsive to today’s demands, and that continued teacher-directed instructional methodology places students in the role of passive learners who are unable to connect learning to real life experiences (Lachat, 2001).

Another explanation for senior high schools’ reluctance to move forward with proposed innovation is described in the following:

Because of their size, bureaucratic complexity, subject traditions and identifications, and closeness to university selection, high schools have proved especially impervious to change and to adapting to the changing learning needs of their increasingly diverse student body (cited in Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006, p. 4).

Noguera (2002) similarly states that the size of high schools make them conducive to

such problems as violence, disengagement, isolation and fragmentation. The large number of teaching staff within senior high schools also makes it problematic for principals to work with teachers to ensure the enactment of educational goals, and the effective running of the many departments and school structures (Firestone and Herriott, 1982). The looseness in the organizational structure results in flaws and a fragmentation that creates a lack of coherence in a sense of mission (Noguera, 2004).

Boyer diagnoses the problem of high school organization as the lack of a “coherent set of purposes, [and] of a ‘clear and vital mission’ with the power of a shared vision and the force of a great consensus” (cited in Wilhelm, 1984, p. 24). He believes this lack of purpose and vision contributes to teachers carrying out their daily responsibilities in an ad hoc manner, which makes it problematic for school reform to be undertaken.

Successive change initiatives, which claim to be the antidote for the imperviousness to change at the senior high level, continue to plateau after two years (Sarason cited in Hargreaves and Goodson, 2006). Marsh and Daro (cited in Lachat, 2001) believe that the frequent failure to improve conditions for student learning rests in the probability that teaching professionals have “inadequate knowledge of how to systematically restructure curriculum and instruction around high standards of learning and how to provide instruction in settings that engage and motivate diverse learners” (p. 11). Current reform initiatives require teachers to integrate problem solving and real world or authentic situations into their daily instruction; however, they lack the professional development opportunities in order to learn to do so (Lachat, 2001). As structural changes at the high school level are a benign pursuit unless teachers learn to change their methodology (Conley, 2001), effective professional development needs to be created to meet the current demands for educational reform.

Further compounding the problem of reform implementation is that various innovations have different and sometimes competing demands. For instance, senior high schools are being requested to address bullying and violence while being increasingly scrutinized for their academic standards. Concomitant to these expectations, schools are requested to meet the emotional and diverse needs of all students (Garston & Buckley; Price; Shortt, Moffatt, & Williams all cited in Catano & Stronge, 2006).

2.3.2 Teacher Resistance

One of the primary factors senior high principals must consider when implementing change is how teachers will respond to innovation. This section discusses possible reasons for teacher resistance to reform efforts, the benefits of resistance, and proactive strategies to help move teachers along in their learning.

2.3.2.1 Generational Factors Contributing to Teacher Resistance

Research is beginning to surface regarding the affects of the generational status of teachers. Given that the greatest and recurring obstacle to educational change rests with teachers' resistance (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006) it is timely that researchers have given importance to teachers' perceptions and struggles regarding reform implementation.

Notwithstanding the power of a variety of forces such as gender politics, institutional and cultural politics, cultures of individualism, ill affects of controlling principals, and perceived disrespectful regard for teachers as "merely" instruments of change (Hubbard & Datnow; Kanpol; Elmore; Gitlin & Morganis; Hargreaves; Blase & Blase; Fennell, all cited in Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006), many teachers' reluctance to change appears to rest in their nostalgic perceptions of the earlier years of their careers. Goodson, Moore, and Hargreaves (2006) discovered that resistance to change is not only about degeneration, but also about generation. While degeneration pertains to reduced physical capacity and professional commitments, generation is concerned with the "construction, protection, and reconstruction of professional and life missions" (p. 45).

According to Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) teachers respond to reform depending on whether or not it relates to their generational missions. For instance, these researchers report that baby boomer teachers who began their career in the 1960s and early 1970s tend to favourably respond to reform that champions social justice which challenges the "traditional grammar" of schooling and promotes teacher autonomy. However, teachers who began their careers in the mid to late 1970s embrace reform that reinforces the

traditional grammar of schooling and reduces teacher autonomy. Hargreaves and Goodson also found that newer teachers tend to question proposed reform less and simply see consistent change as an integral aspect of teaching; however, they dislike reform when it adversely affects their professional image and working conditions. These newer teachers do not seem to be as driven to create large-scale social missions as their predecessors; instead, they wish to affect the individual lives of their students.

Baby boomer teachers experience their greatest nostalgia during times of rapid change and incoherence of expectations (Coontz cited in Goodson, Moore & Hargreaves, 2006). Their nostalgia is typified by longing for the “golden age” of teaching when they worked in smaller communities and smaller, family-like, traditional schools, and when they had a strong social mission (Merz; Sergiovanni; Siskin & Little; Goodson all cited in Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006). These teachers grieve for the loss of their autonomy in instructional innovation, the loss of schools that lack racial strife, the loss of students who came to class prepared to learn, and the loss of parents and communities that supported educational efforts (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Compounding this sense of bereavement is the public’s disrespect for teachers under conditions of fast-paced change imposed by agencies external to the school (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006).

Zimmerman (2006) suggests that principals must be competent at identifying teachers’ initial reluctance to embark on new initiatives as an indicator of bereavement, and help them cope with leaving the old behind as they move toward new ways of being. Goodson, Moore, and Hargreaves (2006) caution that nostalgia may provide solace to teachers; however, its idealization distracts teachers from engagement with today’s educational challenges.

Experienced teachers’ resistance to change may also be affected by the number and types of innovation they have encountered over long careers (Zimmerman, 2006). Huberman (cited in Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006) remind us that cycles of innovation for policy makers may extend to approximately five years because of electoral cycles; however, teachers who have had long careers do not experience reform in isolation, therefore, multiple and cumulative competing policies are perceived as only “pendulum swings” and are seen as futile (p. 17). An example of these contradictory reforms are

evident in the “age of innovation and optimism that characterized the 1970s and the age of globalization and standardization that took deep root from the mid 1990s” (Goodson cited in Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006, p. 18). During the late 1980s to mid 1990s, teachers struggled with the uncertainty of postmodern society, which was characterized by multiple competing reforms such as the simultaneous implementation of portfolio assessment with standardized tests and interdisciplinary initiatives with subject-based standards (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

Educational leaders who are requesting innovation are cautioned not to denigrate teachers for their values and attitudes, as requesting them to change is asking them to forfeit their professional identity (Zimmerman, 2006). Fullan and Hargreaves (cited in Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006) suggest that respecting teachers’ reluctance to change as “a process of fulfilling, preserving, and protecting the missions and memories of one’s generation draws attention to a positive sense of what teachers are fighting for” (p. 14). While this recommendation is perhaps necessary to create a positive relational atmosphere in senior high schools, the large number of teaching staff makes it problematic for senior high principals to ascertain where teachers are in their generational values. Furthermore, if the principal does gain an understanding of each teacher’s generational values, the external accountability of educational standards makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to allow enough time for teachers’ to redefine their values.

2.3.2.2 Common Reasons for Teacher Resistance

Other reasons why teachers resist change outside of generational values rest in how innovation is presented to them. The Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium and Sparks (1997) outline possible reasons why teacher do not engage in learning new knowledge and skills:

- ◆ Change is imposed, not negotiated.
- ◆ Change is embedded in multiple, competing and overwhelming innovations.
- ◆ Their voice has been excluded from the change process.

- ◆ New knowledge and skills are presented in off-site professional development, or one-time workshops that are disconnected to what happens in the work of the classroom.
- ◆ Teachers experience learning in isolation, resulting in trepidations about appearing more knowledgeable than their colleagues.
- ◆ Teachers have experienced poor quality of innovations and school improvement in the past.
- ◆ Teachers have been members of school cultures that impede risk taking and collaboration, and that believe students and teachers have limited capacity to learn.

A number of studies (Sparks, 1997; Grossman, Compton, Shahan, Ronfeldt Ingram, & Shaing 2007; Kan & Perry, 2004)) stress that most teacher resistance is perpetuated by root causes that ignore teachers' daily experiences. Change is not happening because of teachers being stressed and burnt out. Resistance can be attributed to being awarded reduced resources, while increased demands on accountability and student achievement are causing students and staff to become disconnected from their authentic selves, and from each other (Beatty cited in Roffey, 2007a).

However, these studies caution that resisters must be addressed so that colleagues who are "on the fence" about certain issues are not swayed into negative thinking. In addition, resistance must be managed to maintain the relationships within an organization and to move toward the goals for improvement.

2.3.2.3 Proactively Coping with Teacher Resistance

While it is unreasonable to believe that teacher resistance can be completely eradicated within schools, Sparks (1992) suggests the following to minimize its presence:

- ◆ Make certain the learning experiences of adults in the school are well designed, are likely to lead to on-the-job changes that improve student learning, and use a balance of learning processes (e.g., study groups, coaching, action research, training) to accommodate various goals and learning styles. There is no margin of error for poor staff development.
- ◆ To the fullest extent possible, involve all effected individuals in decision making about important issues. Strive to reach consensus on significant issues

such as the establishing a vision and goals that will stretch the staff's capacity.

- ◆ Audit the culture of the school system and of individual schools to see if they promote learning, risk taking, experimentation, and collaboration. Is time available for learning and working with colleagues? Is the level of trust and communication sufficiently high to enable the formation of a genuine community of learners? Are the school's ambitions for its students sufficiently high that interdependency and synergy among staff members is required for their accomplishment?
- ◆ Remember that staff learning is a tool, a means to accomplishing stretching goals. It is not an end in itself, a duty performed by staff members to fulfill a bureaucratic requirement for seat time in a workshop room (pp. 1, 2).

These suggestions should also incorporate the notion that leaders must understand that change is a dynamic, non-linear process and that resistance may appear at any point in the change initiative. Therefore, it is necessary that leaders learn about their teachers' backgrounds, personalities, and interests in order to determine when and why they may become resistant about a particular aspect of change. They must also foster relationships within the school in order to be able to carry on trustful communication so that teachers will feel open to discussing their reservations toward change (Kan & Parry, 2004; Grossman et al., 2007).

2.3.2.4 Recognizing the Stages of Teaching Careers: Implications for Minimizing Teacher Resistance

To further minimize teacher resistance when implementing innovation, professional development opportunities must take into consideration the stage of career teachers may be at in order to differentiate the learning opportunities (Day, 2000). The National Staff Development Council suggests the following stages in a teacher's career:

Stage	Teachers At This Stage...	Guidance Most Helpful If...
Survival Stage: Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Needs pertain to coping with daily classroom management, lesson planning, demands of teaching → Main purpose is to survive → May not acknowledge problems or may blame others for difficulties → Little sense of efficacy or control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Need "how tos" → Co-teaching opportunities → Personal support through actively listening, daily check ins and connection with other teachers → Ensure the new teacher has the resources they need including texts, curriculum guides, manipulatives, etc.
Consolidation Stage: Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Teaches to the middle of the class with little differentiation; however, is beginning to recognize the instructional needs of the students and how their teaching style relates to how well students learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Co-teaching → Observation and feedback → Share ideas → Engage teacher in problem solving and idea exchange with colleagues → Engage in professional learning with multi-generational teachers so that they gain multiple perspectives on teaching
Renewal Stage: Year 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Demonstrates competence in teaching → Refresh some routines → Have mastered management issues and basic instructional strategies → Begin the search for new instructional practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Engage in professional learning experiences outside of school and professional journals → Engage in action research projects → Allow them to act as a guide for new teachers
Maturity: Year 6 and beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Interested in new ideas and resources → Refine their beliefs about teaching → Take on more leadership roles and display a strong sense of efficacy → Teaching takes on a larger social context such as democracy in education and school improvement → Makes more critical assessment of their impact on student learning → Consider their career future in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Encourage teacher to seek leadership opportunities such as co-mentor, department head, facilitator, etc. → Provide support and coaching about leadership skills, and connect them to professional networks → Support teachers as they are learning new instructional strategies

Sammon, Day, Kington, Gu, Stobart and Smees (2007) have developed another model which demonstrates the phases in a teacher's career. These researchers posit that professional life phases and identities influence teachers' commitment to their careers, resiliency, and their perceived effectiveness. Without acknowledgement and understanding teachers' career stages, school renewal and innovation are unsuccessful:

Phase	Characteristics
0-3 years: Commitment Phase	Teachers will either develop a sense of efficacy or suffer a reduced sense of efficacy
4-7 years: Identity and Efficacy in Classroom	Teachers will develop a strong sense of efficacy and identity. Self-efficacy and identity may be impeded if teachers have not been properly supported.
8-15 years: Managing Changes in Role and Identity: Growing Tensions and Transitions	The teacher will either sustain commitment or will lose motivation and disengage from the profession.
16-23 years: Work-Life Transition and Challenges to Motivation and Commitment	Either teachers will further their career because good pupil results confirm their self-efficacy and commitment; or, the workload, managing competing tensions, home responsibilities and career stagnation lead to decreased motivation and commitment
24-30 years: Challenges to Sustaining Motivation	Teachers will sustain their sense of commitment or will continue to teacher, but lose their motivation.
31 years: Sustaining/Declining Motivation,	Teachers will maintain commitment and be able to continue coping with change, or will feel tired and trapped and will look to retiring.

Sammon et al. further contend that three influences impact teachers' professional lives: 1) Situational factors such as pupil characteristics, leadership style, and staff relationships, 2) Teachers roles and responsibilities, educational policies and government initiatives and 3) Personal factors such as health and family life. Establishing a sense of well-being in the work environment is what helps to prolong teachers' capacity to develop and maintain their professional identity, motivation, and self-efficacy.

2.3.2.5 Teachers as Adult Learners

To engage the majority of teacher learners, no matter the stage in their careers, the Nova Scotia Education Leadership Consortium recommends that professional learning opportunities follow the *Principles of Adult Learning*:

- Adults need to be free to direct themselves.
- Adults need to connect learning to their knowledge and experience base.
- Adults need to understand how learning will help them achieve their goals
- Adults must see a reason for learning something.
- Adults need to know that their learning will be useful to them on the job.

- Adults need to be shown respect.

(Module 12: Mentoring and Coaching, Lesson 5)

2.3.2.6 Positive Aspects of Teacher Resistance

While dissent or resistance to innovation is typically viewed as a negative force in schools, there are actually benefits to ensuring opposing viewpoints are voiced, accepted, and integrated into school improvement. It appears that seemingly negative voices keep others who are deep in the visionary stage grounded in the realities of school life. Fullan (2001) believes that dissent has the potential to form new ideas and breakthroughs, and that “absence of resistance is a sign of decay” (p. 74). Fullan further contends that if leaders disconnect from resisters’ voices by surrounding themselves with like-minded individuals, they will lose touch with how many people in the organization may feel about a proposed innovation.

In their book, *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way we Work*, Kegan and Lahey (2001) suggest that complaints, if channeled in a productive manner, can help individuals identify their core values. If complaints are not allowed to be articulated then individuals lose the opportunity to determine what is really bothering them. Kegan and Lahey suggest that once an individual voices a complaint a chance is provided for a leader to take this individual through a process in which he or she is able to move from the language of complaint and blame to the language of commitment and responsibility.

2.3.3 Successful Senior High School Reform

Despite the obstacles impeding reform in senior high schools, examples exist illustrating the positive components of successful implementation of innovation at this level. This section outlines these components and their implications.

2.3.3.1 The Need for Continual Senior High School Reformation

Despite the barriers senior high schools face in their attempt to implement change to improve student achievement and to update the organizational structures, they still are held accountable for keeping pace with the market demands and changing expectations of today's society. The current educational "policy epidemic" (Levin cited in Church, 2003) is hurdling toward many educators at a dizzying speed, making even the most positive, seasoned teacher unsure of their talent to teach. Wagner (2001) argues that educators can be sure that implementation of policy change will be a consistent expectation, as new research arises regarding innovations in curriculum and instructional practices. Continual reformation of educational practices is needed as the nature of the work world and the characteristics of our learners change, "rendering our system of education as totally obsolete" (Wagner, 2001, pp. 3, 4). Educational researchers have reported that in a changing society, schools will continuously feel the effects of multiple initiatives and reforms and can expect this condition to be the norm (Hargreaves & Hopkins cited in Vere Midthassel, 2004).

Hargreaves (cited in Lachat, 1997) believes that despite the challenges of a postmodern age in undertaking change at the high school level, the learning needs of our students takes the utmost precedence. Given that our schools have never before been asked to be internally and publicly accountable, nor have they been faced with such diversity, they need to transform in order to meet the realities of the age in which they reside (Lachat, 2001).

2.3.3.2 The Characteristics of Successful Senior High School Reform

Despite a seemingly lack of models of successful senior high school reform, examples do exist of secondary schools embarking on changes that have resulted in high performance. Among these examples are common trends that provide clues to the ingredients needed for successful school transformation. One of the trends that seems to be most prominent is that caring relationships exist among staff, leadership, and students and that all school and community partners are invited to succeed (Cooper, Ponder,

Merritt & Matthews, 2005). Cooper et al. (2005) report that teaching faculty within effective high schools create and implement mechanisms and networks to support and enable students so that they do not fall through the cracks. Teachers' relationships are fostered through professional teaming, usually through academic departments, which emphasizes instructional improvement. The professional learning communities in such schools seem to weather the erratic and pressure filled nature of reform over extended periods in order to remain on course in their commitment to student learning (Seashore-Louis, 2006). In other words, educators within successful senior high environments do not engage in the "we versus them" attitude, or the tendency to blame external forces for not successfully implementing reform (Seashore-Louis, 2006). It appears that these educators take sole responsibility for the dynamics of change within their school.

In their article, *Effective High Schools – What Are the Common Characteristics*, Murphy and Hallinger (1995, pgs. 18-22) list the elements of successful high schools:

- **A clear sense of purpose** – a well understood mission emphasizes high academic performance, and act as a "prevailing norm" that served as a guidepost to decision-making and school activities. Nogeura (2002) adds that if the mission is realistic and easy to follow, it serves as a unifying theme and helps educators feel a sense of responsibility and ownership for the students and school. Gruenart (2005) cautions that many mission statements are contrived to please external leadership, multiple educational stakeholders, and every aspect of education; thus, they can be impractical and meaningless to teachers. In order for a vision or mission to be purposeful, teachers' input must be integral to the process of its development.
- **A core set of standards within a rich curriculum** – while a core curriculum existed, rich and diverse academic programs provide the opportunity for enriched or extended content.
- **High expectations** – high expectations are conveyed through school policies and practices, and the school mission for academic achievement creating a "strong press for academic achievement."
- **Commitment to educate each student** – these schools have well defined remedial and advanced placement courses and programs in an attempt to meet all learners

needs.

- **Special reason for each child to go to school** – these schools create many opportunities for students to be meaningfully involved and to assume responsibility in rich academic environments. These schools support sports teams, clubs, a variety of interest groups, and student government.
- **Safe, orderly learning environment** – school rules and standards for behaviour are clearly articulated and fairly enforced. These rules and consequences are communicated to students, teachers, and families. To enforce the consequences parental contact is made when they were broken, administrators are visible during high traffic times, and innovative disciplinary measures are put into place, rather than relying on the traditional suspension as a consequence.
- **Sense of community** – these schools elicit and receive strong support from parents and communities. While these senior high schools rely less on parental support in their daily routine than elementary schools, students are encouraged to support the social structure of the cultures.
- **Resiliency and problem solving attitude** – similar to Seashore-Louis (2006), Cooper et al. found that effective senior high schools do not let adversity become excuses for their failure to meet students' learning needs. Instead, educators within these schools regard difficulties simply as challenges to be overcome through problem solving. Gu and Day (2007) assert that it is the nature of the work setting in which people establish a sense of resiliency to adversity. If work settings are caring, positive and possess a supportive social community, teachers can learn to be resilient. When the school has a sense of purpose and is values-led, teachers tend to draw on their inner strength and motivation to overcome trying circumstances. Leaders also need to help teachers develop and maintain their sense of vocation to help them meet the challenges of their environment (Day & Hadfield, 2003).

2.3.4 The Key Role of Relational School Leadership in High School Reform

Throughout my research, I have learned that leadership promoting the building, nurturing, and maintenance of relationships among all school stakeholders is central to senior high school improvement. These leaders encourage cohesive professional relationships within the school community by helping teachers become decision-makers in creating a collective vision for the school, setting the parameters for healthy communication and interpersonal relationships, and by proactively navigating the positive and negative relational influences within the school. This section discusses how senior high principals employ these dynamics to set the relational course for their schools.

2.3.4.1 The Importance of Vision

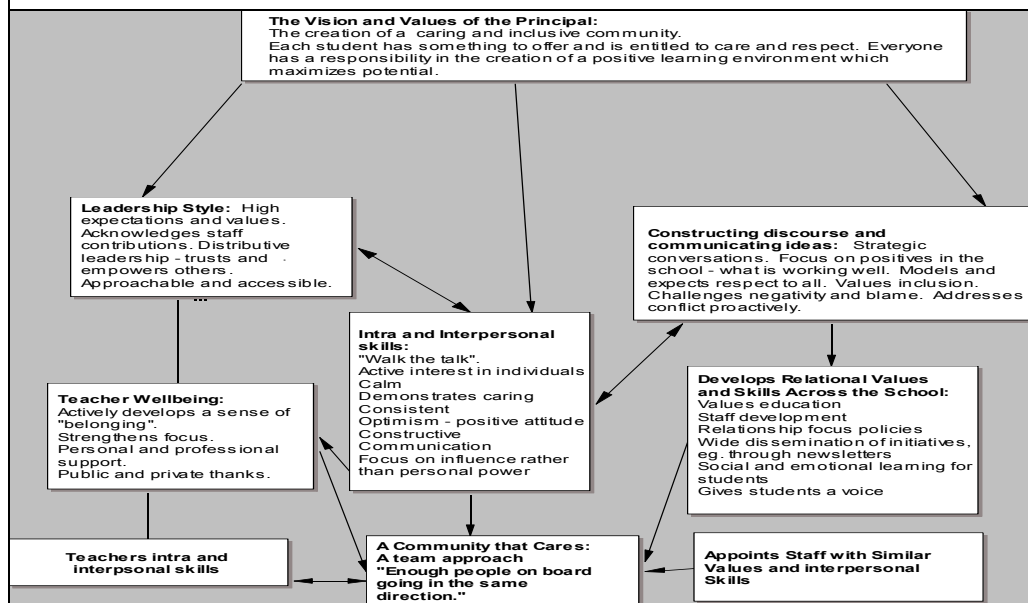
The most unifying force among the elements of successful senior high schools is the establishment of a clear and purposeful vision for staff and students. Administrators who are leading complex second order change must have the ability to set the standard for the school by communicating a vision for student achievement based on sound knowledge of learning theory and instructional pedagogy (Marzano cited in Wells & Fern, 2007). Visionary leadership consists of two stages: the creation of the vision and the communication of the vision to staff members and other school stakeholders (Barnett & McCormick, 2004).

Dufour and Eaker, as cited in Huffman (2003), believe that the lack of vision for public schools continues to be the primary reason for the absence of coherence making among reform, thus affecting long-term school improvement. These researchers believe that administrators must combine their personal vision with those of faculty members in order to gain a collective vision that can be embraced by the staff. Furthermore, leaders must know their teachers well in order to “speak their language” when sharing their vision (Kouzes & Posner cited in Barrett & McCormick, 2004) so staff are able to describe it in their own words (Gruenert, 2005). Zimmerman (2006) cautions that unless staff understand the vision and effective measures are used to implement it, vision

statements will only “gather dust on walls and shelves” (p. 244). Once the collective vision is established, it serves as a value that defines how teachers intend to operate on a daily basis, and fosters a shared responsibility for student learning, while foregoing the responsibility of being all things to all people (Senge & Lieberman cited in Huffman, 2003; Gruenert, 2005). In addition, when teachers develop a relationship between their values and the strategic direction of their school, they become personally, emotionally and intellectually committed to the vision (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005).

Establishing a collective vision in which the student is the focus builds trust among an otherwise autonomous teaching staff as every decision and conversation centers around what is best for student learning, and not what is best for the egos of individuals. Once relational trust and collaboration is established, a moral resource for improvement occurs because teachers develop strong personal attachments to the organization and belief of the mission (Fullan, 2001). Roshenholtz (cited in Fullan, 2007) found that teachers who supported one another in enforcing consistent standards for student learning and behaviour complained less about students and were more confident in their teaching practices.

Roffey (2007a) describes systems and stakeholders as being in a reciprocal flow with each other. This reciprocal flow translates into the notion of the collective vision being communicated as, “The way we do things around here” (p. 21). Sergiovanni (cited in Roffey, 2007a) created the following visual to suggest how vision are transformed to practice (p. 21).



It is obvious that literature on educational leadership increasingly promotes the establishment of vision based on a collective sense of morality and values. Perhaps the new direction of leadership is best described by Sergiovanni (cited in Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2007):

There is a new kind of hierarchy. One that places purposes, values, and commitment at the apex and teachers, principals, parents and students below, in service to these purposes (p. 52).

2.3.4.2 *The Power of Relationship Building*

“Leaders who are most effective in generating results will not only appeal to the bottom-line, but also to the heart...One of the best strategies for improving results is connecting with people’s hearts” (Dufour cited in Hale and Rollins, 2006, p. 4).

The theme of relationship building resurfaces throughout educational leadership research. The overall messages assert that building trustful, open, honest relationships among all school stakeholders fortifies the teachers, students, and leaders during times of adversity. The research also points to the benefits of cohesive staff relationships in teachers’ professional learning, which directly affects student learning.

Through their studies on personal-best leadership experiences, Kouzes and Posner (2007) discovered that “encouraging the heart” (p. 69) was among the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. Encouraging the heart, to Kouzes and Posner, means that leaders display a capacity to build a caring relationship between themselves and their subordinates, and they show recognition for their collective and their individual achievements. These researchers found that a relationship with subordinates is so powerful that the ability for leaders to successfully build and sustain collegiality far outweighed their technical skills, such as efficiently using Internet. Survey results also indicated that the top two important qualities a leader can possess are “Being able to see a situation from someone else’s point of view” and “Getting along well with other people” (p. 71).

Given the proliferation of research correlating successful leadership to relationship

building, another leadership approach is evolving. This approach is labeled as *relational leadership*. Relational leadership is described by Nemec (2007) as the emotionally literate leader. Emotional literacy, otherwise known as “street smarts,” is a values-based concept that embraces personal and organizational factors such as character in leadership, relationships, personal skills, and communication (Nemec, 2007; Fullan, 2001; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992; Roffey, 2007a).

According to Fullan (2001) and Knuth and Banks (2006), emotional literacy, or emotional intelligence, rather than intellectual brilliance or a high level of efficiency in other performance dimensions, overcomes a great deal of resistance to change, and helps teachers feel more secure during times of chaos. In fact, low emotional intelligence is the trademark of coercive or pacesetting leadership which are the two lowest forms of leadership style. These pacesetting and coercive leaders distance themselves from staff by moving too fast, exhausting even the most compliant staff and by distancing themselves from who they lead (Knuth and Banks, 2006). On the other hand, emotional literacy makes the difference between a marginal leader and an outstanding leader (Roffey, 2007a). Goleman (cited in Fullan, 2001) recognizes five main emotional aptitudes, which he defines under two sets of competencies: social competency and personal competency.

◆ Personal Competence:

- self-awareness (knowing one’s internal state, preferences, resources, intuitions)
- self-regulation (managing one’s internal states, impulses, resources)

◆ Social Competence:

- Motivation (emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals)
- Empathy (awareness of others’ feelings, needs, and concerns)
- Social skills (adeptness at inducing desirable responses from others) (p.72)

Relational leadership transcends the building of relationships with individuals to include structures and cultures. In order to build these relationships, one must have an understanding of how they will be used to fulfill the vision and set the learning context of the school (Church, 2003; Grossman et al., 2007). Since schools are relational

organizations dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of human beings, relational values such as justice, respect, inclusion, compassion and fairness need to be at the core. Caring schools also help to develop a sense of teacher agency under a principal who adopts a problem solving approach to difficult situations and attempts to transform the school (Nemec, 2007).

Nemec (2007) contends that the relational leader guides others through an approach linked to their spiritual beliefs, or through a deep understanding of their character and moral fabric. To these leaders, leading is doing what is right, instead of “doing things right”. This philosophy is especially important during a time when the pressure of accountability can make a leader, who is not connected to their internal values, compliant to the demands of external reform. This compliance may forfeit learning as the “core business” of the school culture in favour of filling the expectations of external pressures. Knuth and Banks (2006) state:

Only authentic leaders of strong character, who exhibit integrity, fairness, and ethical behaviour lead such complex organizations as schools, which are often highly vulnerable to faddism and politicization (p. 9).

Relational leadership is synonymous with the concept of cultural leadership in that it promotes a sense of “we-ness” as a school undergoes reculturing to become a more caring organization, responsive to the emotional, physical, social, and learning needs of the leaders, teachers, and students. When these basic needs are met, the members of the school can better concentrate on the core mission by minimizing disagreements over school operations and routines, making way for teachers to investigate best instructional practices (Knuth and Banks, 2006; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). In this context, culture encompasses the development of quality relationships, which are foundational to a community of caring where educators meet learners where they are in terms of their capabilities, interests, and attitudes. Central to school improvement and instructional reform is the understanding that quality relationships among adults, and between adults and youth provide the impetus for enhanced learning (Breunlin, Mann, Kelly, Cimmarusti, Dunne, & Miller-Lieber, 2005; Barnett & McCormick, 2004). Hale and

Rollins (2006), in their study of 25 challenging high schools, found that the key strategy for helping teachers raise their expectations and their commitment to change was in the leaders' abilities to promote relationships based on integrity, ethics, and a moral purpose.

According to a study conducted by Bryk and Schneider (cited in Church, 2005), relational "trust fosters a set of organizational conditions, some structural and others social-psychological, that make it more conducive for individuals to initiate and sustain the kinds of activities necessary to affect productivity improvement"(p. 12). According to Evans (cited in Knuth & Banks, 2006), trust is the essential link between the leader and the led and is paramount to job satisfaction, loyalty, and followership. Trust is cultivated by the leader's sense of individual concern for his or her teachers. This individual concern must extend beyond demonstrating a helpful and considerate approach by including modeling of respect and fairness, and by being accessible to teachers. Individual concern also encompasses recognizing individual efforts, providing direction and guidance based on teachers' individual needs and development (Barnett & McCormick, 2007).

Ylimaki (2006) describes the relational leader as more of a visionary archetype who maintains her authentic self by being honest without blaming or being judgemental, and who frees the creative forces in teachers. If a teacher is having difficulty moving forward they may assert, "I want to help you learn this instructional practice, but I need more information about the aspects you find challenging" (p. 628). Day (2004) asserts that trust is also promoted when principals are candid with teachers who are not doing their job effectively.

Proactive strategies focusing on relational values and well-being across the school system including the Department of Education, school board staff, students, and families make for more effective learning environments. School leaders at all levels of the education system must have high expectations about relational values and they must model healthy relationships especially since feelings of belonging enhance resilience. An example of a positive, approach is constructive input such as "Yes, and..." rather than "Yes, but..." (Roffey, 2007b, n.p).

While caring relationships have the power to transform schools into learning organizations for all stakeholders, the myth that relationship building is based on a “warm and fuzzy” (Roffey, 2007, n.p) approach needs to be dispelled. In fact several researchers have indicated that these work related relationships need to follow inherent guidelines to inform all stakeholders of what is expected. The following is an example of these expectations:

- Teacher well-being is not in competition with student well-being.
- The curriculum focuses on relational issues
- A committed search for competence
- Caring seeks out the best characteristics and produces the best characteristics in people
- Caring relationships are meant to restructure the understanding of self
- Non-negotiable goals and standards are established
- Marginal teachers must be held accountable, while finding and using the strengths of staff members help to build on their expertise (Roffey, 2007; Hale & Rollins, 2004; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992).

2.3.4.3 Navigating Relational Influences

It is now “received wisdom” that teacher participation is sustained through collaborative, caring cultures (Day, 2004). Individuals respond more readily to those who care about them especially when communication is driven by caring and prosocial behaviour in adults and students. Caring, collaborative cultures are noted to reduce staff absenteeism and to improve student behaviour. However, school leaders must be mindful that change is slow and incremental when trying to create a climate of caring in the school (Roffey, 2007b).

Research has shown that when teachers develop strong relationships in working together as active inquirers of practices, there is an improvement in students' ability to assert their voices in inquiry. It appears that as teachers learned to collaborate with each other, they inadvertently empower students to collaborate in an attitude of inquiry (Day & Hadfield, 2004). Barth (2006), however, describes types of relationships that are either counterproductive to establishing a caring work environment for all school stakeholders, or support the notion of school as a culture of learning:

- Parallel play – similar to children playing side by side, but not sharing tools, self-absorbed, functions in isolation – sign of door shut in classroom
- Adversarial – sometimes blatant, sometimes withholding craft knowledge or insights about teaching
- Congenial – interactive positive relationships, personal, friendly, wants to go to work to see friends. “Schools are full of good players. Collegiality is about getting them to play together” (p. 10).

It is up to the principal to create, maintain, and monitor work relationships to determine which ones are unproductive in order to put the appropriate strategies in place to help teachers move forward in their understanding of working relationships (Day & Harris, 2007). The shift into relationship building and collaboration does not mean that individuals abandon their beliefs and priorities; instead, it means that they successfully negotiate, accommodate, and incorporate their beliefs and priorities so that stakeholders can pursue the notion of school improvement (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992).

2.3.4.3.1 Overcoming Initial Conflict to Build Productive Professional Relationships

The development of new working relationships may involve a progress from an inward focus on self-interest to the focus on tasks. The success of collaboration depends on the development of the interpersonal dimensions of the relationships. If there is no history of working together there can exist initial tension, especially if teachers lack the skills needed to understand one another and to negotiate their relationships effectively. The primary solution to overcoming interpersonal tensions to establish trust, confidence

and the means for effective communication before new roles and working relationships can fully function appears to rest in the nature of the teacher-principal relationship prior to the establishment of new teacher work roles and participation in school decision-making (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). The challenge is to sustain positive relationships and to overcome any blaming mentality that currently resides in a school environment (Roffey, 2007; Hale & Rollins, 2004; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992).

Conflict will no doubt surface between teachers and principals once teachers have an active, authentic voice in decision-making. When conflict occurs, principals are advised to approach it with a productive and honest attitude, showing interest in what the teachers are advocating (Blase & Blase, 2001). Teachers must learn how to resolve professional differences regarding classroom management, curriculum instruction, and assessment so that work continues (Spies, 2001). Blase and Blase (2001) suggest that conflict should be embraced as something that can be learned from when analysing disagreeing point of views. These authors recommend highlighting the productive aspects of the conflict and emphasizing mutual respect, while modeling understanding of another's viewpoint.

2.3.4.3.2 The Micro-Politics of Relationship Building

Current scholarship in educational leadership is beginning to illuminate the micro-political impact of teachers' interpersonal relationships during reform implementation. This micro-political impact, influenced by generational factors, creates substantial resistance to leadership and proposed reform.

From the mid 1990s to the present, the confusion of postmodernity gave way to a "new world order" which promoted economic and cultural globalization (Bauman; Castells; Giddens; Putnam; Soros all cited in Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). The current fast-pace of change in western society has created distrust and a decline in relationships, resulting in a higher demand for accountability in the school system and a "substitution of personal relationships with market-based and performance driven interactions" (Hargreaves cited in Hargreaves and Goodson, 2006, p. 36).

To address individual schools' internal accountability teacher teams have been

implemented so that teachers could exert power in bringing about the instructional change needed to improve student achievement (Watson & Suporvitz, 2001). Surfacing from this new staff dynamic is the recognition that teachers' resistance to reform affects relationships with their colleagues, especially among the baby boomer generation who hold the most political influence within schools.

Maxcy and Nguyen (2005) caution that schools can be “arenas of struggle” in which matters of control of work and resistance to policy are at the core. A political analysis of the struggle illuminates “relations of power among individuals and groups who join, coerce, thwart, bargain with, and manage meaning for others pursuing particular enduring interests” (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2005, p. 181). In the case of the baby boomer generation of teachers, Greenberg & Baron (in Zimmerman, 2006) suggest that the threat to the strong social relationships among these colleagues is one of the reasons why there is frequent opposition to school leadership that proposes structural and organizational changes. Pressure within this teacher alliance to follow the status quo regarding course offerings, instructional methodology, student achievement, and materials makes change problematic (Lachat, 2001).

Implications of this struggle suggest senior high school leadership needs to pay close attention to the politics of how teams are formed, how leadership is distributed, and who is benefiting or losing because of the distribution (Maxcy and Nguyen, 2005). In my view, senior high principals who are attempting to monitor the micro-politics of distributed leadership and teaming could potentially slip into a surveillance role, thereby alienating staff who feel they are being watched. Therefore, it is important that principals possess the interpersonal skills to be able to monitor staff relations while forging a trustful relationship with their teachers.

2.3.4.3.3 Building Internal Commitment through Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Building

Another challenge for senior high administrators is that they must encourage the sharing of tacit knowledge and foster internal commitment among teachers who are typically isolationists, and who fear they will lose their autonomy if they engage in

collaborative discourse. Wagner (2001) suggests that, historically, individuals who have entered the teaching profession are autonomous by nature and have adopted a “craftsman trade” mentality. These individuals perceive the requests for uniform standards as a threat to their expertise and sense of creativity, believing that everyone must teach the same content in the same manner. Usually, any sort of change expectation is met with suspicion and not fully embraced. This circumstance is further exacerbated by the fact that teachers typically have few opportunities to work with other adults during their workday; therefore, they have not learned to develop the skills needed for effective teamwork. Wagner believes that the “egg-crate” nature of the senior high school structure further isolates educators from the “fast-changing world of globalization and business innovation” and reinforces autonomy (p. 12).

In order for traditionally autonomous teachers to consider looking beyond their current teaching situation, they must be given incentives to grow. Marzano et al (2005) believe that providing teachers with intellectual stimulation through opportunities to learn about the most current theories and practices is a way of breaking this isolation. Fullan (2001) refers to this as “knowledge building”, which he believes can only be properly implemented through a social context. The foundation of knowledge building is the sharing of tacit knowledge, which is “deeply rooted in an individual’s action and experience, as well as the ideals, values, or emotions he or she embraces” (Polyani, cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 80). The sharing of tacit knowledge not only creates collaboration among teaching professionals, but also encourages internal commitment to new innovations as it is closely attached to “human emotions, aspirations, hopes and intention” (Von Krogh et al. cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 81).

In order to encourage meaningful collaboration which will produce effective results in student achievement, educational leadership must have the ability to create a culture of change within schools by believing that one cannot function in the “organization by being an isolate” (Molinaro & Drake, 1998, p. 2). The principal is the key when it comes to the “school capacity” to manage new innovations (Fullan, 2007). Instead of leaders resisting change, change needs to be viewed as an opportunity for growth and as a constant condition within the teaching profession. In order to do this, leadership for change

means creating and sustaining the conditions for continuous “constructivist” adult learning for teachers, resulting in distributed or shared instructional leadership. Constructivist adult learning provides opportunities for teachers to develop new understandings of the world, their craft, and their students, enabling them to own the problem and the solution in regards to the decisions being made for the school (Wagner, 2001, p. 3).

2.3.4.3.4 Encouraging ‘Activist Professionalism’ through Relational Leadership

Effective relational leadership encourages “activist professionalism” (Day, 2004, p. 433) which is based on three concepts: trust, active trust, and generic politics:

- Active trust is fostered through numerous, multi-level professional relationships, which work together in a strategic fashion to undertake educational enterprises. Teachers develop stronger responsibility for their colleagues.
- Generative politics: allows and encourages individuals and groups to make things happen rather than to let things happen (p. 433).

Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers (1992) contend that school district leadership not only need to recognize the importance of the power of relational leadership and collegiality, but they need to help teach principals and teachers learn how to cultivate and nurture interpersonal knowledge and skills that are needed to work together productively. For instance, school leaders and teachers need to learn that team process follows developmental stages such as the following:

STAGE	INTERACTION PATTERN	PROCESS AND FOCUS	COMMUNICATION
Stage 1: Beginning	Randomness or leader centered Pairing or subgrouping	Confusion Searching Protective and seeking allies	Guarded Restricted Topic and situation centered
Stage 2: Norm Development	Erratic: tentative Usually leader centered or leader directed	Testing limits Seeking answers Trial balloons, leadership tests	Security oriented Situation centered Little self-disclosure

Stage 3: Conflict distorted	Erratic; centers on one person, pairs, or both, depending on issues; or random	Confrontive Hostile labeling Anxious Conflict	One-way distorted labeling Some self-disclosure, usually in anger or retaliation
Stage 4: Transition	Less erratic Patterns develop Less centered on leader	Vacillate between task and group concerns Focus on new norms and personal feelings	Self-disclosure and feedback More open and less labeling
Stage 5: Productive	Interaction pattern based on task at hand	Cooperation Group leadership Group is a group, "we" purpose	Open, within limits of disclosure Feedback and intimacy norms
Stage 6: Affection	Group centered but moving to individual focus	I-thou interaction often Intimacy norms changed to more intimacy	More self-disclosure and risk Positive feedback
Stage 7: Actualizing	Pattern appropriate to task Usually group centered	Flexible- move from task to person to group as appropriate	Open, constructive, accurate; based on being rather than need

(Blase & Blase, 2001, pp. 30-31).

Once the stages are identified, school leaders and teachers must learn how to progress through them until they are at the actualization stage. Learning to understand and move through the developmental stages of teamwork has important implications regarding the hierarchical nature of external leadership who must now consider establishing relationships with schools and not “do to them.” (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). These relationships should act as models to schools on how to conduct teamwork and group consensus, and how to build relational trust. In other words, education, being an interpersonal endeavour, must now consider making relationships the backbone of its

infrastructure.

2.3.4.4 *Teachers as Active Participants: A Case for Learning Communities to Support Teachers' Learning and Participation*

Teachers should be seen as part of the solution to education, not the source of its problems (Glickman, cited in Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 4).

Vonvillas' (1996) research regarding change at senior high reveals that reform follows a more satisfactory and comfortable pathway when teachers participate in multi-levels of decision-making. Noguera (2002) also believes that unless teachers feel ownership, even the best innovation will be sabotaged. Shulman (cited in Floden, Porter, Alford, Freeman, Irwin, Schmidt, & Schwille, 1988) contends that unless policies are implemented in a manner that involves collaboration with teachers as decision-makers rather than "unwilling subordinates grudgingly conceding to their lack of power" (p.100), commitment to school change will not be built or sustained. Active decision-making leads to teacher empowerment, which provides teachers with the opportunity and confidence to act upon their ideas in order to improve their performance (Blase & Blase, 2001). Blase and Blase (2001) caution that teachers can sometimes see the concept of empowerment as a "sham"; therefore, decision-making is primarily viewed as only a vehicle for venting frustration and doubt. Blase and Blase posit this attitude occurs because principals have failed to mobilize teachers in issues of importance and have not taken their voices seriously when it comes to the final hour.

Noguera (2004) suggests that teachers must be skilled and knowledgeable about their subject; this, in turn, helps teachers feel more confident in their decision-making. Seashore-Louis (2006) asserts that successful senior high schools have learned to combine their internal commitments, conditions, and political acumen. These senior high schools purposely put students at the center to ensure the greater school community understands the meaning and reason behind reform (Noguera, 2004; Coddling & Rothman; Bernhardt cited in Lachat 2001). Much research suggests that in order for teachers to cohesively improve their practices to enhance students' lives and learning,

schools need to adopt the culture of being a learning organization. Lick (2000) cites Graff's description of a learning organization:

A learning organization is one in which the organization itself is committed to individual growth, learning and creativity as a path to institutional growth. In such an organization, systems are in place to capture, share, and institutionalize the insights of individuals and teams. The institution as a whole, builds off of past failures and successes and gets smarter and more effective as a result of shared learning of its members" (Graff cited in Lick, 2000, p. 48).

2.3.4.5 Learning Communities within a Learning Organization

According to Jardine (2008), teacher agency can be developed through numerous forms of learning communities that draw on learning situated in the realities of classroom practice. This embedded type of professional development can unfold in a variety of learning community formats, collectively defined as "staff development that improves the learning of all students organizing adults into learning communities whose goals align with those of the school and district" (NCDC cited in Jardine, pp.11, 12). Three of these learning communities are: *Professional Learning Communities* (PLCs), *Whole Study Groups* and *Lesson Study*. PLCs, and faculty and lesson study communities help to personalize larger schools because relationships are forged between teachers, resulting in closer relationships with youth because teachers feel supported (Barker, 2006).

Professional Learning Communities

Watson & Suporvitz (2001) assert that Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are created in successful senior high schools in order to distribute leadership, act on shared purposes and to analyse student learning in relation to instructional change. PLCs provide a vision for collegial, professional, results driven schools (Wells & Feun, 2007). They are "places in which teachers pursue clear, shared purposes for student learning, engage in collaborative activities to achieve their purposes and take collective responsibility for student learning" (Sparks cited in Wells & Feun, 2007, p. 143). PLCs where teacher development is brought about by mutual support, collaborative work, and

overall agreement on values provide the best avenue for professional growth, professional performance and satisfaction, innovation and student learning (McLaughlin & Talbert cited in Wells & Feun, 2007; Fullan & Hargreaves cited in Gruenert, 2005). Rick Dufour (2004), one of the original proponents for professional learning communities, states that this model flows from the assumption that the “core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught, but to ensure that they learn” (p. 1). The simple shift is from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning which has profound implications for schools (Dufour, 2004). Professional learning communities provide a collaborative approach to teachers’ professional learning in order to address student achievement (Jardine, 2008).

Developing a professional learning community demands attention to conceptualizations regarding student achievement and reflection on a preferred future for improved student learning (Wells & Feun, 2007). Three crucial questions are at the heart of the work for a professional learning community:

- What do we want each student to learn?
- How will we know when each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? (Dufour, 2004, P. 2)

Whole Study Groups

Whole Study Groups advocate that all teachers must join a study group that devotes itself to one aspect of a collectively defined goal that is acting as the vision for the school. The Whole Study Group’s mandate is to create, implement, and integrate effective teaching and learning strategies into curriculum and school programs to improve life for students in the areas of learning and behaviour (Jardine, 2008).

Lesson Study

Lesson Study encourages teachers to collaboratively plan, observe, and provide feedback to each other regarding each others’ attempts to implement researched teaching and learning strategies. Usually, these teachers draw on their existing expertise, while asking for assistance from outside sources that may possess resources and information to advance their practices (Jardine, 2008).

2.3.4.6 The Implications of Co-Mentoring within Learning Communities

Whole Study Groups, Lesson Study and Professional Learning Communities can be supported through utilizing co-mentorship practices. Co-mentorship, frequently referred to as reciprocal mentorship, peer mentorship, or peer coaching is a strategic process in which teachers support each other to reflect on present practice, learn new skills and solve classroom-related problems. This support is carried out through mutual goal setting that is in alignment with the schools' collective vision (Lam et al., 2002). Co-mentorship is created to nurture teachers' developmental knowledge and acquisition of new instructional strategies, and to thoughtfully examine results of experimentation in a safe environment (Kohler, Crilley-McCullough, Sheerer, & Good, 1997).

Mentoring is defined as assigning a guide or role model, counsellor, or coach sponsor to improve instructional practices, and is best employed when a teacher is developing unfamiliar skills, or is trying to solve challenging problems (Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Donegan, Ostrosky, & Fowler, 2000). While mentoring is effective in these scenarios, it is viewed as a linear relationship in which the mentee is in a subordinate role that is influenced by someone of greater age, position, or knowledge (Kochan & Trimble, 2000). Jypson and Pale (2000) describe mentoring as a complex relationship which is based on a question of power balance as one participant is situated as the expert who provides advise, counsel, and guidance to the other. Furthermore, Biott (cited in Lam et al. 2002) cautions that teachers resist support from an advisory teacher if an implementation of a plan or a task is initiated by the advisory teacher.

On the other hand, co-mentoring is based on a reciprocal relationship in which teachers support one another if they have the necessary skills, but are not using them consistently, or they have already received preliminary professional learning regarding an instructional strategy (Donegan et al. 2000). Co-mentoring is embedded within the situated learning experience so that teachers can examine procedural refinements of instructional experimentation on a daily basis. In addition, co-mentoring is a vehicle for aiding helps teachers to adapt innovation to their personal teaching style (Kohler et al., 1997).

Co-mentoring has the potential to modify longstanding educational or sociocultural systems that breed resistance among people (Lick, 2000). This strategic relational process helps teachers to successfully meet instructional objectives more so than traditional supervision, and changes in instructional practices become more long term and integrated into daily teaching (Kohler, 1997). Reciprocal coaching has substantial influence on the transfer of knowledge and skills from teacher workshops to classroom practice (Lam et al., 2002; Donegan et al., 2000). Mullen (2000), contends that co-mentoring creates a “counterculture” that is resistant to overarching institutional practices and exploitation, as its participatory nature is founded in social equality. In addition, reciprocal mentoring is seen as a catalytic force in changing traditional procedures based on hierarchical systems and homogeneous cultures that create schools stuck in antiquated practices.

Mullen (2000) believes that in order to suspend hierarchical order, senior and novice teachers must examine their assumptions regarding their position within the school culture. If veteran teachers believe that they have expert status because of their seniority within the school, they must redefine their identity to become a collaborative learner. Furthermore, co-mentoring is not a “compensating” practice for those less capable or qualified to teach.

When establishing co-mentoring partnerships, teachers must be paired voluntarily with similar minded teachers and they must be made to feel that they have something to share (Donegan et al., 2000). Teachers must be educated that co-mentoring is based on a reciprocal relationship that involves joint planning, observation, feedback, and co-teaching (Donegan et al., 2000; Kohler, 1997).

While co-mentoring relationship is reciprocal, the following ground rules must be established to ensure the co-mentoring partnership is an effective one:

- Confidentiality
- Keeping conversations on professional issues
- Clarify values
- Openly disclose mistakes, concerns, failures
- Take risks
- Engage in self-analysis

- Develop thoughtful relationships
- Establish learning agreement
- Set challenging goals
- Develop an understanding why other approaches may work (Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Cordingly, n.d.)

Professional dialogue must be structured and supported by protocols to reinforce teachers' learning purposes (Cordingly, n.d). Wallace (1998) has found that unless planning meetings and discussions are formalized through record keeping, plans are abandoned and the targeted change is not acquired.

Day and Hadfield (2004) suggest the following essential factors in making collective practice effective in bringing about change:

- Members possess a general desire to systematically investigate classroom learning and teaching
- Identification of a particular problem that is important to participants and to the other colleagues in the school
- Acquire external resources
- Co-opt a critical friend to advance thinking. A critical friend is someone who is willing and able to speak the truth and to say openly the things other colleagues may be reluctant to expose (Stokes,2003).
- Establish regular meetings enabling the building of trust and sustained interactivity.

2.3.4.7 Challenges to Implementing Learning Communities

Given that schools are strapped for time during the instructional day and budgets do not allow for teacher release, how do principals as instructional leaders provide opportunities for these communities to exist and to operate effectively? Principals who strongly believe in building the capacity for change to improve student achievement have shown creativity in freeing up time for teachers to learn and work in collaboration. Church (2005) cites the following examples of how principals have tried with success to free up time for professional development:

- Principals have taken over teachers' classrooms so that they can co-teach or attend other professional development opportunities.
- School funds have been creatively allocated to hire substitutes to release teachers
- Principals use staff meeting time as professional development, choosing to distribute administrative information through emails, handouts, or through other means (pp. 18, 19).

The implementation of these scenarios is dependent on the principal's willingness to suspend hierarchical control over teachers and building operations. They are also dependent on whether he or she has the ability to manipulate scheduling and school budgets in order to free up time and money for action research, and the tangible resources needed to support innovation.

Despite the documented positive outcomes of professional learning communities, critics such as Hargreaves (2006) caution that teachers can be prone to "interactional congeniality," instead of probing into issues that sometimes divide educators. Scholarship on professional learning communities at the high school level reveals that high schools spend little time focusing on and analysing student learning data (Eaker, Dufour & Burnett; McLaughlin & Talbert all cited in Wells & Feun, 2007). Apparently, teachers at this level engage in conversations that are characterized by the exchange of lesson plans, concepts, and various materials; however, collaboration focusing on student results creates discomfort and tension (Wells & Feun, 2007).

Discourse analysis of learning communities reveals that successful teams possessed a sense of purpose that focuses on the "how and what of work", rather than question its fundamental practice (Scribner et al., 2003, p. 93). The notion of autonomy, however, can be a manipulative tool used by leadership to give teams the illusion that they are in control of decision-making, when in fact they are not:

... political analysis of restructuring reforms purporting to devolve and decentralize educational decision making found administrators leveraging the "political utility" of participative rhetoric to manage conflict among stakeholders and reestablish the legitimacy of the system (Anderson, Malen, Weiler)---from this perspective, models of "participative leadership" were less arrangements to transfer power to those down in the chain of command (albeit under strict limits and specifications) than

means to maintain the status quo, if not further consolidate power under the guise of redistribution (Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006, p.181)

However, if professional learning communities are allowed to unfold without interference from school administration, they actually create teacher autonomy primarily in classroom instruction and student control matters. Autonomy is described as having control over personal activities and having consistency among ones goals, action, and values. Social connections through teamwork also foster one's worthiness for love and respect, and promote autonomy (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Hargreaves warns that a controlling, micromanaging type of school leadership may create "contrived congeniality" which results in teachers feeling pressured to collaborate in order to meet ill-defined goals (cited in Church, 2005, p. 12). Lam, Yim, Wing-hong, and Lam (2002) also describe contrived collegiality as possessing two prongs: 1) Administratively imposed collegiality that involves administration's manipulation of collaborative practices and teachers' behaviours in that teachers are "mandated to collaborate voluntarily" (p. 192), and 2) Organizational induced collegiality promotes a "top down" attempt to nurture "bottom-up" creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving through manipulation of the environment, rather than of teachers. While Lam et al. (2002) assert that the avoidance of administratively contrived collegiality is difficult because of the demands for principals to effectively fulfill the requirements of innovation, organizationally induced collegiality is more positive. The authors further advocate that collegial relationships should be spontaneous, flexible, voluntary, and naturally occurring among teachers.

Firestone (cited in Maxcy & Nguyen, 2006) further cautions that the practice of principals asserting their leadership through student assessment in order to organize school efforts and to identify problems, compromises teacher decision-making by channeling their "collective voice" through the assessment results. In addition, using student assessment tools does not improve principals' aptitudes for leadership. Firestone's argument has important implications during a time when data driven decisions are being used as the vehicle to improve student achievement.

In regards to co-mentoring as a strategy for supporting a learning community, Kohler

(1997) cautions that while some think that this vehicle alleviates stress, others say it causes conflict because teachers may perceive that it violates the traditional grammar of schooling, autonomy, privacy, and equality in schooling. In addition, teachers may resist co-mentoring because they believe it makes them vulnerable to scrutiny and may risk their self-esteem and professional respect. Teachers may feel psychological pressure and exert subtle resistance toward having another teacher in the classroom (Lam et al., 2002). Orland-Barak and Tillema (2006) further contend that unless teachers are willing to establish a shared problem, possess a willingness to change one's perspective on their teaching, and truly engage in the dynamics of the group or team, knowledge productivity will not occur.

Hargreaves (cited in Lam et al., 2002) argues that the current individualistic and isolated culture in senior high schools cannot foster the team collaboration and co-mentoring needed to improve teacher performance. Without the efforts to nurture the foundational beliefs, values and norms that sustain an open, trustful culture, the practice of co-mentoring will not generate true collaboration.

Learning communities are not to be a means of sharing superficiality or self-protection. They are not regarded as a replacement for individual knowledge, experience and judgement, but rather a complement to these (Day, 2004). Members have to work together for a long time before they actually work as a team or professional learning community (Drucker cited in Day, 2004). In addition, school leadership must be mindful of implementing the structure of teams so that they do not put curriculum ahead of students' social and personal concerns; these concerns must be embedded in curriculum delivery (Spies, 2001).

2.3.4.8 Teacher Knowledge Construction: How do Teachers Learn?

While this literature review has encompassed the attributes of effective leadership and the conditions needed to minimize resistance and to maximize collaborative learning for teachers, it is important to understand the essence of how teachers learn. In order for change to occur, proper learning supports must precede its inception or else appropriate application will be abandoned (Sammon et al., 2007). According to Jardine (2008),

professional staff developers frequently struggle with how to implement the most effective learning situations for teachers so that theories and practical applications are meaningfully connected to daily practice, thereby being applied once they return to their schools. In this light, the concept of learning organizations cannot be discussed without a fundamental understanding of teachers' learning processes.

Foremost, teachers' professional learning must help them reconnect to and maintain their underlying reasons for teaching, as these can be easily lost during the daily demands of the classroom (Day, 2000). Professional learning must extend itself to the whole teacher as a person since it is the "teachers whose self brings significance to the meaning of the teaching act" (Day, 2000, p. 108). It must also help them to uncover their implicit beliefs and the reasons behind their instructional methodology (Ballet, 2006). Regarding professional learning as a holistic construct helps professional staff developers to create learning opportunities to help teachers confront, make sense of and interpret emerging situations within the school (Lambert cited in Sammon et al., 2007). Professional learning is so important to teachers that Darling-Hammond (cited in Bessaher & Heath, 2007) argues that the time teachers spend in discourse with one another and with knowledgeable professionals is just as important to student learning as the time they spend directly teaching youths. In fact, the learning environment for students is a direct reflection on the learning environment for teachers.

Despite the powerful advantages of teacher's receiving professional learning, the greatest obstacle in knowledge construction for teachers lies in the maintenance of a sustained and school related learning environment which ensures that the natural work of teachers is at its core. If these conditions are not attained, then knowledge construction becomes disconnected and progress stalls. In a learning environment connected to teachers' daily practices, knowledge becomes an 'epistemology of practice' (Orland-Barak & Tillema, 2006). "Thought and action are regarded as framed, shaped, and scaffolded by the setting and social context within which they originate and within which learning takes place" (Orland-Barak & Tillema, 2006, p. 8).

Orland-Barak and Tillema (2006) posit that knowledge construction for teachers is now taking a constructivist stance over an objectivist one. An objectivist stance "tells the

knowledge” while a constructivist one views knowing as “being recreated and rebuilt by those directly involved in the teaching context” (p. 8). Leshem (2008) further contends that people acquire knowledge through social practice and by the whole person actively engaging in the settings of that activity.

In March, 2008, Nova Scotia Department of Education’s publication, *Report and Recommendations of the Education Professional Development Committee* also revealed that when the professional learning is linked to teachers’ daily practices, and ongoing support is provided, teachers are able to learn and incorporate the necessary instructional methodology to improve student learning. This committee labeled this type of professional learning as embedded professional development, which is described as learning that educators engage in together. Embedded professional development draws on the potential benefits of learning strategies such as peer observation, discussion groups, collaborative lesson planning, joint work on school improvement, mentoring and networking related to subject matter pedagogy. This committee believed so strongly in the notion of teacher guided, embedded professional development that they recommended that the Nova Scotia Department of Education align provincial curriculum and program priorities to schools’ goals.

Shulman and Shulman (2004) define teachers as curriculum interpreters, adapters, and users who are unable to successfully internalize learning without proper resources such as mentoring, co-mentoring, curriculum print resources, and instruments such as computers. Shulman and Shulman also argue that teachers need an understanding of their own metacognitive processes in their learning process in order for learning to be transferred to daily classroom practice.

Shoonmaker (2007) contends that there are different types of teachers; therefore, professional learning must be diversified to meet their needs. Two of these types he identifies as experimental and practical teachers. Experimental teachers are characterized by their involvement in research and design experimentation, and consider their classrooms as laboratories for learning. They need time to reflect and participate in discourse about their practices. They value discretionary power over their teaching. On the other hand, practical teachers want professional learning and curriculum design to be

boxed and prescriptive. They prefer detailed teaching guides that allow them to make professional choices from proven strategies. Principals must know their teachers well in order to determine how they will respond to professional development and try to devise new ways to draw on their strengths.

Some teachers may possess both experimental and practical tendencies. The type of tendency a teacher engages in also depends on their stage in their career and life circumstances. Some usually practical teachers may reach a stage in their careers when they feel confident enough to experiment, while a normally experimental teacher is refraining from experimentation because personal problems may make them want to take refuge in predictability. In addition, sometimes experimental teachers need to feel protected from the “tyranny of having to be creative all of the time” (Schoonmaker, 2007, p. 269).

While this section is only a brief description of teacher knowledge construction, it is meant to engage others in the notion that professional learning is not a surface event that should be presented in a one-shot workshop format. Teacher learning is a complex construct that draws on teachers’ whole persona and manages to engage them in meaningful instructional changes. As the notion of professional learning continues to receive in-depth concentration, I posit that many professional staff developers must learn the principles of adult learning and how to apply them in order to awaken a diverse population of teachers to new possibilities in their practices.

2.4 Conclusion

Unfortunately, senior high schools are incredibly resistant to change (Fullan cited in Wells & Feun, 2007). My literature review has resulted in the understanding that senior high principals must assume the role of instructional leaders; however, this is an impossible task when it is executed in a traditional hierarchical style, reminiscent of outdated organizational structures. It is imperative that senior high school principals allow for distributed instructional leadership opportunities in order to successfully instill a climate of change, which is receptive to the myriad of competing reform. However,

senior high school principals frequently face the challenge of attempting to implement collaboration in a culture of negativity, which may use passivity or aggression to thwart innovation implementation (Wells & Feun, 2007). This factor makes it imperative that senior high principals understand the dynamics of building relational trust among staff members in order to create a collaborative culture, relatively free of manipulation and covert resistance to change. This relational trust is created by establishing a clear vision for the school. In addition, these principals must understand teachers' resistance to change and the best conditions for teacher learning in order to help them redefine their understandings of instructional pedagogy.

At present, little scholarship exists regarding the dynamics of senior high school principalship during a time of vast standardized change. My inquiry into how senior high principals are attempting to negotiate their new role as instructional leaders and how they bring coherence to educational reform through distributed instructional leadership and relationship building will attempt to illuminate the practicalities of leadership at the secondary level.

Chapter Three Methodology

The research within my literature review has shed light on the complexities of implementing innovation, instructional leadership, and distributed instructional leadership, and the challenges of negotiating relational influences while reinventing senior high schools as learning cultures. As I progressed further into my study, I became increasingly interested in whether senior high principals in Nova Scotia were experiencing these same dynamics. If so, I wanted to investigate how they navigated the uncertainty of these multiple facets to arrive at creating school cultures conducive to change.

In order to explore how senior high principals were experiencing their roles as leaders in Nova Scotia, I conducted semi-structured interviews with five principals at this level. I employed the qualitative research method known as grounded theory to analyze the data from these interviews to ascertain how these principals experienced their roles within the context of their experiences and relationships with their teachers, students, and other school stakeholders.

Chapter Three describes my research design, the context of my study, my data collection techniques, and the use of grounded theory in my data analysis. This section also describes how ethical issues were addressed, and how senior high principals were selected and invited to be participants in the study.

3.1 Research Design

I chose grounded theory as my method for data analysis as this type of study largely concerns itself with how individuals perceive and make meaning of their circumstances. This research method originates from the theoretical school of symbolic interactionism, which proposes that “meanings derive from the social process of people or groups of people interacting” (Blumer cited in Berg, 2007, p. 10) and that “reality is negotiated between people, always changing, and constantly evolving” (Blumer cited in Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 59). Symbolic interactionism posits that the meanings

people attach to their experiences are not accidental or “unconnected,” and that individual’s experiences and the events surrounding those experiences are important in the construction of meaning (Berg, 2007). Since the focus of my research is on how senior high principals make meaning of themselves as instructional leaders, and how they create the circumstances for distributed instructional leadership to occur in their schools, grounded theory’s emphasis on analysing process and change, and understanding how reality is socially constructed (Richards & Morse, 2007) best suited the nature and purposes of my inquiry.

Further justifying grounded theory as the methodological fit for my research is that its foundational question, “What’s going on here?” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 60), reaches to the crux of my inquiry about how senior high principals are attempting to enact their new role as instructional leaders, while trying to empower others to accept instructional leadership roles.

Charmaz (2006) defines grounded theory research as “a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data. Hence, the analytic categories are directly ‘grounded’ in the data” (p. 187). Inductive analysis involves the researcher immersing him or herself in documentation and data in order to determine recurring themes that appear to be meaningful to participants; therefore, the researcher is involved in data analysis while collecting data (Abramson cited in Berg, 2007; Charmaz, 2006). In grounded theory, the researcher is more concerned with analysis than description, and creates “fresh” categories instead of working from previously established conceptualizations (Charmaz, 2006).

This study adhered to the following components Glaser and Strauss, the originators of grounded theory, created in order to construct abstract theoretical explanations of social processes:

1. Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
2. Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
3. Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
4. Advancing theory development during each step of the data collection

and analysis

5. Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps
6. Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representatives (cited in Charmaz, 2006, pp. 5, 6).

3.2 Context

The data collection for my study took place at senior high schools in rural and semi-rural areas of Nova Scotia. In one instance, my research took place in the residence of a retired senior high principal, formerly employed by the Halifax Regional School Board.

3.3 Participants

For my research, I interviewed five principals from rural and semi-rural regions within the province of Nova Scotia. One of these participants was a principal of a large senior high school, one was a retired principal of a medium sized senior high school, one was a principal of a primary to 12 school, while two others were principals of combined junior/senior high schools. Prior to selecting participants, I had contacted a representative from the Nova Scotia Department of Education who is familiar with the work of senior high principals across the province to provide insight into possible participants for my study. In response, this representative provided a list of potential participants based on their reputation as respected senior high school instructional leaders within their schools, local communities and the wider educational community. From this longer list, I created a short-list based on the participants' availability and distance from my home. Representatives from The Nova Scotia Department of Education were not involved in helping me to short- list these senior high principals.

While I included one senior high principal who was retired from the Halifax Regional School Board, I chose not to interview incumbent senior high principals within my own school board, as I was aware that my prior knowledge about the schools and principals might skew the hermeneutics of my data. In addition, I was mindful that, as a district leader, I am perceived as exercising power in relationship to school personnel, and I did not wish for this perception to impede the researcher – participant dynamic in regards to

honest, open communication. I believed that if I conducted my research outside of my school board, the participants would have neutral emotions regarding the purpose behind my research and the perceived balance of power would be more equal during the interview situations.

Prior to the commencement of my research, I obtained permission from senior administration for each of the involved school boards to interview a specific number of senior high principals within their board. Senior high administration for each of these boards was unaware of who I would be approaching to interview. Once permission was granted, I electronically mailed potential participants a letter outlining the research methods and time commitment of this study. All participation was strictly voluntary, and I obtained informed consent from each participant. To ensure that all participants were fully informed before agreeing to participate, I offered them the option to follow this letter up by contacting me, or my thesis supervisor, with pertinent questions they had regarding who I was as a researcher, the research methodology, reasons behind the study, or any other concerns or queries they had regarding the research process.

3.4 Data Collection

As grounded theory seeks to explore how people structure and give meaning to their circumstances (Berg, 2007), I used semi-structured or semi-standardized, one-on-one interviews to generate qualitative data.

Berg (2007) defines interviewing as a conversation with the purpose of gaining information. A semi-structured or semi-standardized interview is characterized by asking prepared open-ended questions, which may be supplemented with probes to help the researcher clarify a participant's response (Richards & Morse, 2007), or to determine the level of the participant's background knowledge regarding a subject. While prepared questions provided the framework for the interviews, the wording of these questions was flexible in order to fit the context of the interviewer-participant dynamic, and to adjust the level of language if the participant was not familiar with particular educational terminology. Conducting semi-structured or semi-standardized interviews allowed me to clarify the meaning of terms, concepts and questions whenever necessary (Berg, 2007).

While I had not initially sent out the questions to the senior high principals prior to interviewing them, I decided to do so after the first interview to provide them a chance to reflect on their practices. This opportunity for self-reflection helped them to feel more comfortable within the interview situation, and aided them in providing more precise descriptions regarding their daily practices and personal theoretical constructs regarding their leadership approach.

To ensure that I gained a complete understanding of the subject of my query, I used the four styles of questions Berg (2007) recommends in order to conduct an effective interview:

1. Essential Questions: These questions were posed in order to gain specific information regarding my inquiry and to ensure my interview stayed on course despite its semi-structured or semi-standardized nature.
2. Extra Questions: These questions were asked to ensure reliability of responses to the essential questions.
3. Throw –Away Questions: Throw-away questions were usually asked at the beginning of an interview in order to establish rapport and comfort between the interviewer and the participant. Throw-away questions were usually general and pertained to the demographics or the physical aspects of a school. They were generally spontaneous in nature.
4. Probing Questions: These questions were intended to be neutral and spontaneous, and were simply used to clarify meaning, or to elicit the full story from a participant.

3.5 Data Analysis

I audiotaped, labeled, and transcribed each semi-structured interview. I then analyzed the interview transcripts for theoretical coding using the MAXQDA 2007 software program. Theoretical codes were used as a way to conceptualize “how the substantive

codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into theory” (Charmaz, 2007, p. 63). I constructed theory by identifying concepts and exploring the relationships between these concepts and the core category of senior high principals as instructional leaders (Richards & Morse, 2006). It is important to note that I used inductive analysis to extrapolate these identified concepts and categories, and formulated theories.

Theoretical coding, according to Charmaz (2007), follows other types of coding such as open coding and focused coding; therefore, my research included these coding styles, which occurred in two important phases:

Phase One

- Open Coding: The unrestricted coding of data line by line was employed in order to identify the concepts and categories within the data (Strauss cited in Berg, 2007).

Phase Two

- Focused Coding: After an analytical direction had been established through coding data at the minute level, I used focused coding to synthesize and explain larger segments of data. I analyzed large amounts of data using the most significant or frequent codes that had been established in earlier coding (Charmaz, 2007).

Throughout Coding

- Memo-writing: I interrupted all coding to write theoretical understandings of the content in the form of memos (Berg, 2007). Memo-writing is the pivotal step in grounded theory between coding and abstracting theoretical constructs, as researchers must analyze their ideas and codes for emerging categories and concepts (Charmaz, 2007). My memos involved the recording of insights, intuitions, thoughts, ideas, and feelings about the categories and theories that emerged from the data. I sorted and compared memos as data collection and coding unfolded, treating memo-writing as data.
- Since coding is an emergent process and new ideas arise, I consistently compared the codes of bodies of data with previously established

coded data.

- Coding and data analysis began at the commencement of data collection.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The validity of research results was enhanced by positioning myself in the research, and by bracketing or putting aside, as much as possible, my personal understandings of leadership at the senior high level, my professional experiences as a teacher, and my assumptions (Richards & Morse, 2007). My method of bracketing was to write ongoing reflections in a separate journal and to refer to them throughout my research. This process ensured that the categories and theories I abstracted from the data were not based on my personal assumptions, and were in keeping with evidence found in ongoing literature reviews. I also used “Response Data,” a method for keeping subjectivity in check by requesting a peer to ask critical questions throughout the research, to help me uncover my assumptions and biases regarding my analysis (St. Pierre, 1997).

I triangulated data collected from interviews by cross-referencing reviews of current research regarding instructional leadership and distributed instructional leadership, my reflection journal, and documents published by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. I also offered participants the option to review transcriptions prior to coding to ensure that their message had been accurately represented, and to provide them with an opportunity to add final remarks. Reliability was strengthened through ongoing in-depth coding analysis and memo-writing, which identified emerging concepts, categories and theories.

3.7 Potential Problems

I anticipated this grounded theory research would involve few problems, with the exception of the following:

1. Travel: A number of the senior high school principals that I interviewed worked in schools that were a maximum three-hour drive from my home; therefore, I scheduled my interviews through April to the middle part of May to circumvent winter driving

conditions.

2. **Principal Availability:** Principals tend to face many unforeseeable circumstances within their role, which might necessitate cancellation of meetings. In order to minimize the effects of cancellations I requested principals to set two meeting dates with me. The second date acted as a “rain check” in the event that the first interview date needed to be postponed

3.8 Ethical Issues

The most prominent ethical issue connected with this research pertained to confidentiality. I hope that officials at the Nova Scotia Department of Education, administrators at district school board levels, and senior high school principals read my research to help inform their practices; therefore, it was imperative that participants were protected through anonymity. I had no further communication with the representative from The Nova Scotia Department of Education who provided me with the names of potential participants, so that they would be unaware of who would be involved in my research. The Nova Scotia Department of Education did not have any involvement in my research and in no way were these principals coerced to participate in my research.

To preserve anonymity of interviewed senior high principals, I used alphabetical letter pseudonyms or inserted generic terms (ie. wrote ‘school’s name’ to replace the actual name of the school) for their names and schools. I did not describe the demographics of schools in order to prohibit easy identification. I also alphabetically coded any names of specific teachers mentioned within the interview.

Once the research had been completed and analysed, I deleted raw data from electronic files. I also destroyed raw data in hard copy formats. During the data collection and analysis stage, I stored raw data in password protected electronic files and in locked filing cabinets.

Prior to conducting this research, I obtained ethics approval from the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University and the school boards that were involved in the research. This ethics approval ensured that all participants were treated with human dignity and their personal interests were protected. I gained informed

consent voluntarily from the participants through signed letters indicating they understood the purpose and processes of this qualitative study.

3.9 Reflections on My Positionality within the Study

Given that I have, in the past, prided myself on being a non-judgemental leader who did my best to ensure that my daily practices were not emotionally driven in order to be open to understanding others' perspectives, I initially believed that I could undertake my interviews as an objective observer. However, within my first interview I became so drawn to the story of the interviewee and the vitality she brought to her role as principal, I found myself forgetting my role as researcher. As my interviews progressed, the stories of the senior high principals I interviewed encompassed replicated patterns of chaotic uncertainties in daily events, an overload of administrivia, a constant quest to stay on top of the tide of reform, and a deeply rooted passion to reculture their schools into communities of caring. Despite the many challenges in carrying out the multiple facets of their role, these principals were quick to inform me that they loved their jobs, and that they felt a deep sense of purpose in what they do.

As I interviewed these five senior high principals, it occurred to me how much they were committed to creating a purpose for their school. These were well-informed, highly competent individuals who engage in self-reflection about their practices, and who were able to articulate their transformation as school leaders. They were unafraid to network with other school administrators or to adopt mentors to help inform their practices. These individuals expect to keep transforming their practices and beliefs as they progress in their careers. Unanimously, each of these professionals declared that they did not want me to paint a "rose coloured picture" of their practices. Each of them believed that they had not reached perfection. They, too, still struggle with what it means to be a leader, and how to employ optimum approaches to help their teachers recognize their individual potential as educators. One principal paraphrased Mark Abshy, coach of the Canada World Junior Team, in the following words, "If I am not trying to improve myself as a leader, how can I expect my players to keep going? If you're not trying to improve, how can you expect your players to because you are telling them, essentially, you're done.

This is all I have.”

Once I had completed my interviews and I began to formulate the results from my data analysis, I realized that I felt both compelled and responsible to convey the positive contributions that these principals bring to their profession, as well as the challenges that they face in negotiating the complexities of their roles. As a researcher, I had the opportunity open to few in the teaching profession; through two-hour interviews with five impressive leaders, I was able to gain insights into the world of a senior high principal.

What fascinated me the most about conducting these interviews was that despite the overwhelming nature of their roles, these principals readily gave of their time to sit with me. Not only did they wish to help me with my research, they wanted to make sure that others within and outside of the education profession heard of their lives and of their purpose to create a world of caring for students and teachers within an organizational structure that challenges this notion. They wanted others to see the demands that are placed on their time that make it problematic to fully pursue their ultimate purpose - reculturing the senior high environment so that it is more personalized for all stakeholders. Whether they understood they were doing so, these principals informed me of their belief that personalizing and creating trustful relationships among all of these stakeholders is what ultimately brings improvement in student learning and students' lives.

These senior high principals talked of their role with such passion; I immediately understood that they were hoping that having their stories in print might help bring a change to the demands placed on them by external leadership. I also believe they are hoping that my research will sensitize others to the nature of their role and to enlighten the public about the purpose behind what they do. For me, these interviews humanized senior high principals who are frequently perceived as managers or administrators, not necessarily leaders. My interviews also told me of the isolation these school leaders experience within their role, and their desire to be heard. I found each of these principals were thankful for being given the opportunity to voice themselves and to professionally reflect on their practices and their vision. As one senior high principal said to me, “I don't think anyone has ever asked me about my vision for my school.”

My intention is not to assume the role of cheerleader for the agency of senior high principalship; rather, I have worked to represent their narratives in an informed and highly respectful manner. My wish is that others gain insight into the world of principalship. I am also hoping that my research acts as a catalyst for policy makers to critically assess how external reforms align to each school's culture and vision.

I learned through my research that it is impossible to write about the humanistic elements of education absent my lens as teacher, leader, and human being who continues to work toward the betterment of students' learning, keeping in mind that the adults working with our youth also need to be treated with respect and humanism as they move forward in their learning. Throughout the research, however, I incorporated measures to ensure that I remained open to alternative interpretations and perspectives in the interview data. I enlisted the critical questioning of my work colleagues and my thesis supervisor. I also considered my findings in relationship to the research I included in my literature review. Further, I maintained a journal highlighting my thoughts whenever I detected that my personal perspective was colouring my data analysis, in order to clarify my feelings and perceptions behind some of my assumptions.

Chapter Four Findings

The question guiding my research was: **How do senior high principals in Nova Scotia conceptualize their role as instructional leaders and what practices do they employ to enact that role?** I endeavoured to explore my query through the use of a qualitative methodology known as grounded theory. Since the foundation of grounded theory rests on learning how people make meaning of their personal experiences in relation to the context of these experiences and their interactions with others, this methodology allowed me to analyse and code for theories inductive to the data collected from two-hour semi-structured interviews with five senior high principals. Hence, the findings within this section are a result of theoretical coding which naturally emerged from the data present within the interview transcripts, rather than from my imposed assumptions.

While theoretical coding is given in-depth treatment in Chapter Five, Chapter Four discusses the common categories and themes that emerge from the data I collected: instructional leadership, shared/distributed leadership, building school vision, teacher resistance, and supporting principals. I have attempted to authenticate my data analysis by using direct quotes from the interviews to highlight the voices of the five senior high principals.

4.1 Instructional Leadership

The first category emanating from my data analysis was that of instructional leadership. In this section, instructional leadership will be discussed with respect to the principals' personal interpretation of its meaning, their struggles with implementing this leadership style, and their quest to build relationships among staff members while coping with teacher resistance. The principals' perception of the qualities of an instructional leader and their enactment of instructional leadership are also examined.

4.1.1 Personal Interpretations of Instructional Leadership and its Perceived Benefits

These senior high principals' shared interpretation of instructional leadership means that principals are in classrooms not only evaluating teacher performance, but also collaboratively working with teachers to help them keep their practices current. These principals also believe that instructional leadership involves modeling the best practices of classroom instruction. This modeling is keenly dependent on their ability to keep themselves abreast of current research on instructional practices and curriculum. In their minds, those principals who demonstrate strong instructional leadership are ones who take an active interest in all curricula, not just curriculum pertaining to the subject matter they formerly taught.

Many of these principals continue to feel a strong pull to the nature of their craft; therefore, they miss the experience of classroom teaching and the intricacies of planning for student learning. While they are learning about current research in instructional practices, they are bereft of the experiences of actually putting these practices into place. They believe that being able to implement a more direct form of instructional leadership would help them to experiment with new practices; thereby, helping them to stay in touch with the energy of the classroom:

My ideal day would be at least two hours a day, visiting classrooms and visiting teachers. And not being there as a threat, not being there to supervise, or maybe spending a whole period in Drama class, or spending a whole period in Math, class, or talking to kids or sitting beside them. Actually, I miss teaching too, so actually maybe doing something in [her subject area].

Despite the fact that the many demands of the role of principal prohibit them from undertaking more of a direct instructional leadership role, they believe that there are many benefits regarding this concept of leadership. Their perception of the greatest benefit of instructional leadership is “getting the pulse” of the classroom and the school. “Getting the pulse,” means that they are able to see teachers' practices and styles, and are able to detect where practices need more support, or where issues of curriculum need greater attention. Issues of curriculum include whether teachers are following course

outcomes, employing current assessment strategies for student learning, and informing students of their learning targets related to the course outcomes.

Many of the principals voiced their concern that teachers need to be supported more at the senior high level to help them to differentiate instruction for all of the learning needs of their students, including those who need to be challenged by the curriculum. While all of these senior high principals come from an elementary or junior high background and have witnessed the impact of differentiated instruction on student learning, many of the professional development opportunities pertaining to literacy, numeracy, and differentiated instruction are primarily conducted at the elementary level, receiving only vague attention at the senior high level. Consequently, senior high teachers are left with very few models showing them how to incorporate these strategies within the structure of the senior high instructional day. A typical day at the senior high level exists within a semestered system in which teachers may receive 90 to 150 students per day in chunks of one-hour periods that follow a rotating, block schedule.

Each academic year, a semester runs from September to the end of January, while a new semester begins in February and runs to the end of June. Each semester contains 110 instructional hours per full credit, while 55 hours are allotted per half credit (*Public Schools Program 2003-2004*, Nova Scotia Department of Education). The principals reported that potentially teachers might teach seven full courses throughout the year. This course load scenario means that teachers teach four of the seven courses in one semester, resulting in no preparation periods during this time frame. This lack of preparation time makes it problematic for teachers to research and experiment with new instructional practices during the school year. As a result of the lack of time to do their own research, these principals feel their role as instructional leader is to treat senior high teachers as their students in helping them to create an environment that supports all learning; thereby, strengthening a climate of caring within the whole school.

I don't think that you can just say, "Research says this, research says that." I think you have to produce research to show people that there are other ways to doing things, but also providing people with a variety of strategies, or providing them with a variety of methods of doing things.

When I talk about educational leadership, I have been frustrated in my career that every initiative starts here (gestures downward) and works its way up...I mean even with IPP writing, the kids come into us and teachers are just thrown when they were told, "You have to do an IPP!" They don't have a clue what to do, nor should they.

The principals' perception of the next greatest benefit to direct instructional leadership is that they would be in classrooms learning students' names and developing a relationship with them. One of the principals from a smaller junior-senior high took delight in the fact that students knew when he was out of the school and actually questioned him about his whereabouts the following day. He believes that this is a good indicator of the students knowing who he is and his role in the school, thereby, developing an atmosphere of trust and support. If these senior high principals are not in the classrooms modeling instruction, they at least want to be able to sit alongside students to support them in their learning and to develop relationships with them so that their role is not an unknown one. They also believe their presence in the classroom reinforces the teachers' modeling of respectful communication; thus, substantiating the schools' expectation of a respectful climate, which accepts diversity of all its members.

4.1.2 The Struggles of Being an Instructional Leader

All of the principals interviewed have a strong desire to be instructional leaders whose presence is felt within the classrooms. In fact, this aspiration is the primary characteristic of their self-described "ideal" day. While a few of them attempt to practice an element of direct instructional leadership, they emphatically stated they are unable to do so with regularity because of the numerous demands on their time. One of the more prominent obstacles to principals carrying out direct instructional leadership is the amount of paperwork and documentation they are expected to complete for their school board, or for the Department of Education. This documentation usually encompasses reporting on their school's progress relating to various reforms, school statistics, financial matters, resources, tenders for operational items, and other school matters relating to curriculum,

human resources, and operations. While these principals understand the importance of the documentation, they are frequently overwhelmed by the fact that there are unreasonable turn around times for their submissions. In fact, they could potentially be asked to submit information in as little time as by the end of the day of which it is requested. Filling out the documentation usually means that information has to be investigated, verified, and then collated into a specified format. Once the documentation is submitted, no communication follows to inform the principals of how it is going to improve their schools and student learning. As one principal stated, "...heavens knows, we seem to give them those numbers X number of times and they go into a data base pit somewhere in [the city] and never come out again."

Some of the demand for documentation is perceived as being the result of disorganization on behalf of a department requesting information, and a lack of communication among school board and Department of Education departments regarding which information is the most pertinent to obtain. The principal who managed to spend a small degree of time within the classroom mentoring teachers, but felt overwhelmed by the demands for reports from the school board, decided that she periodically needed to take a strong stand in order to meet some of the established priorities within her school, and to eek out some time to be within classrooms.

I think a lot of those people in these positions [school board staff] come back to schools for their information and they're looking for reports all of the time, and you can take a humungous amount of time in feeding the board office what they want to know. So sometimes, you just have to make a decision when they say, "I want this report now," and all the stuff comes down and they want it by the end of the day, well, they might not get it by the end of the day.

Further compounding the nature of paperwork and the completion of unexpected reports are the number of emails the principals receive that demand some kind of action. Again, board office and the Department of Education staff send many of these emails. The majority of the principals usually tend to 30 to 50 or more emails per day in the evening as they believe their time is best spent dealing with school issues and school

meetings during the hours of 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Many of them reported that they log in at least twelve hours of work per day, frequently finishing responses to emails between 10:00 and 11:00 in the evening; only to go to work the next morning to find approximately 25 or more new emails published overnight. Many of these emails are directives given to them while they are sleeping. Some of the principals resort to arriving at school between 7:00 and 7:30 in the morning to quickly peruse these emails to decide the priority for the day, while relegating what they consider to be less important emails until the day's end. The common cry of these principals is, "Emails are killing us!"

When asked to describe a typical day, principals painted a picture of competing priorities that revise themselves from hour to hour, or, from minute to minute. Their established "to do" list for the day is rarely achieved as the constant onslaught of "pressing matters" takes precedence. Frequently, the principals used the term "putting out fires" to describe these pressing matters, which encompass such situations as discipline issues, violence, human resource issues for all employees of the building, school operation issues, financial issues, parental communication, and immediate action requests from the school board office and the Department of Education. One principal articulated that "putting out fires" means that a principal needs to be resigned to going with the ebb and flow of the day, because trying to put an organizational framework to the pressing matters is oftentimes more stressful, especially since many of the issues need to be dealt with immediately. Despite their best efforts to create organizational systems such as daily planners, priority lists, communication lists, or writing reminders, they reported that they struggle to complete the bulk of the priorities they had set out within any given day. This frequently leaves them with a sense of inadequacy and the thought that they are somehow failing their teachers and students.

I always feel behind—you truly cannot organize the day with a plan; you must be willing to take it as it comes. It leaves you with the feeling at the end of the day that so much didn't get completed and you just wished there were a few more hours in the day.

...it [putting out fires] could be anything from discipline to any of the assessments that just arrived from the department. Then all of the sudden, you've got to get the data out to the teachers and you've got to talk to this one and you've got to do that. Staffing

last week, we had to have our staffing assignments out before they go to HR. I was leaving on Wednesday for the Principals in Focus meetings for Thursday and Friday, so I am running around here. I got to all of the high school staff by the time twelve hit, I guess...I ran from door to door saying, "Here is your staffing assignment, nothing different from what we've discussed. You and "G" have been talking about it. I have been touching base with you, but here it is on paper." And I was running out the door [to go to the Principals in Focus meeting].

The hard part is that you cannot prepare for the unexpected and the unexpected takes over more than your routine. You can't establish a routine is what's difficult. My routine in the morning is, like I said, come in, look at my emails, see the admin assistants, see the VPs, see if there is anything pressing from yesterday. You know, but the police officer, our liaison officer could pop in, teachers pop in to throw things by you...

You never really plan. You can plan to the best of your ability and you can have your list all set up in detail in terms of when you want to do this, and when you want to do that, but Murphy's Law always seems to kick into action and things happen and then you have to deal with that particular issue that leads you to something else, which leads you to something else.

Many of the principals believe their job responsibilities are unreasonable, and that the operational and human resources demands are consuming an increased amount of their time. Operational demands not only pertain to issues dealing with the physical plant, but fire and safety procedures, managing and displaying credibility regarding the school's finances, scheduling, and other aspects of the school that keep it afloat. Human resource demands have grown from managing teaching staff through teacher supervision and supporting classroom instruction. Now, the principal's role, especially in light of the movement toward professional learning communities, involves more mediation of interpersonal conflicts, and helping teachers to build collegial teams to move forward on initiatives. To these principals, it is a challenge to provide ongoing opportunities to gather teachers to discuss student learning and to keep the momentum of the school vision alive.

What is usually overlooked regarding the principal's responsibility regarding human

resource issues is that they not only pertain to teaching personnel, but also encompass custodial staff, administrative support staff, educational program assistants, volunteers entering the school, and anyone else associated with the running of the school. Schools house what can be considered to be “hidden” staff, meaning the number of staff members within a school who do not typically end up under the principal’s staff statistics, but for whom the principal is still responsible. This “hidden” staff has the propensity to substantially elevate the number of staff members under the principal’s leadership even in smaller junior/senior high schools.

More and more there’s a lot of pressure on us as plant managers, and from the point of human resources, in terms of managing our human resources, and that’s not just supervising, or supporting teachers in the classroom. That’s mediating disputes, potentially dealing with situations where you are trying to develop a collegial model or a PLC to move forward on a particular initiative to get people to talk to each other, get the people together...also we are required to do full yearly evaluations on all of those [Educational Program] Assistants. That’s like a staff within a staff. Just by virtue of a support staff in terms of Program Support Assistants, cafeteria, library assistants, office administration, custodial...That pushes even a small school like us, that pushes us to close to 60 [staff].

One principal described how external leadership’s increased complexity of multiple operational and human resource demands, combined with growing requests for documentation, compete with the realities of the senior high school environment and the ability to become direct instructional leaders.

If you want me to concentrate solely on instructional leadership, if that is my job, and that’s what it is supposed to be, then I should have time to do that. And I don’t have time to do that. Everything else gets in the way. And that’s the part I am not sure the Department [of Education] sees at all. Even some of the board [staff] say, “You’ve gotta do this and this.” I don’t think that they see that when there is a fight out in the parking lot and the VPs have one [student] there and one [student] there, well what do I have to do? I have to start interviewing too!

Interestingly, the principals mentioned how failure to remember things is considered a disruption to their productivity, rather than a mere annoyance. The principals’ definition

of memory failure is characterized by not remembering to check on the completion of delegated tasks, forgetting to inform individuals or whole school staff members about particular items, or failing to remember to act on requests made by staff and students as they are doing daily walk throughs. As stated earlier, these principals do keep daily planners and priority “to do” lists; however, numerous tasks are instantaneous and unexpected, and must be taken care of immediately. The immediacy of acting on the task reduces the chance that they are written down. On the way to taking care of a task or giving a message to someone, they might encounter a situation, staff member, student or parent, causing them to forget what they originally intended to do. This can be described as “the domino effect” in that a principal can walk down the hall to carry out an action, be greeted by a teacher with a request, encounter a behavioural infraction in the hallway, come back to the office to deal with the discipline repercussions regarding the infraction, only to meet a parent waiting with a complaint. The original task becomes lost by virtue of the fact that each encounter along the walk is connected to another action.

I’m human, I forget to tell them things. And I tell you, I think if anything bothers me the most about the job is that there’s so much up here (pointing to head) that I don’t get down the hall to give somebody a message before the next thing hits, and then I forget it. I’ve gotten really desperate for that email. If they don’t read their email, then they’re out of luck. If I don’t email it at the time it happens I’m not going to remember until four in the morning and I feel rotten when I don’t get the message out.

When I asked one principal, “Do you have many disruptions?” the person replied,

Oh something as simple as I get up and I am going down the corridor and I forget what I went for. So you want to talk about disruption. I don’t know what that’s a sign of (laughing). To tell you the truth, it worries me.

I posit that competing directives from the school board and the Department of Education regarding documentation, and operational, human resources, and program matters in combination with coping with the daily school occurrences appear to be taking their toll on these principals’ memories. Failure to remember to follow up on communication or tasks has far reaching repercussions regarding school operations, and

may undermine the trust of staff and students. Since building trustful relationships is a priority for these principals failure to “follow through” is a significant liability to their role as school leader. It is evident that “failure to remember” is something these principals take seriously, and is not shrugged off as “just another mistake.”

The job expectations for senior high principals are so heavily laden with responsibility that these principals caution potential school leaders with younger children against pursuing the role because of the pressures it places on family life.

I think timing of getting into principalship is key with regards to people’s family and life. Like I was very fortunate to get in when my kids were at the stages when [they were older]. Some people are getting in when they are having families. Principals are in charge. I know principals who every Saturday and Sunday morning will go drive around their school to make sure that things are okay from the night before. You know, it’s a 24/7 kind of thing.

But, I couldn’t do this job if I had a family at home. And that’s what I’m finding with administrators, something has to suffer.

You’re putting a lot at risk if you’re not ready outside of these doors to commit to what’s inside of these doors. If things are shaken up outside, then you can’t do this inside.

The principals with younger families appeared to experience guilt about not being able to arrive home from work at specified times to be with family, or were regretful that they missed time with their children earlier in their school leadership career. Within the data, there is a definite theme of competition between the role of principal and the role of parent.

I come in probably anywhere between six and seven in the morning. And I promised my husband this year I’d leave by five, five-thirty. Um, really supper is supposed to be on the table by five-thirty and I am not really good at getting there on time. My time at getting [administrative work] done is in the morning, so that’s why I come in. My attitude is that I’m not hurting anyone at home because they’re asleep.

Well, regretfully, my kids are grown up, and regretfully, in hindsight, I could have been there a little bit more even during

those ensuing years, during the 90's, when I was taking my Masters. I was doing that part time. I didn't take a sabbatical, so that was summers and studying through the school year and putting time in. That's because I simply felt, "If I am going to do the job and do it right, I've got to put the time in."

The principals who feel that their role has minimal impact on their family either do not have children, or do not have young children. These principals cited that they have supportive spouses who are flexible and understanding of their job demands, possibly because there are no parental obligations at home. However, it seems that some of these principals still feel self-reproach that their partners are being deprived of their time.

The demanding role of school leadership has important implications regarding the number of potential school leaders needed to replace incumbent principals upon retirement. One principal noted that she is finding it increasingly difficult to encourage teachers who have strong leadership skills to consider taking on the role of senior high principal because they witness the overload on principals' time.

I know after seeing what I do, this is not for me." [Teacher who contemplated school leadership said to principal]...he would make a wonderful principal...And he sees that [the work] and not just what I do, but what other principals do.

The fact that these current school leaders are advising potential principals who have younger children to rethink administration until they are at a point in their life when family responsibilities have subsided, is fodder for younger educators to not assume the role. While senior high principals have repeatedly requested that external leadership reduce the rapid escalation of their workload, they report no signs of this occurring. I posit that if all levels of external leadership do not address the number and complexity of the directives to schools, potentially school leadership will become a barren field.

4.1.3 The Open Door Policy: An Emphasis on Building Relationships

Despite their frustration regarding not being able to establish a routine due to their workload, of utmost importance to these principals is that their typical day involves an "open door" policy and a high degree of visibility within their school, enabling staff and

students to speak to them whenever needed. They purposely leave their office door open so that teachers can drop in during non-instructional times of the day to discuss successes, concerns, personal or other issues, and to ask questions, or request support; therefore, there are numerous interruptions due to unexpected visits by school staff and students. These senior high principals frequently arrive at work much earlier than their staff and students so that they will have some time to complete administrative work without interruption. As soon as staff and students arrive, they make it a priority to spend time making connections with teachers and students by going to classrooms prior to the beginning of the instructional day, or by being visible in the hallways. The principals are so committed to making themselves accessible to all members of the school that they frequently put their own workload aside during the instructional day. As one principal stated, "...if a student comes into see me, I've always believed that they come first. So if a student comes to see me, I'm not going to say, 'Sorry, I'm not going to see you because I've got all that paperwork to do.'"

That's done [paperwork and reports] at night isn't it? It's just ongoing. Be it reports to central office, contacting parents, setting up meetings, creating agendas. I mean we have school advisory councils that you're always preparing for. Things like that. But I think that on a list of priorities for successful schools, those things will get done after the connections are made outside the office.

These principals value that they are making connections among their staff and their students as they believe that relationship building is the primary means to creating a community within the schools. It is their belief that building a sense of community fosters a comfortable environment, which enables teachers to take risks in learning new instructional strategies to improve student learning. They also believe that making these connections helps to change the previously held perception of traditional leadership: leaders are autocratic and prefer isolation from the teaching staff. A number of the principals commented that despite their best efforts to have daily personal interaction with teaching staff, their role is still perceived as hierarchical. They recognize that the teachers' perception of their power as leader is a barrier to honest, trustful communication; therefore, making them more determined to break down the wall

separating teachers from school administration. One principal remarked, “You know, there is still a we-they with some teachers in high schools. I don’t look at it as we-they. It’s we.” Admittedly, the principals’ dedication to the “open door” policy puts them at a disadvantage in their attempts to fulfill the other priorities of their day, and is one of the reasons why they are unable to act on their interpretation of direct instructional leadership.

I tried to get out into the classrooms as much as possible because that’s where what’s happening and I really think that one of the most important things is curriculum leadership and you can only tell what’s happening by going into the classrooms and seeing. However, as much as I would have liked to have been doing that all of the time, I didn’t get into the classrooms as much as I would have liked, and simply at the high school, as you know, there are always teachers on their prep period and when they say they want to speak to you, you have to listen quite often. That’s very important, to listen and to be there for them. So that was often a challenge to do that.

I can say that by the time the day actually starts with other human beings, none of my stuff gets done.

4.1.4 Qualities of an Instructional Leader

Overwhelmingly, the senior high principals interviewed articulated that the foremost quality an instructional leader should possess is being a strong “people person.” To them, being a “people person” means that an instructional leader is committed to building and nurturing a collaborative learning environment for staff and students. This collaborative environment must rest on the principal’s efforts to promote honesty, openness, and trust among all staff members, so that communication is not guarded. If teachers have trust in principals and their knowledge, then they feel comfortable when they are being guided in examining their instructional practices. Their primary method for fostering a sense of trust, openness, and honesty is to maintain the “open door” policy. The principals also believe that building a collaborative environment means that they must present themselves as good, trustful communicators who are receptive to others’ ideas and who have a sense of humour. They portray a good communicator as showing that they have

the best interests of their staff at heart by actively listening, demonstrating a positive attitude, admitting mistakes and being open to “not being right” all of the time. They note that instructional leaders still must make firm decisions regarding their schools, but they must consider others’ input and be resistant to exercising a “top down”, hierarchical approach to leadership.

Complementary to being a strong communicator, these senior high principals believe an instructional leader needs to build staff cohesion by recognizing teachers’ efforts, observing and valuing the teachers’ generational viewpoints, and facilitating sharing of teachers’ tacit knowledge and teaching experiences. On the other hand, the majority of them expressed guilt and remorse that they may be falling short of celebrating teachers’ efforts, and finding forums for teachers to share knowledge of their experiences, while examining their beliefs about teaching. While a number of the principals try to secure funding to release teachers to meet as teams during the instructional day, they admitted that many of the meetings occur after school. All of these principals expressed remorse that meetings were scheduled at the day’s end, when teachers are exhausted from their teaching responsibilities and still must prepare for student learning the next day.

...you can’t keep giving to teachers and expecting them to work evenings and weekends extra because they already have their preparing and correcting to do, so, I mean, you know the day may be 9 to 3 or 3:30, but you also know they are gonna work three or four hours in the evening. I mean they work long, long hours. I think that is a sad thing that the public doesn’t realize the hours. They just say, “You have the summers off, and you have all this time off.” But, they don’t. Teachers spend a lot of time working...

They are drained at the end of the day, and they still have all their marking and their prep time to do...

I know they’re busy and I hate calling them for another meeting. You got IPP meetings, you’ve got whatever...

Overall, the principals voiced that school leaders need to be humanistic by demonstrating interest in teachers’ personal lives, realizing that the stages in their lives dictate the amount of time they can dedicate to their profession. For instance, a teacher

with a young family, or going through a personal struggle will only be able to dedicate so many hours per day to his or her job until their life outside the school stabilizes. Again, the principals believe that the “open door” policy helps teachers to feel comfortable in talking to them about personal issues they may be facing, thereby, explaining why their work habits may change for a period of time.

The next quality of high importance an instructional leader should possess is being knowledgeable about curriculum and current instructional best practices. They must also be involved in ongoing professional development. Two of the principals also believe that school leaders need to keep themselves informed regarding the data and studies germane to current instructional theories and practices to ascertain their effectiveness and pitfalls. This helps them to ask informed critical questions about what innovation is being proposed, and to make enlightened decisions regarding how new initiatives will play out in their schools. One senior high principal went as far as to suggest that an instructional leader needs to be familiar with the curriculum from grades Primary to 12 so that they understand the continuum of the key stage and grade level outcomes. It is interesting to note that all five of these senior high principals have teaching experiences at the elementary and/or junior high levels in several different subject areas, making them, by experience, privy to the curriculum outcomes and the instructional strategies of several different grade levels.

...have a good understanding of what is being talked about, and that it is being based on sound data and research.

Not only do you have to know the curriculum that is expected for the senior high level, you should be familiar with the curriculum from P to 12. You should know what the flow is and what the expectancies were along the way. You should also know what the current trends are in curriculum. Not only in your province, but when your province comes down with new initiatives, has this been tried elsewhere in the country? Was it successful? Was it not successful? What were the pitfalls? What should I look for? How can I inform myself?

It appears, however, that much of the professional development principals receive is through self-initiated professional reading that is usually relegated to after school hours.

The principal of the largest high school shared her belief that principals need to be kept abreast of current educational literature; however, she, herself, struggles to find time to read after her work hours because of her lengthy workday. I assert that not only do their staff need professional development, but principals, themselves, need time within the school year to network with each other to research instructional innovations in order to guide teachers in their implementation.

4.1.5 Enacting Instructional Leadership

While the senior high principals openly admitted that “direct instructional leadership” enacted in classrooms and modeling of instructional strategies does not regularly occur, or does not occur at all in their schools, they tried to use other means of instructional leadership in order to support teachers. The following discusses the approaches they are currently attempting and how they believe they have affected staff and student learning.

4.1.5.1 Relationship Building

Unanimously, these principals have made it a priority to get to “know” their school staff and students. They do so by making themselves accessible to all staff members including custodians, administrative support staff, library assistants, Educational Program Assistants, and anyone else who is involved in keeping the school operational. They put special emphasis on getting to know their teachers so that they can readily see changes in their behaviour, teaching style, or communication. As mentioned earlier, they attempt to do this by using an “open door policy,” making themselves visible in the hallways, and getting to school early so that they may be able to share collegial talking time with staff. One principal even stated that she knows her staff so well that she is able to detect and predict teachers’ changes in mood and practices. If she knows that a teacher is going to come to school needing support, she meets them at the school entrance with a coffee, showing that she is available to help them if they wish. This principal’s belief is that if you nurture the teacher, it directly impacts their effect on their students and their learning.

You have to pay close attention to your teachers. They are your classroom. You have to make certain that they’re learning. You

have to make certain that you're connected with them. I am not saying in a personal way, that you have to party with them. But, you have to know who is affected by seasonal affective disorder, because you know that you have to shore those people up in January and February in this climate. You know, I think those things are important because they have direct impact on the students.

A number of these principals are aware of how building trust by getting to know teachers means that they acknowledge their work overload. They attempt to nurture their staff by providing such opportunities as wellness days, discussing ways of taking care of themselves, and by incorporating fitness opportunities within the school day.

... I always talk to my teachers about the mind, body, spirit. Take care of yourself first, because you can't take care of anybody else if you don't, so it's important that you build in exercise, a healthy diet, and I used to have these conversations with them too. And you know we started the 10,000 step program to really reinforce it and to have those conversations with students because if you want to develop a well rounded individual, I think that it's important for the leader to have developed the mind, body, and a spirit as a model and in creating that culture. And yes, it's okay at three-thirty to walk out of the school to go for your walk, come back later, you know, that's good. That's healthy. If you want to go for your walk at lunch, then go. You know, this is good. So, you have to have that understanding. So, I think you really have to be a well rounded individual because that's what we want to develop in our students. Not to be shy about talking about your spiritual development, which brings in the humanistic part of it.

It's tapping in for them to survive because the demands in the classroom are becoming unbelievable... Like I find right now, my teachers are exhausted, **they're exhausted**... everyone is on a treadmill... with semestering there is no down time. Like we finish exams one day, the term starts the next day. February is just like September now. People can't even breathe and that's what I'm finding is killing our teachers.

As one might expect, the size of the school determines how well the senior high principals were able to get to know their staff. The principals of the smaller schools did not struggle with doing this, while the principal of the large high school could not

possibly get to know all her staff well enough to be able to predict their moods or to determine changes in behaviour. This does concern her; however, she tends to rely on the department heads building this relationship with her staff, and then reporting to her about teachers who were experiencing personal difficulties.

Of special note, the way these principals deal with school finances demonstrate that they are trustful, open, and supportive to their staff. Four of the principals noted that the previous administration of their schools was not transparent with the school's finances, was controlling of money, or spent money on the cosmetic aspects of the school, rather than on instructional materials. When they assumed the principalship of the school, they demonstrated their support of their teachers by being transparent with spending and by allocating money to classroom instructional materials and professional development. Whether these principals knew the power of their financial decision-making on their staff was not ascertained. However, I posit that their power to handle finances in an upfront manner may have been one of the first building blocks to fostering an atmosphere of trust and honesty within the school, which allowed teachers to begin to feel comfortable in exploring their practices.

4.1.5.2 Support through Resources and Professional Development

To compensate for not being direct instructional leaders, the principals in the study used a *pressure/support* method of leadership to encourage teachers to grow in their practices. *Pressure/support* occurs when a principal clearly defines expectations they want teachers to ascertain within the realm of their roles, and then provides the pertinent tangible and intangible resources according to the teachers' needs. These tangible resources come in the form of classroom materials, professional resources, professional development, or substitute monies to provide time for them to meet with other educators who are experimenting with similar practices. Intangible resources come in the form of supporting the teachers' experimental practices in response to parental inquiry, helping to organize meetings, encouraging teaming within the school in which teachers could mentor one another, verbal encouragement, and showing a positive attitude toward their risk taking (Fullan, 2007).

All of the principals reported that the teachers, themselves, determined their learning needs. These principals believe that in order to learn, teachers need to build on their own current practices and to examine their beliefs. Therefore, while they are being challenged, they are still learning within their comfort zone. Vygotsky (as cited in Jardine, 2008) calls this learning in the zone of *proximal development*, whereby teachers learn in the area that takes place between what they can do with support and what they can do independently. In other words, if the learning goal is too far beyond the realm of the teachers' understandings and practices, they will struggle and forfeit the learning experience, or they will not integrate what they have learned into their daily practices.

So my vision was to help every student learn to the best of their capacity, but to also give the teachers the tools to teach them where ever they were.

I've always said, "I can't give you everything, but you tell me what you want and I will do whatever in my power to get you what it is you need."

These principals use various means to ensure that teachers are within their zone of proximal development, making way for them to learn new methodologies. For instance, they have attempted to assign teachers courses in which they are trained, they have tried to create schedules so that teachers are not teaching numerous new subjects, or they have created mentoring situations in which teachers have been teamed together to teach the same subject at the same time, so that they can co-plan. Whenever possible, teachers are enabled to teach subjects based on their personal interests and experiences, either through courses selected from the Nova Scotia Public Schools Program, or by creating Locally Developed Courses. One principal actually partnered two teachers to teach the same course; each one assuming the course on a part time basis so that one of them could learn skills from the more experienced teacher in order to eventually teach it independently.

Of course, the schools' budgets only permitted so much that the principals could offer the teachers; thus, to offset what they had in their finances many of them received monetary support from their school board, or they accessed funding through different initiatives in the *Learning for Life II* (Nova Scotia Department of Education), or other

Department of Education sponsored initiatives. Typically, these grants were used to provide teachers with meeting time within their instructional day, or to provide them with ongoing professional development opportunities embedded within the school year. The principals acknowledged that a disadvantage of releasing teachers for meeting time or professional development during the instructional day is that they must spend extra time preparing for substitute teachers. In addition, the teachers fear that student achievement will be impeded, especially in those courses ending with a Nova Scotia Examination.

4.1.5.3 Mentoring and Modeling

While modeling or mentoring of instructional practices very rarely occurred, these principals chose to exercise “direct instructional leadership” by modeling for teachers the most effective ways to interact with students, especially when there are discipline issues. Either they take the teacher and the student through a mediation process so that they could come to an agreed upon understanding, or they model appropriate daily interactions with students in the hallways or classrooms. One of these principals reported that by modeling mediation techniques with teachers to use with students, she hopes to remind the teacher that even though students have misbehaved, there may be extenuating circumstances or deeper reasons behind the misbehaviour, thereby, lessening the teacher’s frustration. If a collaborative, caring environment is to be achieved the principals have strong expectations that students are not to be spoken to in sarcastic tones, despite a teacher’s frustration with them. Many of the principals are cognizant, however, that their teachers are under a great deal of daily pressure and that it is only human to lose patience with students. By modeling appropriate interaction with students and by helping teachers to see that students’ misbehaviours are usually the result of personal upset, they hope that teachers be reminded that their students are also under a great deal of pressure.

A lot of that, I just don’t feel that I have gotten out there enough, however, a lot of that might come through that discipline that has just come through the door. Where I have somebody, and an irate teacher who just sent a kid to the office and eventually I’ve sat down and mediated the discussion with the student and the teacher,

and I've helped the teacher to recognize again that this, there's something deeper going on here. You know, I don't know.

Recognizing that they are unable to work with teachers for extended periods of time to act as instructional leaders within classrooms, these principals attempt to use more of a shared leadership style, team building or collaboration in order to do so. While the principals supported team building and collaboration, there was no mention of how these occurred with respect to running productive meetings, laying the framework for the partnerships, or coping with interpersonal conflicts. On the other hand, the principals shared great detail regarding their understanding of shared or distributed leadership. The next section will discuss these principals' definition of shared leadership, the benefits, and struggles of assuming this style of leadership, the preferred traits of potential teacher leaders, and how teacher leaders are supported within the school.

4.2 Shared/Distributed Leadership

Within this section, the terms shared and distributed leadership will be synonymous to one another. The senior high principals' interpretations of shared leadership and their struggles and successes with this leadership approach will be discussed.

4.2.1 Definitions of Shared or Distributed Leadership

While all principals described shared or distributed leadership as containing an element of delegation of tasks, their primary objective behind employing this leadership style is to gain an understanding of the voice of the teachers and to get "the pulse" behind teachers' thinking. They also see shared leadership as being synonymous to shared decision-making; all teachers have an opportunity to give input during times of decision-making. Promoting shared leadership is a means of building a capacity of knowledge within the school, and it is a chance to create embedded professional development opportunities, in that the teacher leader in an instructional area works with another teacher as he or she attempts to emulate the teacher leaders' new practices. Shared leadership is carried out through a combination of using teams to inform teachers' own

practices, especially through common assessment, or through empowering individual teachers to take on a leadership role in their subject area. Overall, the principals believe that the benefits of shared leadership is to enable teachers to feel empowered within their school, to take ownership for change, and to encourage daily professional conversations. All of these conditions help teachers to be more receptive in undertaking the school's vision.

Discussions of delegation of work in relation to shared leadership only pertained to the vice-principals' roles within the school. Principals reported that they share committee and operational responsibilities not only to lighten their own load, but also to train vice-principals about the various aspects of running the school and supporting student learning. To ensure that the vice-principals "sing the same song" as the principal, frequent formal or informal connections occur throughout the week to ensure that communication is fluid among them, especially in regards to discipline issues. The majority of principals reported that procedures are established in which discipline issues are first dealt with by the vice-principals, while they primarily handle chronic or acute offenses. In some instances, the principals stated that they did not believe, with the weight of their role, that the school administrator should be dealing with daily discipline issues, as this impeded their ability to oversee the bigger picture of their school by compounding their workload.

4.2.2 Struggles with Shared Leadership

Delegation of tasks to teaching staff is not highly favoured by these principals because many of them feel guilty that they are creating even more stressful work situations for their teachers. As one principal stated, "There are a lot of things that I do that could be passed off, but everybody's busy. Like schools are busy. Teachers are busy. Your administration is busy. It's a tough job when principals feel like they are always passing things off."

Another factor prohibiting delegation of tasks for some of these principals is the huge amount of responsibility they feel regarding what goes on in their schools. For

some of the principals, fear of delegation or the micromanagement of delegated tasks is the result of worry that the task is not going to be completed, or that it will not be completed to their expectations. For others, the fear of delegation is due to the anxiety that if something is inappropriately handled, they will need to answer to their school board or to the general public. In a time of high stakes accountability to external leadership and to the public, it is no wonder that principals fear giving up some of their control, especially when an occurrence in the school might end up being played out in the media. A few of the more seasoned principals have become more resilient to the disapproval of supervisors or public perception. They have also learned that they cannot do the job of principal if they are micromanaging or refusing to give up control of tasks, especially as they progress in their careers and there is only so much energy they can expend. One principal who used to find it difficult to delegate commented on the reason for his struggle in giving up control and how he changed his mindset:

It's the Messiah complex where you feel if you are going to do the job and do it well, you need to do everything and you can't do that...I guess, as you grow older you realize you just get a little less mileage out of the tires. You have to realize if you do your homework and you hire good people and you bring good people into your school community, then you have to have faith in them and faith in their abilities, and, just like we say to our students in the classroom, "It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we learn. As long you don't make the mistake over and over again." Such is the case with the development of leaders.

A further struggle a number of these principals face is finding suitable candidates to take on leadership roles within the school. Some principals reported that they are experiencing increasing difficulties in finding teaching staff who demonstrate the leadership skills needed to facilitate committees and to undertake tasks. One reason they offered was that many of the natural leaders continually take on new projects, and they are becoming "burned out."

A few of the principals have circumvented the apparent dwindling source of natural leaders by not having a fixed notion of the traits of a leader within the school. These principals tend to look at teachers individually to see what personal traits they could lend

to the variety of teams and tasks within the school. For instance, even though a teacher may not initially present as a leader, they may have a particular interest in something that the school can find profitable to use; therefore, they will be approached to take a leadership role in seeking out further information and informing the staff. These principals noted that pursuing this notion of leadership has actually brought previously disengaged teachers into the fold of the school culture, and brought out leadership traits in teachers that would have otherwise lain dormant. They reported that a principal must know their staff members well enough to learn of their personal interests, their interpersonal strengths, and in what areas they may excel. In addition, these principals stated that by looking at staff individually when considering leadership roles, the same teachers are not being overburdened with initiatives, thereby, reducing the incidences of burn out. These principals caution that drawing on the same teacher leaders creates an atmosphere of favouritism within the school; therefore, principals must look critically at their staff to discover potential leaders in order to share professional learning opportunities in a more balanced manner.

When you give away whatever power you are perceived to have, you get it back tenfold. So, in having strong leaders around me, it just made me look good. I mean you just think of (names a list of teachers), they had not been recognized, celebrated, or encouraged the same way and so when you do that it opens them up and they open up to other staff and it has a ripple effect.

Encouragement of distributed leadership has also brought about issues regarding interpersonal conflicts and building teams within the school. As one principal reported, “More and more, there’s a lot of pressure from the point of human resources, in terms of managing our human resources, and that’s not just supervising, or supporting teachers in the classroom. That’s mediating disputes, potentially dealing with situations where you are trying to develop a collegial model or a PLC to move forward on a particular initiative; to get people to talk to each other; to get people together.” The typical interpersonal conflicts described are ones dealing with disagreements regarding pedagogy, work distribution within teams, or how some teachers may use inappropriate

communication mannerisms with other staff members. All of the principals stated these occurrences are dealt with through mediation between the teachers, in which they act as the mediator. They may also personally counsel the teacher in question to ascertain any underlying reasons behind their behaviour. The principals who have a background in guidance counseling or peer mediation stated that this has prepared them for their role as mediator, and understanding human behaviour.

4.2.3 Supporting Shared Leadership

All the senior high principals support their teacher leaders by finding the means for them to attend professional development opportunities. They also encourage them to join school board and Department of Education leadership teams in which they may be involved in designing curriculum, or presenting professional development workshops to teachers outside their school. They believe that when their teachers are involved in external teams or work groups, they bring back the knowledge they have learned; thus, the other teachers are invigorated with new information. Having their teachers working in school board or departmental workgroups also helps the school keep pace with the most current educational trends and with what the external leadership wants schools to undertake.

While the principals attempt to provide substitute days so that teacher leaders can pursue their mandate within the instructional day, a number of these meetings still fall after hours. As mentioned earlier, to reduce the number of after school meetings some of these principals access grant money from different initiatives, which is used to provide time for teacher leaders and any teacher who wanted to be mentored by them to meet. While some principals have successfully found blocks of time within the school's schedule in which teacher teams can meet at a common time, smaller staff size, or the amount of programs within a school make this problematic. For those schools that have not obtained grant money or are unable to timetable meetings for teacher teams within the instructional day, traditional staff meetings have taken on the format of what one principal labeled "meetings with a purpose." These are meetings in which instructional

strategies and student learning are the focus, rather than school administrivia. Administrivia items are typically listed in a weekly newsletter that is emailed to teachers. “Meetings with a purpose” allow teacher leaders in the school to share their knowledge, or teachers to discuss successes and concerns regarding student learning.

It is evident within the interviews that the notion of professional learning communities is largely reserved for subject department meetings in which common assessments frequently set the agenda for the professional learning. While the teacher teams chart their own course for the meetings through their common assessments, the principals also have input into the agenda by requesting that some items pertaining to supporting the school vision be discussed, with the expectation that an agreement of a course of action within the department results. To keep abreast of the professional learning communities’ progress, the principals request a member of each team to inform them of the team’s progress. At this point, the principals have an opportunity to contribute their input into the process of the teams.

Of particular note is one principal’s interest in nurturing potential school administrators through using distributed or shared leadership. He is hoping in the forthcoming year to establish a team of teachers who are either pursuing or have obtained a Masters of Education focusing on leadership to give him feedback regarding his practices, and to ascertain how other teachers perceive administrative decisions and actions. His aspiration is to mentor these potential school leaders so that they can gain on the job experiences and insights into school administration in order to prepare them for the role of principal.

4.3 Building School Vision

Educational research has established that creating a vision is foundational to building cohesion within a school. Unequivocally, the transformational vision for all of these principals is to build a community of caring within the school in which teachers and students are valued, and encouraged to explore their learning in a safe environment. These principals stated that the agreed upon vision for the school is a combination of

their beliefs and their teachers' collective voice. In all instances, the principals felt that the school accreditation framework currently supported by the Department of Education helped the school to base their vision on sound evidence, and provided a structure for them to work within.

The vision is communicated through informal discussions, making it a focal point during school meetings, and through principals modeling what the vision means in daily practices and interactions. School vision is supported through the creation of embedded professional opportunities whenever possible, or through full day in-services that the teachers design. Either the teachers provide the professional development, or school board program support staff guide these sessions. Other ways the vision is supported are through the types of courses and programs offered to the students, creative timetabling teachers to free them up to meet if necessary, providing opportunities for teachers to mentor one another, and celebrating teachers' successes.

Many of the principals described how once the vision gained momentum, the majority of the teaching staff was noticeably invigorated in their daily interactions and experimentation with teaching practices. However, all principals remarked how the momentum of moving forward is easily obstructed by the outside demands placed on the school. For instance, the teachers may want and need professional development in a certain area; however, the school may need to divert its focus to addressing particular aspects of externally developed assessments. While teachers and principals believe that the results of these exams inform teachers' instruction, the times in which they are asked to act on documentation are usually unpredictable; thus, interfering with what the school has planned to do to support its vision. It would seem advantageous to schools if external leadership published a calendar outlining when particular requests were due, so that the schools can integrate them into the building and maintenance of their vision.

If the principals are unable to spend extended amounts of time within classrooms, they generally gauged whether the teachers are able to work toward the schools' vision through personal conversations, observations of interactions with their students, samples of student assessments and through teacher evaluations. The following section discusses how these principals support teachers who *appear* reluctant to work toward change in

their practices to support the schools' vision.

4.4 Teacher Resistance: Going Below the Surface

This section discusses the senior high principals' interpretation of teacher resistance to following the school's vision, how they have managed to overcome resistance in some instances and the dynamics of teacher resistance within their school staff. For the purposes of this section the term *teacher resistance* pertains to those teachers who choose not to examine their beliefs or instructional practices, even though educational research has informed them more effective methodologies to improve student learning exist. The term *teacher resistance* in this research does not pertain to those teachers who are reluctant to undertake new tasks or innovation in the face of an overload of externally or internally mandated initiatives.

4.4.1 Interpretations of Teacher Resistance

The senior high principals within the study described a variety of interpretations for why some teachers are resistant to change. For some of these principals, teacher resistance to examine their instructional strategies or to participate in new initiatives is due to the fact that many of them have seen initiatives come and go without the proper supports and follow through. This is an especially salient point when, historically, senior high schools have witnessed the beginning of initiatives, only to be abandoned because of lack of funding. Senior high teachers have also observed many initiatives financially supported at the elementary level make their way up the school system, only to receive decreased funding and attention when they finally reach the senior high level. As one principal declared, "I have been frustrated in my career that every initiative always starts here (gestures downward, meaning elementary) and works its way up... And in fairness, they have seen a lot of initiatives come down and just disappear."

These principals believe that some teachers may be fearful of what is expected of them, especially if they perceive themselves as lacking the skills needed to undertake a newly proposed innovation. This contributes to the fear of progressing into unknown

territory and risking their self-image if they are unsuccessful in their endeavours. Compounding this mindset are the possibilities that resistant teachers have not been adequately informed regarding the philosophical reasoning behind the initiative, or have not had the expectations clearly defined for them. In these instances, principals have met personally with the resistant teacher to try to ascertain why they are struggling to undertake change and to gain their input as to how they might be supported to experiment with new practices.

Sometimes it is the fear of the unknown. It's simply because that professional may not have a good understanding of the philosophical basis of that particular initiative or that strategy that we feel is important to put into place. For those who are resistant for just the sake of being resistant or who deal with change because they, either they have a tough time of it, or they deal with it very slowly, that's part of understanding your people and trying to work with that person and bring them along slowly, but at least bring them along in a positive light.

While one principal remarked that she had witnessed a balance of seasoned teachers and beginning teachers opposing change, most of the principals commented that the majority of the opposition to change seems to rest in more seasoned teachers, especially if they have spent most of their careers in a single school. In these principals' perceptions, many of these seasoned teachers longed to have teaching return to the way it used to be, especially in regards to student accountability and absenteeism. It appears that these teachers believe that using more process oriented instructional strategies and being understanding about why assignments are not submitted on time is not preparing students for the demands of the work world.

The principals acknowledged that a teacher's unwillingness to change might have to do with their personality in that they do not embrace change in other areas of their life as well. Another reason for this unwillingness is that a teacher is not suited for the teaching profession. These types of resisters are the most difficult teachers to motivate because they frequently work in isolation and they are not privy to other teachers' conversations about their experimentation with their practice. It is also challenging to determine what can be done to peak their interest. The potential problem when a principal confronts a

teacher of this nature is that they will transfer to another school where their practices may go unchallenged. This condition speaks volumes regarding the effectiveness of exercising the systemic processes put into place when dealing with non-compliant teachers. Teacher resistance of this nature, however, makes up only a minimal number of teachers who display reluctance to change.

It's a comfort zone that they met some kind of success through the years or it hasn't been pointed out to them through the years. You know, I think that's a big problem in passing problem teachers from school to school and what happens in the high school the principal will sometimes put the squeeze on a teacher because they're not meeting up. That teacher will apply and go to another school."

Overall, the principals emphasized that the apparently resistant teacher still has their students' best interest at heart. One principal asserted that everyone wants to achieve and it is up to the principal to help the resistant teacher meet with success in changing their practices, no matter how minute it may seem to others. He believes that once the resistant teacher experiences an element of success, they will become more amenable to change. His strategy has been to try to have teachers teach to their personal interests or to their strengths to help build a safe foundation in which they may experiment. Similarly, Ian "Tay" Landry (2008) asserts that motivation is dependent on interpersonal relationships and that it is not a personal trait. He further contends, "The only unmotivated person is a dead person" (p. 4).

Oh, I don't think that anybody wants to purposely do something that's against the movement of the school. In that positive light, somebody may just have to be worked with to help see that and how we can accomplish it and how they can accomplish it. We all feel good. Like we don't have a teacher here who doesn't feel good when they give a good lesson. We all want success. There is not a teacher here who doesn't want to be a good teacher, they just, the skill level, the work ethic, or, and somehow they just have to be worked with. It's like I tell the staff, there's not a student in this building who doesn't want to succeed. It may look like that to you when they don't come. They would love to feel success in some way, shape or form and we have to facilitate that. There's not a parent who doesn't send their kid to school who doesn't want

success for their child. Until you have that feel, you will hear comments from teachers that will curl the hair at the back of your neck, but then you look and say, “Well, they just don’t get it and I have to find a way to help them get it.” I believe firmly that everybody wants success.

Agreement existed in the principals’ belief that the resistant teacher’s voice is a valued contribution to discussions regarding proposed innovation. These teachers’ critical questioning, expression of doubt and critique of the innovation have prompted many of them to rethink some of their plans. It appears that the resistant teacher’s voice keeps the rest of the staff grounded and focused as they decide steps to take to meet a new vision or goal. One principal even went so far as to say that resistant teachers have actually helped him to shape some of the programs within the school.

I love resisters because they make me think deeper. They make me realize that I have to value their opinions. And to tell you the truth, the reason why we are having the success that we have is because of the resisters. So, that term, it’s all how people look at it.

I think they bring the idea, “Well, there has to be standards, there has to be standards, there has to be rules, there has to be regulations.”

In these principals’ eyes, the only time a resistant teacher becomes problematic is when their negativity begins to overpower meetings or staff relations. In these instances, the resistant teacher begins to adversely influence the thinking of the other teachers; thus, productive discussion does not ensue regarding the change in practice. All of these principals agreed that it is the responsibility of the school leader to go below the surface of a teacher’s apparent behaviour to discover what is motivating them to resist change. Knowing the personalities of each staff member helps them to understand a teacher’s resistance. In addition, it makes it easier for them to approach the teacher to discuss their reluctance to change.

4.4.2 Overcoming Teacher Resistance

For these senior high principals, gaining relational trust has been instrumental in helping teachers rethink their beliefs and reasons for opposing change. One principal stated that it is because of the trust that she builds with her staff that she is able to give teachers very direct messages regarding their practices without condemnation from that teacher. In other words, she has established a comfort between she and the teachers; therefore, they do not feel threatened when she needs to bring a problem in their teaching to their attention. When a principal takes time to know their teachers and build trust with them, they view resistant teachers in humanistic terms, and want to delve deeper into why the opposition is occurring.

The principals who have been able to foster shared instructional leadership within their school reported that as teachers begin to experience success with instructional strategies they are experimenting with, their vibrancy rubs off on even the more reluctant teachers. In a few instances, some of the more resistant teachers have voluntarily come forward to request support in undertaking similar changes in their methodologies as their colleagues. Usually, in a situation like this, the principals have strong supports in place to nurture experimentation in learning, and the teacher decides what they need to help them move forward in their practices. As soon as the teacher specifies the support they wish for, the principals moves quickly to ensure that they receive it.

Principals who do their best to break the isolation of teaching at the senior high levels also meet with some success in helping teachers to overcome resistance. In these instances, the principal teams an isolated teacher with another teacher who is interested in pursuing a particular teaching methodology.

I created partnerships for certain projects. And those resisters will be in partnerships for certain projects. I just pretend that they are not that person. I speak to them the same way I would speak to everybody. And I know that inside that might be eating them a little bit, but I give them enthusiasm about it. After a while it is a little contagious...I see bits and pieces shining through with them coming on board.

Teaming and mobilizing many teachers who wanted to experiment with change

resulted in a reduction in the number of staff who held steadfastly to resistance. As a result of the principal's actions these resisters began to lose their allies in their fight against change. In other words, the tenacious resisters began to become "squeezed out" of the school culture, sometimes losing the friendship of their colleagues. For this reason, resisters jumped on board with other teachers to maintain their socialization within their school.

Given the narratives of these senior high principals, building a school climate of caring, collaboration, and excitement about learning is the primary antidote to resistant forces within the staff. While these conditions do not completely eradicate reluctance to change, they make it more manageable for the principal to address teachers who are struggling to examine their teaching practices.

4.5 Supporting Principals

Despite their daily struggles, these five senior high principals were all adamant in asserting that they "love their job." They frequently articulated how much they enjoy the variety of challenges they face and they find a deep sense of purpose in transforming their school into a community of caring. These principals consider their staff and students to be their family, and in doing so, they are conscious of treating each individual in their care with respect.

Similarly, many of these senior high principals have found school board staff who held the same values and beliefs regarding building and nurturing relationships to be supportive. These school board staff members make contact with the principals when they are experiencing personal life upsets such as death of a loved one. If they learn that a principal is facing issues within their school, they also lend their support. Consequently, a level of trust is built among the principals and board staff; therefore, principals do not feel threatened informing senior management of problems they are experiencing, or requesting help.

The school boards that are aware of relationship building frequently call on their principals' advice and guidance regarding proposed initiatives. It is important to these school board staff members to make informed decisions about how an initiative will

proceed in order to ensure that schools are able to undertake it.

We've got an exceptional senior management and board too in that way, they really work hard at consulting and looking for feedback from us in trying to get a sense of what we think when they are in the decision making process. Or if they are faced with making decisions for the whole board.

Of particular note is a Nova Scotian school board that believes in the power of relationships to such a great degree that it has allocated budget for teachers to participate in cross-school networking. This initiative has been employed especially during the accreditation process so that a number of schools can collaborate to share data, instructional practices, and instructional goals. This type of networking is especially effective when a teacher is the only one in the school to teach a particular subject. By connecting with other schools, there is an opportunity for this teacher to be able to work with other teachers assigned the same course.

Cross-school networking may encompass multiple levels of schooling so that elementary, junior and senior high schools have an opportunity to work together to design a continuum of learning for their students. The conversations stemming from these connections inform the various levels of schools about the curriculum, and the successes and challenges of teaching at each level. Fullan (2007) also advocates that if schools are to change then teachers must have more of an understanding of the ultimate goal behind the change. This understanding is created when they are able to gain a more global perspective regarding a proposed initiative through networking with other schools. Fullan further contends that schools working in collaboration reduce the variance in teaching practices and student achievement among schools.

While many of these senior high principals commended external leadership for forging relationships with them, they believe they can be further supported by being granted an administrative assistant who has a solid background in understanding the needs of a school administrator. This individual would lessen the daily administrivia these principals face such as organizing meetings, making contacts, creating power points, developing the school's newsletters, or pulling together statistics and reports that need to be submitted to the Department of Education or the school board. All of these

principals agree that this administrative assistant must be knowledgeable about the school milieu and be able to have insights in to how a school administrator may handle different administrivia tasks. Lessening the administrative and managerial demands of their job would allow senior high principals to more consistently exercise their notion of direct instructional leadership.

Chapter Five Discussions and Conclusion

Ultimately, your leadership in a culture of change will be judged as effective or ineffective not by who you are as a leader, but by what leadership you produce in others (Fullen, 2001, p. 137).

Chapter Five describes the theoretical constructs that emerged through the comparison of data and memo-writing as I clarified the nature of the categories and themes discussed in Chapter Four. I discovered these theoretical constructs in the data by diligently crosschecking my analysis and by using my literature review to verify my predictions of possible theories.

The findings from my research culminated into two key theoretical constructs: *leadership as a relational process* and *relationality as the foundation for professional learning* as they are related to educational leadership. While these key theoretical constructs are discussed separately, they are integral to one another in their actual practice. In conclusion, I will argue that the current description of instructional leader needs to take on new dimensions in order for senior high leadership to use relational leadership to build learning organizations.

5.1 Key Theoretical Constructs

The findings from my research reflect two theoretical constructs that describe how principals view themselves as instructional leaders, and how they attempt to overcome the challenges within a senior high culture in order to implement change through their personal interpretations of instructional leadership: 1) Leadership as a relational process and 2) Relationality as the foundation for professional learning and school improvement. I posit that both of these theoretical constructs are central to the concept of educational leadership, which creates the prerequisites for improvement in classrooms, including setting direction, developing community, building capacity, and monitoring progress, and managing school operations (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2007).

A representative from the Nova Scotia Department of Education describes

educational leadership as allocating leadership energies to address the relational, curriculum and operational demands of a school. Fullan (cited in Knuth & Banks, 2006) more specifically defines the concept of educational leadership as overlapping leadership and management as principals need to do both. Management issues cannot be neglected in favour of instructional leadership, nor can the opposite situation exist. Both must be executed with as much balance as possible, ensuring that the leader is carrying out his or her responsibility with integrity, values, ethics, and morals in order to promote relational trust. It is important that plant management issues are routinely dealt with to make way for a healthy, dependable, and organized learning environment for all members of the school. If a principal is unable to balance plant management tasks and relationship building, the school is overtaken by chaos, disorganization, or interpersonal conflict (Knuth & Banks, 2006).

5.1.1 Leadership as a relational process: Reculturing Senior High Schools through Trustful Communication

Four out of five of the senior high principals indicated that they were actively attempting to reculture their school from being one steeped in a hierarchical tradition which promoted isolationism, self-protectionism and minimalist attitudes about student achievement and the purpose of teaching. The singular principal not undertaking this reculturing process had inherited a school that had been formerly led by a leader who believed in the power of humanity, the strength of a collective voice, and who modeled the principles of relational trust.

The four senior high principals who were attempting to reculture their schools into a community of caring in which the well-being of the students and teachers was at the fore, used a variety of communication strategies in an attempt to build relational trust among school stakeholders: *the transparency of financial and budgetary allocation, the creation and implementation of an understandable vision, electronic communication, personal interaction, role modeling, and accessibility*. Each of these communication methods were implemented in an attempt to gain the confidence of the teaching staff and to clearly articulate their expectations for student learning and school improvement.

5.1.1.1 The Transparency of Financial and Budgetary Allocation

Mentioned earlier in the results section, the senior high principals who adopted a high school steeped in rigid practice, led by controlling and secretive principals quickly assessed the financial management history of the school and were able to detect fundamental issues regarding misallocation of monies. In one instance, the former principal did not equally target money to the differing needs of the school; therefore, funding was cut short to a number of programs, such as music, or other social activities. In another instance, the former principal only targeted funding to special or favoured interest groups or to cosmetic school improvements, thereby, neglecting the instructional needs of teachers. In two other instances, the former school principals were described as being “tight fisted” and controlling with money, fearful of distributing funds for staff development in case money ran out for other school endeavours. However, other school endeavours were not funded either. In one school, the money was misappropriated so poorly that it caused this current principal to exclaim, “Principals have too much power over their budget!” I posit that the secrecy surrounding budgetary handlings was one of the sources that caused distrust in these schools, which had exhibited much isolationism within the staffs.

Once these principals assessed the financial situation of the school, they were in a better position to implement a “pressure-support” dynamic to their leadership by encouraging a change and then offering teachers the resources needed to take on new ventures. These resources may have taken the form of classroom materials, classroom release time to meet during the instructional day, or professional learning opportunities. In addition, these senior high principals reallocated funds to all subject departments so that teachers would receive instructional materials to support their daily practices. It is my opinion that the sheer act of giving these tangible resources to the teachers communicated the principals’ expectation that student learning and improved instructional practices were at the forefront of the schools’ mission. It also communicated that they cared enough about the well-being of their teachers that they were prepared to support them with resources to help them feel confident in their

instructional practices, and to reduce the course preparation time they would have needed to look for materials. In this guise, the role of instructional leaders for these principals took on the element of resource provider (Cardno & Collett, n.d.) which may have set the foundation in developing relational trust between themselves and the teachers.

I contend, especially since senior high schools are known for collecting large sums of money within an academic year, that senior high principals must be forthcoming regarding the financial status of their school and how the money is allocated. I further argue that because a hierarchy can be established by virtue of who holds the purse strings within a school, one of the first and fundamental steps a principal can make who is attempting to be a relational leader is to be transparent with spending practices, and to distribute finances in a fair and equitable manner within the school.

5.1.1.2 The Creation and Implementation of an Understandable Vision

Four out of five of the principals interviewed used the Nova Scotia School Accreditation process to form their school vision. The fifth school is about to undergo this process in the upcoming academic year. While these principals readily stated that the accreditation process took a great deal of time and effort, they applauded the fact that their school plans were data driven, making them more measurable. This differed from previous school improvement plan models that encompassed vague mission statements, which frequently went awry because of the lack of accountability associated with them. The common belief among these principals, however, is that the length of time an accreditation plan is to be in service should be lengthened from three to five years. This is in keeping with Fullan's (2007) view that the length of time for change to take hold within a school is an average of five years.

While their school vision was created through a collective voice that relied on data results, these principals also have a personal vision they attempted to marry with the established school vision. These principals unanimously revealed that the concept of their school as a "community of caring" inspires their personal school vision as they believe that this type of culture promotes an optimum learning organization for students

and teachers, and paved the way for smoother running of the school.

The collective school vision, along with established goals and targets, articulated in the school improvement plan, specifies the expectations teachers are to follow concerning improving student learning and school culture. These principals consistently communicate this vision with their staff through staff meetings, daily conversations, newsletters, and during community events at the school. In respect to their personal vision, these principals relay their expectations through conversations, and by modeling respectful communication and healthy interpersonal relationships to all school members. They further support the message of their personal vision by demonstrating that staff was not spoken about behind their backs, and that they are dealt with personally when issues arise.

Building a collective vision is also another avenue in which teachers learned that they are joint decision-makers within these schools. One principal commented on how startled one of her staff members became when she asked the teachers their opinion on a particular issue. While this can be viewed as the beginning of the journey to teacher empowerment within the school, the teaching staff often need to be persuaded that asking for their voices is an act of sincerity, not an act of manipulation. School administration has been known to solicit opinions in the guise of democratic leadership, but then not take consensus seriously in the final hour (Blase & Blase, 2001).

5.1.1.3 Electronic communication

Since these senior high principals no longer use monthly staff meetings as a vehicle for distributing administrative items, they turn to the email system to inform teachers of due dates, upcoming events, upcoming assessments, and other important future occurrences within the building. These items are published in Monday morning staff newsletters. Newsletters are also published to students' families to keep them abreast of what is happening. Both types of newsletters are used to provide teachers with recognition or to celebrate their efforts in trying new instructional programming or methodology. Blase and Blase (2001) stress that celebrating and praising the

contributions of teachers in a manner of sincerity through announcements, notes, or other celebratory means, not only helps teachers feel valued, but even motivates them to work harder.

While these principals found the amount of emails coming to them from external leadership and other outside sources to be an overwhelming part of their day, they value the electronic mail system for getting messages out to teachers. They also value receiving emails from teachers with requests or reminders. Since they worry that the day's chaos may cause them to forget to remind teachers of something, or to deliver a message, the email system is seen as a saviour in ensuring that teachers are kept well informed regarding matters of the school.

5.1.1.4 Personal Interaction, Role Modeling, and Accessibility

These senior high principals demonstrate that they believe that two-way communication is of primary importance to keeping school environment stabilized. They do their best to ensure that teachers know of daily occurrences, new requests coming from external leadership, information about students, or other pertinent matters of school operations.

Furthermore, the senior high principals hold the notion of the "open door policy" and communicating messages in such high esteem, that this priority often leaves them bereft of time to work on administrative matters and to spend time in classrooms. While these principals have access to email to send along messages to teachers, whenever possible they prefer a personal delivery approach to teachers in order to make contact with them, and to keep in touch with what is happening in the hallways and classrooms. I believe they use this means to try to personalize their school environments. Personalizing the school environment refers to the structures, policies, and practices that endorse relationships, mutual respect, trust and collaboration (Bruenlin et al., 2005). These school leaders promote the notion that senior high schools are relational establishments devoted to meeting the diverse needs of human beings, and they put a human face on the organization by being visible, accessible, and engaged (Nemec, 2007; Knuth and Banks,

2006).

The foundation for implementing relational leadership is the school leader's possession of emotional literacy or emotional intelligence. These principals demonstrate this concept in a number of ways. Firstly, they advocate and model the belief that students, no matter their behaviour, are human beings who may also be experiencing much adversity and pressure in their home lives. In order to communicate their belief to teachers, they oftentimes mediate conflicts between teachers and students to model conflict-resolution strategies for them, and to provide teachers with a more in-depth understanding of a students' behaviour. They also make themselves visible during high traffic times to model proper communication with students to teachers and to connect with students. When dealing with students on a personal level, these principals attempt to "go below the surface" to determine the underlying reasons for misbehaviour in order to set appropriate consequences and to help remediation.

Emotional literacy is also demonstrated in the manner in which these senior high principals deal with resistant teachers, teachers who are temporarily displaying behaviour not usual to their personality, and mediation between teachers in conflict. They interact with these teachers using a non-judgemental approach and are more concerned about the underlying reasons for their behaviour, rather than condemning them for displaying resistant, inappropriate actions, or weak teaching skills. Their "open door policy" welcomes teachers to share personal life events so that the leaders can support these individuals if they are experiencing uncertainty. The "open door policy" is the primary means that these principals show their individual concern for each staff member. Whether these principals understand the premise that a center of well-being helps teachers develop resiliency to school and personal life events (Sammon et al., 2007) remains to be seen; however, they certainly understand that unless a teacher feels supported at school their well-being will not be nurtured; as a result, students' needs will not be met during daily instruction. Nemeck (2007) supports these principals' practices of establishing caring within a school environment by stating that when learning and a sense of well-being are at the core of the school, an educational vision is established communicating that relationships among the school staff, students, and families are learner centered and

future oriented.

5.1.2 Relationality as the Foundation for Professional Learning and School Improvement

Throughout my research, the theme of relationality as it pertains to professional learning and school improvement resurfaced many times. This section will discuss how relationality influenced issues of teacher resistance and became the foundation for building learning communities within the senior high schools.

5.1.2.1 Reduction of Teacher Resistance through Principal-Teacher Relationality

Early within their positions at their schools, these senior high principals learned the importance of not only building relationships to personalize the school culture, but also to begin encouraging teachers in a non-threatening manner to experiment with new practices. One principal even stated that if there is a relationship with teachers based on trust, then they take less offense if she needed to approach them about improving their classroom practices. Obviously, these principals understand that to encourage their teachers to learn, they must create an environment free from intimidation, fear, and scrutiny (Blase & Blase, 2001). In fact, repeatedly throughout the interviews these principals stated that they treat their teachers as they would their students; therefore, they try to create an environment for them that is conducive to learning.

Part of this environment is created by “going below the surface” with teachers when they are resistant to change to ascertain the reasons fueling their reluctance. In addition, these principals understand that their relationship with teachers needs to be based on a clear understanding of what is expected of them. They believe that if a teacher is resistant to proposed change, they may have not explained the expectations and avenues clearly enough to that individual. In this light, the principals looked at their own role in contributing to resistance, as opposed to quickly chastising the teacher for his or her beliefs. While explicitly explaining expectations did not completely erase resistant tensions within the school, it helped the principals understand the perspective of dissenting staff members more so than if the conversations had never taken place.

5.1.2.2 Increase of Experimental Teachers and the Spontaneous Development of Informal Co-Mentorship Teams

Whether it was strategically planned, or the dynamic took hold naturally, as teachers became more confident to experiment with new practices within a risk free environment, the number of resistant teachers began to decrease. It appears that the number of experimental teachers grew, and pushed the resisters to the farther corners of the staff. In fact, teachers who became experimental began to resist the resisters by confronting them if they disagreed with a complaint, or if they were acting in a non-professional manner. By experimental teachers addressing resistance in the school, the principal's message of the school as a learning organization based on a community of caring is reinforced without the intrusion of administration.

As teachers began to feel more comfortable with the relationships among the staff and with school leadership, they began to pair into informal co-mentorship teams. While these principals did promote professional learning communities by providing some time for meeting during the instructional day, or by scheduling after school meetings, it appears the most excitement in learning was caused by these informal co-mentorship partnerships. Some of these co-mentorship teams evolved as a result of one teacher seeing another teacher attempting a new instructional strategy and meeting with success. This teacher would approach the experimenting teacher to inquire about the process and a partnership was forged to learn from each other. Teacher leaders naturally arose from these circumstances.

In some instances, when a principal knew that a teacher was stuck in his or her practices, they were partnered with an experimenting teacher to help them move along in their thinking. It was not ascertained how the interpersonal dynamics unfolded in these partnerships, especially if they were not based on a personal interest the resistant teacher possessed. Given that new partnerships even with like-minded people can begin with superficiality or conflict (Blase & Blase, 2001), the probability of at least initial strife is high in this type of situation. It was also not determined whether the teacher who was assigned the partner went along willingly or not; this has implications in the face of

research that recommends that teachers should be voluntarily matched in order to have a better chance of developing a productive relationship (Donegan et al., 2000; Blase & Blase, 2001; Day et al., 2004).

5.1.2.3 Professional Learning through Co-Mentorship Relationality

Learning through the relationship of a productive co-mentoring strategy has been receiving increased attention in educational research concerning professional learning (Day et al., 2004; Blase & Blase, 2001; Donegan et al., 2000; Day, 2000; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Lam et al., 2002). While formalized mentoring has its place in education when teachers are learning new skills it is not viewed to be as effective when teachers are engaged in their daily practices. Instead, the co-mentoring model has proven to be more beneficial in helping teachers to reflect on, experiment with, and integrate long-term change into their instructional practices because of the nature of the co-learner process of discovery (Kochan & Trimble, 2000). Co-mentoring also has the potential to break the isolationist way of thinking (Wagner, 2001) by having teachers learn together in a cohesive manner; however, Wallace (1998) cautions that teams and co-mentors still need to meet with the whole staff, or they will become isolated learning partnerships.

Co-mentoring, combined with in-service training, has a high potential to change teachers practices (Donegan et al., 2000), especially since it gives teachers the opportunity to differentiate their learning based on where they are in their practices, phase of life, and stage of their careers (Schoonmaker, 2007). I further posit that since the professional learning is integral to the daily happenings of the school setting, teachers will be basing their change of practices on the cultural needs of the environment. Since teacher improvement is largely brought about by their witnessing of changes in students' learning outcomes, co-mentorship increases the number of opportunities in which teachers can see advancements in student learning (Zwart et al., 2007) through differing methodology from their own.

5.1.2.4 Differentiated Teacher Learning through Multiple Learning Communities

While I have advocated the use of co-mentoring to help teachers examine instructional ideologies and to take action in making long term, integrated changes in their methodology, this strategy for teacher learning can be embedded in other collaborative practices such as professional learning communities and whole faculty study groups. While the existing co-mentorship practices in the schools represented in my research appear to be informal, research has proven that co-mentoring partnerships are only conducive to long term change if they follow a formalized process involving record keeping and written feedback from observations, so that teachers can keep track of their progress and future aims (Wallace, 1998). I further contend that using a variety of collaborative practices further strengthens the notion of differentiated teacher professional development and creates a more dynamic dimension of the senior high school as a learning organization.

5.2 Implications of Relational Leadership and Learning Organization on Senior High Principals' Role as Instructional leaders

The principal of a successful school is not the instructional leader, but the coordinator of teachers as instructional leaders (Glickman in Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 37)

The current notion of instructional leadership, positioning the principal as possessor of knowledge to be disseminated when time permits, is impractical and restrictive when it comes to leadership at the senior high level. In addition, I posit that this notion of leadership is virtually unobtainable because of the complex infrastructure at this level of schooling. Furthermore, the principal would also need a good working knowledge of the psychology of collaboration, the dimensions of productive discourse, and the stages of team development in combination with the most recent literature on leadership, change, and instructional pedagogy. These informational demands in conjunction with the daily responsibilities and tasks a senior high principal must negotiate are, by sheer human limitation, impossible endeavours.

The overload on principals and schooling across all levels is a dominant trend in

education today. I believe that if more demands are placed on these leaders, their ability to encourage and sustain the relationships needed to promote the school culture as a learning organization for all stakeholders will be constrained. As I mentioned in the Findings chapter, those potential school leaders who have the interpersonal skills to guide others in collaboration are not seeking out the role of principal because they are unwilling to commit themselves to that much professional pressure, which could ultimately negatively impact their personal lives.

I assert that those incumbent school leaders who already possess the interpersonal skills requisite to building productive collaborative leaderships will undergo such role strain under the pressure of competing reform and increased external demands, that they will assume a pace setting³ or coercive⁴ leadership style in order to fulfill the task commitments of their job. Pace setting and coercive leadership are considered to be the two most inferior forms of leadership approaches because they dissuade teachers from taking risks in moving forward in their practices, and they create a relational chasm between the principal and teachers (Fullan, 2001; Knuth & Banks, 2006). It is also my belief that these two leadership styles also contribute to the notions of contrived congeniality and empowerment as a covert way of enticing teachers to think that they are integral to the school culture in order to get them to buy into the principal's will. While teachers may be initially lulled into thinking that they are contributing to the betterment of the school and student learning, they will eventually recognize that they are being manipulated and retreat from acting on the notion that "knowledge sharing" (Fullan, 2001, p. 87) is a core value of the school culture. Pace setting and coercive leaders also have the propensity to monitor and second guess team suggestions or impose their preferences, which further chips away at the illusion of teacher empowerment (Blase & Blase, 2001).

I advocate that the current construction of *instructional leadership* should evolve into a conceptualization of *educational leadership*, which lends itself to principals not only

³Pacesetting leaders set high expectations for fast-paced performance that leads to the disenfranchisement and burn out of subordinates. These leaders demonstrate little emotional literacy and destroy the work climate by their overwhelming, unexplained demands (Fullan, 2001).

⁴Coercive leaders demand compliance (Fullan, 2001).

taking responsibility for the transformational dimensions of the school as a learning organization, but also the managerial aspects that propel a smooth running school. In this regard, principals acting as catalysts for transformation must understand the multiple facets of relationship development and team building in order to create a learning organization that promotes knowledge building and knowledge sharing as core values for teachers and students.

While it is true that senior high principals must become knowledgeable about the current trends in education, curriculum and assessment to help them make sound judgements regarding practices, this can be seen as subsidiary to developing the skills needed to encourage productive relationality within the school. Productive relationality is a term I am coining to reflect the notion of school members learning and employing the skills needed for conflict resolution, productive learning discourse, team building, and other aspects inherent in building, nurturing, and maintaining relationships. I believe that productive relationality will not just happen in a school because it is mandated as reform. Productive relationality must be authentic, sincere, and based on slow incremental steps that guide staff members in building a strong foundation based on interpersonal knowledge of educational and personal beliefs (Fullan, 2001).

Schon (cited in Blase & Blase, 2001) also contends that as schools move toward building a collaborative learning culture, principals will need to act more as facilitators who encourage reflective conversations pertaining to teaching and learning. In a facilitator capacity, the senior high principal allows for experimentation within instructional practices free of scrutiny, blaming, and non-constructive criticism. The principal acts as a co-learner who provides productive feedback and who helps guide teachers through reflection on their practices when an experiment meets failure. In addition, these relational facilitators set high expectations for teachers and expect that they will attain what they set out to do with proper support (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Knuth and Banks (2006) argue that unsuccessful schools lack leadership that facilitates work structures that are needed to scaffold and stabilize effective communication; therefore, they cannot mobilize focus, energy and common will. Little (cited in Lam et al., 2002) describes four practices that characterize successful adaptable

schools:

1. Specific support for discussion of classroom practice
2. Mutual observation and critique
3. Shared efforts to disseminate and prepare curriculum
4. Shared participation in the business of instructional improvement (p. 182).

From these points of view, the role of high importance for the relational leader is to facilitate teachers' knowledge about the processes and interpersonal skills needed to build, sustain, and nurture collaborative learning. Since teachers at the senior high level have, historically, worked in isolationist settings, they have not had the opportunity to learn and practice group-processing skills (Wagner, 2001); therefore, they cannot be expected to assume these skills without being given the strategies to effectively communicate with one another. For groups and co-mentors to work together they must learn their roles and responsibilities, and they must practice their collaborative process skills (Blase & Blase, 2001; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). Furthermore, partnerships that are experiencing difficulties must be facilitated through a process in how to work collaboratively (Spies, 2001).

How senior high principals facilitate group and interpersonal processing skills would be at the discretion of their personal leadership, learning and teaching approaches, and be dependent on the cultural and structural aspects of their schools. However, I contend that if these types of processes are supported by leaders external to the school they can be embedded in off-site professional development opportunities for teachers, be implicit in the nature of collaboration between external leadership and school leadership, or simply be supported by external leadership through providing professional learning opportunities to principals about group and interpersonal process skills. In fact, Blase & Blase (2001) note that "highly effective staff development used 20 minutes of mini-lessons in which staff members learn about and practice groups development skills such as decision-making, trust building, conflict resolution, and dealing with change" (p. 82).

5.3 The Authentic Nature of Relationality

I contend that principals need to facilitate relationality within their schools rather than delivering small increments of instructional leadership in the areas of curriculum and instructional pedagogy. Attention to the relational context empowers teachers with the tools that they need to engage in and structure their own learning. This makes professional learning more authentic to individual teaching styles and to the learning culture of the school. Relationality is also essential to the personalization of senior high schools so that they become more responsive to the strengths and needs of teachers and students, thereby making them more resilient to the unpredictable nature of change.

The senior high principals in my research demonstrate that the process of building relationality can stem from one's authentic self in that they draw on their natural empathy, personal values, and strong interpersonal skills to set the tone for relational trust for all school stakeholders. These principals understand that a humanistic approach to leadership enhances the performance of teachers and students, and encourages them to reach for their own moral purposes, as they become engaged citizens within their unique school cultures.

5.3 Conclusion

Good leaders change organizations. Great leaders change people.
(Hoer cited in Nemeo, 2007, p. 3).

In the July 10, 2008 edition of the Chronicle Herald, the most recent health minister in Quebec, Canada, Yves Bolduc, announced his desire to base his leadership practice on humanistic principals in which “grassroots” employees are encouraged to contribute ideas as to how to better the health system in that province. This leadership strategy is known in the corporate world as the “Toyota Way” because it has been successful in ensuring the Toyota manufacturer’s profitability and continued growth. Bolduc goes on to explain that several health organizations in the United States have successfully used the “Toyota Way” approach to improve the quality of medical care. Clearly, Bolduc’s statement illustrates the power of soliciting stakeholders’ ideas and input in decision-making, and how humanism is foundational to the success of an organization—so successful, in fact, that the business world has been delving into relational leadership practices in order to

help corporations survive in a fast-paced, quickly aging population (Fullan, 2001).

While my research is not advocating that the education system adopt the “Toyota Way” as an approach to leadership, its principles are congruent with the relational leadership and collaborative learning organization I have discussed within this thesis. While relationality cannot be viewed as the panacea or miracle cure for the ills of the current education system, it can certainly be adopted as the foundational component in revitalizing the educational milieu. By mobilizing teachers and students to become members of a culture of learning in which they feel ownership and responsibility, I believe a sense of pride and commitment to honouring a collective vision will transcend the mechanistic notion of the technology of teaching to one of a spiritual and moral purpose.

During a luncheon meeting with my thesis supervisor one sunny June afternoon, she encouraged me to reflect on how my research will influence my current leadership practices. In response to her challenge, I formulated the following ways in which I hope to be able to employ my understanding of relational leadership within my practices:

- I hope to discuss with school board administrators the power of building relational trust as the basis of learning communities within schools. I also intend to model and thus enhance relational trust to the teachers, administrators, and colleagues with whom I work by being open and honest in my communication with them, and by actively listening to their concerns, suggestions, and successes.
- I hope to make more of a commitment to speak to teachers about their beliefs as educators to determine why they have chosen favoured instructional practices and to gain insight into their experiences. From these perspectives, I will be better able to design off-site professional development opportunities more in keeping with teachers’ needs and their aspirations.
- I will view professional development as a way of reconnecting teachers to their vocation and to help them build on their professional identities.

- I hope to implement the reasons behind the practice of interpersonal skills and group process within professional learning opportunities.
- I hope to impress on senior high principals the importance of building a collective school vision which is integral to the daily school procedures instead of being an item to be reviewed at the time of school improvement revisions. I believe that mindfulness of a collective school vision is the impetus to building a cohesive staff relationality that dedicates itself to school improvement.
- When discussing change initiatives with my colleagues, I will assert the notion that change cannot take place without all educational stakeholders knowing its expectations. From here, relational communities of learning should be encouraged to help principals and teachers to critically analyze the implications of a particular change regarding their schools.
- I intend to explore at greater length educational literature revealing the processes of change in an attempt to determine possible challenges and strategies that can be used to make transformation and transitioning more transparent to others.
- I hope to impress upon my superiors and senior high principals that the notion of relationality does not happen magically, and that teachers cannot be expected to automatically function as collaborative learners if they do not have the proper skills needed to weather chaotic situations such as interpersonal conflict, or situational crisis's within the school.

Despite the current reform overload at all levels of schooling, I firmly believe that we are in exciting times regarding educational transformation. In my twenty-four years as an educator, I have never before witnessed the public and educational professionals speaking in such impassioned tones regarding the nature of student learning and reformation of school cultures, whether it be in frustration or in confirmation that finally we are changing our mindset on some of our traditional beliefs. The challenge for all educators

will be to accept that the turbulence of transition will always be present within education, and to become resilient to changing times as we grow in our understanding of ourselves as learners and teachers. The five principals who participated in this study are a testament as to how an individual can maintain vitality, curiosity, optimism and a sense of humour during a time of external pressure for accountability, heavy workloads, and uncertainty about the future direction of education.

I am truly grateful to all five of you for allowing me to hear your stories.

Appendix A



Date: _____

Dear _____,

I am a graduate student in the Masters of Arts Education in Curriculum Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University. To complete the requirements of my masters program I am conducting research which examines the practices of senior high principals as they attempt to conceptualize their role as instructional leaders, while encouraging opportunities for distributed instructional leadership among their teaching staff. This examination will focus on identifying the promising practices that principals are employing as they move toward instructional leadership roles as well as the struggles that they encounter in that process.

Currently, the professional and scholarly literature offers little research on the role of senior high administrators. My study on *Senior High Principals as Instructional Leaders* will provide an opportunity for you to voice the experiences that define the nature of your position. I hope that my thesis will have an audience of other senior high principals, department of education and board level administrators.

My research, however, is independent of provincial school boards and the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Your participation in my research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

With any research, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. To ensure anonymity, all participants will be identified through alphabetical letter pseudonyms. The demographics of schools will not be published to prohibit easy identification. No individual participants will be identified without their permission.

This study will involve an average two-hour audiotaped semi-structured interview, which will be transcribed and coded for common theoretical themes emerging from the overall research. To provide ease and comfort for you, I am suggesting that the interview take place at your school. Participating principals will have the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews to add new information or to clarify any aspects of the audio-taped session.

During the data collection and analysis stage of my research, I will store raw data in password protected electronic files and in locked filing cabinets. I expect the study to be completed by the end of August, 2008, and the results published in a thesis format. Once the research has been completed and analyzed, raw data will immediately be deleted from the password protected electronic files. Interview transcripts will be stored in locked filing cabinets for up to one year after the completion of my research, at which time they will be destroyed. Please be assured that all interview transcripts will contain alphabetical letter pseudonyms for

participants' names and schools.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Cathy Carreau, at [REDACTED] or by collect call at [REDACTED]. My supervisor, Dr. Susan Church can also be contacted at susan.church@msvu.ca or (902) 425-8541. This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have any questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board, Elizabeth Bowering, by phone at 902-457-6535 or by e-mail at elizabeth.bowering@msvu.ca.

If you agree to participate in this study, please provide two (2) signatures below and return this informed consent letter in the self-addressed, stamped envelope by

_____.

It will be assumed that potential participants who do not return this informed consent letter by _____ do not agree to be involved in this study.

1. Informed Consent to Participate in the Study of *Senior High Principals as Instructional Leaders*:

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature Date

Researcher's signature Date

2. Informed Consent for Audiotaping of the Semi-Structured Interview

By signing below, you are indicating that you understand you will be audiotaped for this study, and that you agree to do so. This audiotape will be transcribed, coded, and then destroyed when the study is completed.

Participant's signature Date

Researcher's signature Date

One signed copy to be kept by the researcher, one signed copy to the participant.

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. Describe a typical day for you as a principal, beginning from when you first arrive to work.
2. In an ideal world, what would you spend most of your time doing as a principal?
Probing Questions:
 - a). If it is not occurring now, what supports do you need in place to make the ideal happen?
 - b). If it is happening, what supports are needed to sustain the conditions?
3. Describe the skills and competencies your school board requires of principals?
4. Describe your personal interpretation of instructional leadership.
Probing Questions:
 - a). In what ways do you enact your interpretation?
 - b). Have there been any struggles? If so, please describe them.
 - c). Have you discovered any promising practices? If so, please describe them.
 - d). What supports are in place to inform your practice as an instructional leader?
5. Describe your personal interpretation of distributed leadership.
Probing Questions:
 - a). As an instructional leader, in what ways do you enact this interpretation with your staff?
 - b). As an instructional leader, how do you provide leadership for teacher teams?
 - c). Have there been any struggles? If so, please describe them.
 - d). Have there been any promising practices? If so, please describe them.
6. As an instructional leader, how do you build and nurture professional relationships among your staff members to enable them to collaborate in a trustful, open manner?
Probing Questions:
 - a). Have you experienced barriers in your attempts to build collaborative professional relationships? If so, please describe them.
 - b). How do you interpret the reasons for these conflicts?
 - b). As an instructional leader, how have you managed any interpersonal conflicts within your school?
7. What characteristics do you look for when selecting teachers for leadership roles? (This can include department heads or coordinators)
Probing Questions:

- a). What supports do they need to enact their role as school leaders?
- b). How is time provided to enact their role?
8. What is the vision for your school and how is this vision created?
Probing Questions:
 - a). How is this vision communicated with your staff and school community?
 - b). How is this vision promoted within the school?
 - c). In what ways do teachers that they act on this vision?
9. Do you encounter teacher resistance to the school vision or to instructional change?
Probing Questions:
 - a). How do you interpret teacher resistance?
 - a). As an instructional leader, how do you provide incentives to change for teachers who are resistant to the school vision and instructional change?
 - b). As an instructional leader, how do you provide positive reinforcement to teachers who support the school vision and who are open to improving their teaching practices?
10. What are the external reforms facing senior high schools today?
Probing Questions:
 - a). In your opinion, what are the positive aspects of these reforms?
 - b). What are the challenges of trying to implement these reforms?
11. Is there anyone who has mentored you or you have used as a model for leadership?
Probing Question:
 - a). What were the qualities of that person?
12. What are the personal characteristics an instructional leader should possess?
13. Who helps guide you in your decision-making?

Appendix C

Proposed Reform at the Senior High Level

Under the six themes articulated in Learning for Life II the following reform will directly affect senior high schools in the next five years:

- School Improvement Planning and Accreditation
- New teacher professional growth planning
- The new Racial Equity Policy and its monitoring
- New courses in Mathematics (Math Essentials 10 and 11, Math Trades and Technology 12, new Math mentors and resources)
- Literacy Success 10-12
- Implementation of Advanced Programs (International Baccalaureate, Advanced courses in English Language Arts, the Arts, Science and Social Studies) French Second Language – Double the proportion of graduates functional in French by 2013
- Youth Pathways and Transition (COOP Education links to the community, Options and Opportunities)
- English Second Language initiatives to help students stay in school
- Special Education initiatives (SEIRC Report)
- Technology refresh which will mean upgrading teachers as to how to use revised software and updated computers
- Technology integration within curriculum
- Food and Nutrition Policy
- Safe Schools – Code of Conduct and PEBS
- Healthy Active Learners – (new Phys. Ed credit, Fitness Leadership 12, credits for non-classroom activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award)
- Increase in number of Teen Health Centers
- Changes in the Nova Scotia Exams which include revisions to existing exams and the addition of a History graduate credit requirement exam
- The implementation of new assessment and evaluation procedures and practices
- Build business partnerships to meet students' educational needs
- Language Support Program which will be carried on with grade 9 students as they enter grade

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- Implementation of the recommendations of the Provincial Student Education Council (ie. bullying)
- Change in professional development format which will include school embedded PD
- Professional Learning Communities
- Developing common assessment and learning to interpret data (not overtly stated in Learning for Life II).

Appendix D
Nova Scotia Education Act:
Functions and Duties of Principals

Function and duties:

38 (1) The principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for the school, including teachers and other staff.

(2) It is the duty of a principal to

- (a) ensure that the public school program and curricula are implemented;
- (b) keep attendance records respecting every student enrolled at the school and report thereon to the school board, as required by the school board;
- (c) take all reasonable steps to secure full and regular attendance at school of the students enrolled in the school in accordance with policies established by the school board;
- (d) communicate regularly with the parents of the students;
- (e) ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, orderly, positive and effective learning environment;
- (f) ensure that provincial and school board policies are followed;
- (g) identify the staffing needs of the school;
- (h) assist the school board with the selection of staff for the school;
- (i) evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff of the school;
- (j) assist the school board in the development and implementation of professional-development programs;
- (k) encourage teachers and other staff of the school, students and parents to participate in school decision-making through representation on school advisory councils and committees;
- (l) participate in the establishment and operation of a school council;
- (m) assist the school advisory council in the development of school improvement plans and, upon approval by the school board, co-ordinate their implementation;
- (n) assist the school advisory council in the preparation of its annual report;
- (o) account to the school board for money received from the school board or any other source;

(p) account to the school board, through the superintendent, for the performance of the school;

(q) co-operate with the staff of other departments and agencies of the Government to better meet the needs of the students in the school; and

(r) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations or assigned by the superintendent. *1995-96, c. 1, s. 38 .*

Appendix E
Helpful Practices
Of Senior High Principals

The experienced senior high principals who participated in this study revealed a few tips that helped them cope with the communication and organizational demands of their day. I have listed in the event they may be helpful to others.


Communication

When he is walking through the hallway, one senior high principal asks all teachers to write their requests or reminders to him on paper that he quickly deposits into his pocket for review at various points in the day. By putting the onus on teachers to communicate important items through notes or emails, he avoids the chance that he may forget to follow through on important messages or requests. He jokes that he is always emptying his pocket of small notes.

Many of these senior high principals use staff meetings as professional development sessions in which teachers have the opportunity to share with their colleagues their professional learning.

Stabilizing Organizational Demands

In order to keep her priorities in balance during the run of her hectic days, one senior high principal kept an adaptation of the quadrants Stephen Covey published in his book, *The 7 habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change*. These quadrants helped her to balance the urgent and not so urgent priorities of her day, while keeping the humanistic aspects of her role in the forefront.

Urgent	Not urgent
<p>I (urgent and important, don't let this rule) ACTIVITIES: Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects (take care of business....move to II)</p>	<p>II ACTIVITIES: Prevention Relationship building Recognizing new opportunities Planning, recreation (this is the heart of what I should be doing)</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-right: 50px;">  </div>
Urgent but not important	Urgent but not important
<p>III ACTIVITIES: Interruptions, some calls Some mail/e-mail, some reports Some meetings Proximate, pressing matters Popular activities (stay out!)</p>	<p>IV ACTIVITIES: Trivia, busy work Some mail/e-mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities (stay out!)</p>

In her own words, the principal describes how she utilizes this adaptation of Stephen Covey's quadrants:

This is the quadrant I had sitting on my desk in a little plastic photo frame...Quadrant II resulted in: vision, perspective, balance, discipline, control and few crisis, and I felt great at the end of the day if I managed to spend my time there. Some days I would look at my "To Do", and put I, II, III or IV beside it, or my e-mails or whatever, because I believed that principals were most effective in the classrooms.

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