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Examining Attention to Leadership When Hiring School Administrators in a High Poverty, Ethnically Diverse School District: A Case Study

Veronica A. Tigert
University of the Pacific

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Examining Attention to Leadership When Hiring School Administrators in a High Poverty, Ethnically Diverse School District: A Case Study

By

Veronica Ann Tigert

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Examining Attention to Leadership When Hiring School Administrators in a High Poverty,
Ethnically Diverse School District: A Case Study

By

Veronica Ann Tigert

APPROVED BY:

Dissertation Advisor: Rachelle Kisst Hackett, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Anne Zeman, Ed.D.

Committee Member: Sylvia Turner, Ed.D.

Associate Dean of Benerd College: Laura Hallberg, Ed.D.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my nana, Gladys Ann Taylor, who taught me to lead with humility and in the service of others.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Dr. Rachelle Hackett for her guidance. I took no easy routes to finishing, and she should be commended for staying the course with me. I am also appreciative of Dr. Anne Zeman for her guidance regarding school leadership and assisting with the framing of my study.

I began this journey at the start of my first principalship. I appreciate the Claudia Landeen School staff for the years of encouragement. The Claudia Landeen community was instrumental in the articulation of my core belief that leadership is an act of service.

This dissertation would not have been completed without Dr. Sylvia Turner. She took a chance when hiring me as a math coach, recognized talents I did not see, and encouraged me to pursue educational leadership. She has always known what to say to keep me persevering in my drive to create the best educational outcomes for children. An editor, a mentor, but above all she is a friend I treasure deeply.

I am thankful for my mom, Debra Taylor, who as a single mother recognized the importance of education on my future. This milestone in my educational path began with her as my first literacy teacher.

My gratitude goes to my daughter K.C. whose creativity provides me inspiration. She has been integral in my personal growth to better understand perspectives of younger generations. She has always been my biggest cheerleader.

All of this work could not have been accomplished without the support of my partner, Judy. She has been my ally, never giving up hope that I would indeed finish this dissertation. She has kept me on the path and held an unwavering belief in me. I owe her everything.

Examining Attention to Leadership When Hiring School Administrators in a High Poverty,
Ethnically Diverse School District: A Case Study

Abstract

By Veronica Ann Tigert

University of the Pacific
2023

The purpose of this mixed methods case study was to understand the hiring practices of a school district when considering a principal and how the school district attends to leadership within those hiring practices. The central premise of the study was leadership matters and is second to teaching in student achievement. However, the historical record paints a picture of less than adequate attention to effective hiring practices and a limited scope when addressing leadership. A small school district in California was selected to participate in the study. The design incorporated mixed methods to analyze the hiring practices through a survey of site administrators (principals and assistant principals), interviews of the Superintendent, and interviews of two principals. Similar to what was found in the review of literature, the school district did not align all of the hiring practices to what they valued in leadership and lacked in performance-based instruments when hiring. However, the results of the study indicated how the school district valued leadership and this may have been a contributing factor in student achievement. Through the review of literature and the study, the researcher developed an understanding of the complexity of the leadership construct and provides a synthesis of how key leadership studies fit together to provide a framework for hiring school administrators.

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List of Abbreviations

CAASPP   California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress

EL   English Learner

ELA   English Language Arts

ELPAC   English Learner Performance Assessment Consortium

ESSA   Every Student Succeeds Act

NCLB   No Child Left Behind Act

RFEP   Reclassified Fluent English Proficient

SBAC   Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium

SED   Socioeconomically Disadvantaged

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Leadership is second only to teacher quality in predicting student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2019). The leadership literature outlines key traits, behaviors, and qualities principals exhibit leading to successful schools. Effective school principals find ways to remain deeply connected to classroom instruction (Andrews & Lewis, 2007; Brown, 2005; Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2019). Principals who clearly define a vision and mission, and consistently lead toward continuous improvement affect school achievement (Fullan, et al., 2007; Hallinger, 2010; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Developing collective responsibility for school improvement between all stakeholders helps to build individual accountability for all students and creates deeper collaboration around improving student achievement (Fullan, 2020; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Lambert et al., 2016; Spillane et al., 2001). Furthermore, the concepts of capacity building, a learning leader, and commitment to serving the needs of others show promise for sustaining student achievement (Balyer, 2012; Fullan, et al., 2007; Goodall, 2018; Grossman et al., 2001; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2019; Stoll et al., 2006).

In a large study, researchers identified attributes of effective principalship that increase students' achievement (Waters et al., 2004). Several literature reviews have synthesized the empirical evidence relating leadership to successful schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2008).

Description of Research Problem

Regardless of time in history, the principal has always filled many roles and been viewed as an agent for change rather than simply a manager (Kafka, 2009). However, the social,

emotional, and academic challenges occurring in schools today have increased in number and severity compared to past decades. Schools with high enrollment of diverse students who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to face challenges in serving all the social, emotional, and academic needs of the students (Hassenpflug, 2013; Lambert et al., 2002; Smith, 2016). The enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) increased focus on accountability in meeting the needs of these students and thus increased the demand for highly effective principals (Brown, 2005; Coelli & Green, 2012). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) furthered principal accountability and the need for effective preparation programs for school administrators (Haller et al., 2016; Williams & Welsh, 2017). Administrators who are prepared to overcome these challenges and build a culture of success can change the outcomes for students who research predicts are otherwise less likely to succeed (Haller et al., 2016; Williams & Welsh, 2017).

Teacher quality predicts student achievement more than any other factor; however, leadership plays an important secondary role in affecting the outcomes for students (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004; Fullan, 2014; Lambert et. al, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2019). Yet, more traditional methods for hiring principals have continued and scant research exists on how to recruit and hire the most effective candidates for the role (Atherton, 2018; Doyle & Locke, 2014; Palmer, 2016; Palmer, 2018; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015). More recently, the Principal Pipeline Initiative by the Wallace Foundation, has gained momentum in highlighting the methods by which principals are hired (Gates et al., 2019).

Studies on leadership and student achievement have focused on identifying discrete leadership qualities a school principal exhibits (Marzano et al., 2005; Woods & Martin, 2016). These studies identify promising results for leadership qualities identified by

stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents) that affect student achievement. Notably, however, the number of studies drops significantly for high poverty settings (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Woods & Martin, 2016). Moreover, there is a lack of research focused on the hiring practices of principals at high poverty, ethnically diverse school districts and how, if at all, these districts consider leadership practices when hiring (Doyle & Locke, 2014; Palmer, 2016; Spillane & Kenney, 2012; Stone-Johnson, 2014).

Purpose of Study

Teaching practices have the greatest effect on learning outcomes of students and studies denote the leadership practices of school principals who positively influence these teaching practices (Blase & Blase, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005; Woods & Martin, 2016). Researchers agree some leadership practices lead to positive outcomes for schools (Boyd, 1996; Bredeson, 2000; DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Hallinger, 2010; Kafka, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2019; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Woods & Martin, 2016). Even though leadership practices influence the effectiveness of schools, there has been less than adequate attention in the research on how leadership qualities are determined during the hiring practices of school principals (Doyle & Locke, 2014; Palmer, 2016; Spillane & Kenney, 2012 Stone-Johnson, 2014). Palmer and Mulloly (2015) found a significant lack of research on hiring practices of site leaders. Rammer (2007) found superintendents lacked methods for assessing the qualities principals needed to perform the leadership responsibilities defined by Waters et al. (2004).

The purpose of this case study is two-fold. The hiring practices of a high poverty and ethnically diverse school district will be assessed to determine how leadership qualities across the six themes of leadership as defined by Lambert et al. (2002) and aligned with the seven

claims of effective leadership as defined by Leithwood et al. (2019) are considered and measured by the Superintendent to inform employment decisions of site administrators. Further, the site administrators' perceptions of how leadership qualities were considered during the hiring process will also be reported. The following are the research questions. In Chapter 3, a table shows how the research connects to the literature, the data sources that will be used for each research question, and how the data will be analyzed for each research question.

Research Questions

1. What are the hiring practices used to inform the selection of site administrators by a school district serving a high percentage of ethnically diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

2. How did the hiring practices include assessment of leadership practices as defined by research on school leadership?

3. What are the perceptions of site administrators regarding how leadership practices were assessed during their own hiring process?

Significance of Study

The leadership practices of principals may play a role in explaining why some schools succeed while others do not (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). When tracing the history of the principalship, management duties evolved through the decades with the quality of leadership coming to the forefront in discussions around school improvement in the later part of the last century (Brown, 2005; Coelli & Green, 2012; Haller et al., 2016; Hallinger, 2010; Kafka, 2009; Williams & Welsh, 2017). NCLB (2001) and ESSA (2015) increased accountability for schools and thus increased attention on school principals and their role in student achievement (Haller et al., 2016; Hallinger, 2010; Kafka, 2009; Williams & Welsh, 2017). The historical role of principal as an

excellent manager and community liaison shifted to include a demand for principals who had

deeper understanding of pedagogy and curriculum (Kafka, 2009). Beginning in the early 1980s,

principals were viewed as the agents of change and federal programs began to require a more

focused approach by principals in creating such change (Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992;

Rousmaniere, 2013). Nearly twenty years after NCLB research does exist that identifies some of

the most effective leadership practices leading to student achievement, albeit the research is

scarce when considering high achieving, high poverty schools (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012;

Woods & Martin, 2016). Even though leadership practices appear to be an important factor

impacting student achievement, there is a lack of studies ascertaining if school districts are

placing weight on leadership practices when they hire principals (Doyle & Locke, 2014; Palmer,

2016).

This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the importance of attending to

leadership practices identified in research to inform employment decisions of site administrators

at high poverty and diverse school districts. The findings of this study could inform

superintendents and other district leaders on how to develop and refine hiring practices to assess

the leadership practices of potential candidates for school administration.

Theoretical Framework

School leadership practices can be defined across a variety of themes or movements that

developed during different eras (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2002). Theoretical

constructs from scientific management, human behavior, human relations, systems, and ecology

influenced the development of these themes (Antonakis et al., 2004; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019;

Lambert et al., 2002). The themes have distinct, yet overlapping, characteristics with the key

ideas of one theme evolving and leading to the next as scientists grappled with social, political,

and economic forces during each era from which each theme developed (Antonakis et al., 2004; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Lambert, et al, 2002). Leadership practices, such as authoritative, transactional, directive, instructional, shared, and transformational contribute to the defining of the theme (Antonakis et al., 2004; Lambert, et al, 2002). Although researchers have taken liberty in how they synthesize the literature in labeling each era of leadership development, there is consensus in the overarching ideas that furthered the work to conceptualize leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; Lambert, et al, 2002; Wooi et al., 2017).

Traditional leadership is autocratic. Traditional leaders are more concerned about maintaining efficiency through control, giving directives and giving less attention to any form of democratic process (Antonakis et al., 2004; Day & Thorton, 2018; Lambert et al., 2002). Behavioral leadership is transactional. Principals focus on the organization's objectives and manage behaviors through rewards and sanctions (Lambert et al., 2002; Day & Thorton, 2018; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019). Contingency or situational leadership is related to behavior, but actions are based on assumptions about each staff member's ability with principals being directive in their actions toward goals based on the individual (Day & Thorton, 2018; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Lambert et al., 2002). Instructional leadership is objective oriented. Principals lead achievement toward objectives through instructional functions, such as observing classrooms and monitoring student progress (Day & Thorton, 2018; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Lambert, et al, 2002; Olson, 2000). Community of Leaders is a shared process. The principal is viewed as a "leader of leaders," who undertakes actions that encourage a democratic process and develops a common sense of purpose (Barth, 1988; Day & Thorton, 2018; Lambert, et al, 2002). Constructivist leadership is a reciprocal process. The principal is part of the 'school community'

which operates through shared inquiry in order to shape school culture and improve practice (Day & Thorton, 2018; Lambert, et al, 2002).

Regardless of how a leader's practices may align to a theme, leaders draw upon their Personal Leadership Resources to enact effective leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2019). Cognitive resources of problem-solving capacities and knowledge of school conditions have significant effects on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2019). Social resources include capacity for relationship building but is furthered by the capacity of leader empathy (Leithwood et al., 2019). Psychological resources allow school leaders to remain resilient in the face of adversity and enact responsible risk-taking (Leithwood et al., 2019).

My study will focus on the leadership practices defined across these themes to determine whether and to what extent a high achieving, high poverty and diverse school district uses them to inform employment decisions for site leaders. The themes are described as traditional, behavioral, contingent, instructional, community, and constructivist. Within the context of the leadership themes, the theoretical framework of Personal Leadership Resources proposed by Leithwood et al. (2019) will be applied.

Description of the Study

The introductory chapter detailed the need for additional research into the hiring practices used by district leaders and how attention to leadership practices is given in those hiring practices. This study will explore how a high poverty, ethnically diverse school district attends to practices of leadership, as defined by the themes of leadership, when hiring school principals. In addition to the Lambert et al. (2002) themes, this study will also be informed by Leithwood et al. (2019) synthesis of leadership literature that identified successful school leadership practices in order to determine how, if at all, a school district attends to the nuances of

leadership (traits, practices, and responsibilities) when hiring school principals. This will be accomplished through a qualitative case study approach. The case study is an appropriate research design because the purpose of the study is to understand a concept or practice (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). School District X was chosen as meeting the criteria of a high poverty, ethnically diverse school district and agreed to participate in the study. Initially, an Associate Superintendent of School District X communicated to the Superintendent and site administrators and then I began communication through email. A link to the online survey was emailed to each site administrator. An in-person interview was held with the Superintendent who also provided documents related to hiring site administrators. Finally, virtual interviews of two principals were conducted. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the closed-ended items from the surveys (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). Inductive analysis was applied to open ended responses on surveys, hiring documents, and interviews to code and unitize the data according to themes of leadership. During this process, data was coded, organized into categories, and patterns and relationships were identified (McMillian & Schumacher, 2009).

 Chapter two provides a review of the literature on the history of the principalship, the role of the principal, themes of leadership and corresponding theoretical constructs, the role of leadership in schools, and the status of hiring practices of school districts. Chapter three explains the qualitative case study design. The presentation of data will occur in chapter four. An analysis of the data will occur in chapter five and include limitation, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

By examining the leadership traits in the history of the principalship and the theoretical frameworks for leadership, an understanding of the importance of attending to leadership in hiring practices of school principals will be outlined. This review begins with detailing the historical record of the principalship and how the role of the principal has evolved. Then the chapter synthesizes theoretical frameworks for school leadership and effective leadership practices of school leaders. Finally, the chapter describes research related to hiring practices of school principals.

Modern Principal: Mid-1800s - Early 1900s

The church and home had been the place for society's education of children which, over time, transitioned to a one room schoolhouse with all aspects of the school being managed by a single teacher (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). Due to increasing enrollment in public education and expansion of grade level classes, the principal teacher or teaching principal was created to replace the single teacher or master (Boyd, 1996; Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). Typically, the principal teacher was a man who tended to administrative duties of the school, had authority over teachers, disciplined students, worked with the community, and taught classes (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). The authority of the principalship continued to grow as school district boundaries grew and the central office could not continue to manage the complex details of individual school sites from afar (Brown, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2013). The rise of principal power was also due to principals' struggle for authority and resistance to superintendent's decisions regarding examinations of students to make judgements about schools and teachers (Kafka, 2009).

Throughout the evolution away from direct classroom instruction, principals continued to function as important community figures (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). As local leaders, they formed clubs for mothers of students, social functions, and hosted various educational events (Kafka, 2009). Principals helped lead the way in establishing school sites as the center for charity and civic activities (Rousmaniere, 2007; Rousmaniere, 2013).

During this era, principals began to form professional organizations, and state laws for principal qualifications and certifications soon followed (Rousmaniere, 2007; Rousmaniere, 2013). Eventually, principals became viewed as the teacher of teachers and, by the mid-1930s, most of those working in industrial settings were no longer teaching students (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). Even though they no longer had the role of teacher, principals were expected to participate in the teaching of lessons and to plan with teachers on ways to improve instruction (Rousmaniere, 2007; Rousmaniere, 2013).

The Principalship of the 20th Century

The church had been the place for society's socialization but with industrialization, migration, and immigration, the school became the center for Americanizing youth and their families (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). Teachers and principals became integral figures in the community as school enrollment continued to increase (Brown, 2005). Local politicians looked to school principals to provide leadership in helping with social issues (Brown, 2005; Rousmaniere, 2013). During the 1920s and 1930s, the principal was seen as both spiritual and scientific leader and by the 1940s their role shifted to democratic leader (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). The principal's role in the 1950s witnessed a shift to increased micromanaging of trivial duties with instructional leadership based on scientific theories still expected (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2013). The subsequent decades describe the school

principal's role with increased attention to federal programs that includes rhetoric focused on instructional leadership as the characteristic of successful schools (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). By the end of the century, principals were once again seen as individual agents of change.

The Principalship Today

The No Child Left Behind act (NCLB, 2001) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) brought increased accountability to the principalship for student achievement (Brown, 2005; Coelli & Green, 2012). Yet the role of the school principal to include many responsibilities is not new (Kafka, 2009; Rousmanier, 2013; Spencer, 2009). Kafka (2009) contends, "What is new is the degree to which schools are expected to resolve society's social and educational inequities in a market-based environment" (p. 328). Principals are under greater public scrutiny to be instructional leaders (Carter & Klotz, 1990; Moller, 2012; Spencer, 2009). Schools can no longer afford to promote great managers to the position of principal (NASSP, 1996; Crow et al., 2002; West et al., 2010).

As the role of principal changed from effective manager to effective leader, more attention in the research was given to leadership practices of school principals as an influencer of teacher development and school achievement (Velasco & Edmudson, 2012; West et al., 2010). Although quality of instruction is the largest predictor of student achievement, principal leadership contributes to instructional quality and thus student achievement (Fuller et al., 2007; Jackson & Marriot, 2012).

Evolution of Leadership Theories

Leadership theories have evolved since the late 19th century even though the term leadership first appeared during the 1700s (King, 1990). The development of leadership thought can be organized by eras of leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt

& Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017). The Personality Era

is divided into the Great Man Period and the Trait Period. Personality was first connected to the

concept of leadership as researchers studied historical leaders of the world and sought methods

for individuals to learn how to copy personalities to become a strong leader (Antonakis et al.,

2004; Amanchukwu, et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990;

Wooi et al., 2017). Trait Theory developed from the Great Man Period as researchers grappled

with how to move away from looking at specific leaders (Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu

et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017).

The Influence Era focused less on traits and more on leadership as a relationship (Antonakis et

al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King,

1990; Wooi et al., 2017). During this era, thoughts on persuasion and a leader as a dominant

individual in the leadership relationship developed as the approach to leadership (Antonakis, et

al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King,

1990; Wooi et al., 2017). The Personality Era and the Influence Era have also been grouped

together to define the traditional movement in development of a leadership framework

(Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen,

2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017).

  Major advancements in leadership theory took place during the Behavioral Era

(Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen,

2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017). A notable study by Griffen et al., (1987) identified two

leadership behaviors, initiating structure and consideration, as traits that could be developed

overtime with the right conditions and stimulus (as cited in King, 1990). Behavioral leadership

focused on behavioral traits of the leaders as reinforcements for desired behavior in subordinates

(Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017).

During the Situation or Contingency Era, other aspects, such as environmental, social status, and group influence, were identified as factors contributing to effective leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017). Approaches in the Situational Era led to recognizing that effective leadership was somehow greater than an individual, which led to noteworthy theories that first recognized all of the dimensions of leadership as sources of effective leadership (Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990; Wooi et al., 2017). Vroom and Yetton's (1973) Normative Model based on the premise that one could adapt a leadership behavior to different situations has continued to be a source for modern leadership study (as cited in Vroom & Jago, 2007).

Lambert et al. (2002) contends the evolution of educational theories of leadership should be reviewed as a parallel development within the historical context of learning theories. Social, political, and economic needs have influenced the development of leadership theories and the transition between one era and the next allow for a continuance of previous dominant thoughts to exert their influence (Antonakis et al., 2004; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019; Khan & Shaheen, 2016; King, 1990; Lambert et al., 2002; Wooi et al., 2017). The historical record of leadership research can be synthesized into six themes: traditional, behavioral, contingency/situational, instructional, community of leaders, constructivist (Lambert, et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016).

Traditional Leadership

Based on obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation, traditional leadership practices continue to influence our schools (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Schools with a traditional mindset can be characterized by a single curriculum with an emphasis on basic skills and standardized measures of student achievement (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Leiker & Campos, 2016). This approach to leadership is based on learning theory that suggests learning is externally motivated (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). The teacher is the source of knowledge and learning and the principal is the source of decisions regarding those experiences (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2016; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992). The traditional principal fulfills the role of quality control but does not necessarily directly contribute to teacher growth (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Leiker & Campos, 2016).

Behavioral Leadership

Research on behavioral psychology approaches assume behavior can be predicted, intelligence is fixed and can be measured, and treatments can be described (Kanungo, 2001; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Behavioral approaches rely on standardized measures and rewards (Kanungo, 2001; Lambert et al., 2002). Deeply connected to the traditional framework, behavioral leadership aims to develop along an input-output model by viewing the principal as responsible for quality control and using rewards or sanctions to achieve a standard (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016; Marques, 2015).

Behavior leadership has also been labeled as transactional leadership because of the transactional relationship between leader and follower (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016; Marques, 2015). The primary goal of transactional leaders is to achieve the organization's

objectives and improve performance through a reward and punish based system (Marques, 2015; Smith, 2016). Transactional leaders solve problems but they do so either actively through meticulous tracking and redirection of performance or passively through waiting for issues to arise and then offering a correction (Marques, 2015; Smith, 2016). Transactional leadership effectiveness is typically short-term because once the extrinsic reward is pulled away, growth slows or recedes (Marques, 2015; Zagorsek et al., 2009).

Contingency/Situational Leadership

During the Industrial Revolution, a time of increased immigration, employers sought methods for sorting individuals according to the needs of the business (Costa & Kallick, 2008; Lambert et al., 2002). Factories needed large numbers of workers that had basic skills and basic knowledge of our democracy with children of immigrants as filling this need (Costa & Kallick, 2008; Lambert et al., 2002). Children of more affluent backgrounds were viewed as future managers and owners of businesses and therefore afforded school opportunities that prepared for higher education (Costa & Kallick, 2008; Lambert et al., 2002). Societal beliefs in racial superiority promulgated the use of standardized tests as a tool for sorting students into groups (Costa & Kallick, 2008; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Tracking and grouping still exists within our schools and the premise that ability is fixed continues to influence all school practices, even leadership (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Contingency or situational leadership is based on the premise that abilities of followers are fixed and the successful way to manage them is to group them accordingly and apply different leadership practices (Fiedler, 2006; Lambert et al., 2002; Meirovich, 2015). Contingency leadership practices can be along a continuum of directive to non-directive depending on follower development (Fiedler, 2006; Lambert et al., 2002; Meirovich & Gu, 2015).

Instructional Leadership

Although leading instruction had always been a part of the principal's role, instructional leadership as a framework for understanding effective leadership practices began to take shape in the 1980s as the 'effective schools' movement (Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Lambert et al., 2016). At the center of instructional leadership was a well-crafted vision and mission focused on student outcomes (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Superintendents recruited strong, directive leaders who could successfully turn schools around, and principals were evaluated based on their ability to move schools toward that vision by setting high expectations and standards (Bamberg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). The principal modeled and valued a culture of continuous improvement and aligned school resources to support this culture (Hallinger, 2010; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) proposed a model for instructional leadership that defines three dimensions of the role of principal: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program and promoting a positive school climate. Principals effectively define a school's mission when they develop school culture focused on clear and measurable goals for student progress (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). A study of California schools illuminated this idea of a clear mission being embedded in all the school's practices through the consistent expectations, articulation, and modeling by the school principal (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Managing the instructional program requires principals to be deeply connected to teaching and learning through consistent classroom observations to monitor teaching practices

and student progress (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). For example, in a study of California schools, teachers expressed how the principal knew the reading levels of all the students (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). The key to being an effective instructional manager appears to be a strong commitment to all aspects of the instructional program and an expert in teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

During most of the 1980s, instructional leadership was not viewed as a function to be shared or distributed (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Even though principals did not fully encompass the values of including teachers in school wide decisions, effective principals were not far removed from daily instruction in the classroom (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). These principals had intimate knowledge of curriculum and instruction and worked directly with teachers (Cuban, 1984; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012). However, few studies have shown principals taking a hands-on approach to classroom instruction but rely on pushing changes to instruction through the mission and school culture and serving as outside of the classroom models (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Principals, as instructional leaders, promoted a positive school learning climate, held teachers and students to high standards alongside providing the emotional support and resources they need to meet expectations (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger et al., 2010; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Community of Leaders

Toward the end of the 1980s, the ideologies of instructional leadership were beginning to be replaced with shared leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). The expectation of the principal as leading educational expertise fell short of the reality and school reforms showed greater success when teachers were involved (Hallinger, 2010; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Teachers began to serve in leadership roles (e.g., school site councils, lead teachers) and helped to shape the school culture by bringing a focus on learning and educational practices (Marks & Printy, 2003; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Principals began to share responsibilities with teachers, such as developing the school mission and goals and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Marks & Printy, 2003; Hallinger & Wang, 2015). This shared or distributed leadership model helped to build individual accountability through collective responsibility (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016).

Advances in brain research challenged long held assumptions, such as the capacity to learn as fixed and learning as passive (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Alongside these advances in medical science, qualitative research in critical theory and postmodern thought was being validated as a measurement for analyzing data leading to theories of community-based leadership (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Advancements toward establishing schools as places of learning for students and adults were based on a shared inquiry model (Barth, 1988; Lambert et al., 2002). Likewise, resiliency research was contributing to the body of knowledge that student achievement could be improved when there existed a focus on the environment of the school instead of being driven by fixing the perceived problems of diverse students (Felner et al., 2001; Krovetz, 1999). Successful schools were providing protective factors for students, such as a caring environment with high expectations and providing ways for

students to develop a sense of purpose (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). With a focus on the school environment, the necessity of principals to share the responsibility of leading alongside teachers became apparent (Lambert et al., 2016). The development of community leadership decried the traditional hierarchical structure of schools and replaced it with a shared responsibility for all aspects of school governance and improvement (Glickman, 2003).

Similar to the instructional leadership model, principals who embody community leadership traits are also expected to maintain consistency of the educational program by investing in teachers and resources to support school-wide instructional goals (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Marks & Printy, 2003). Furthermore, through community based shared leadership, the role of the principal is less about inspecting teacher competence and more about facilitating teacher growth through reflection and supporting professional growth opportunities (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Marks & Printy, 2003). Shared leadership models focus on principals and teachers creating knowledge and collaborating by grounding their work in inquiry, innovation, collaboration, reflection, and student achievement (Glickman, 2003; Spillane et al., 2001). Principals build leadership capacity in others through study groups, action research teams, and vertical learning communities (Lambert, 1998; Lambert et al., 2016). The conceptualization of empowerment in studies of shared leadership demonstrates how the principal's role shifts from telling teachers how to teach to facilitating processes involving teachers investigating their own practices in relationship to data on student learning (Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is situated within the construct of community leadership. This approach aims to transform followers into leaders (Lambert et al., 2002; Quin et al., 2015). Transformational leadership models apply many of the same characteristics of a

shared leadership model by focusing on problem solving and collaboration with stakeholders and asking teachers to challenge their own assumptions about teaching and learning (Anderson, 2017; Balyer, 2012). The ideology of transformational leadership is based on individuals rising above their own self-interests for the greater good of the organization (Anderson, 2017; Balyer, 2012). The transformational principal's role is to introduce ideas for innovation, shape culture, and to change culture through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Anderson, 2017; Popper et al., 2000). Shared leadership models have shown positive gains in development of school culture but less evidence exists regarding effects on student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003). Transformational leadership involves many components of shared leadership to foster a positive school culture; however, the focus remains on "capacity building for the purpose of organizational change" (Balyer, 2012, p. 582). Transformational leaders purposely build skills in others (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Wang, 2015) and are committed to serving the needs of others (Balyer, 2012). Unlike instructional and shared leadership models where principals had patterns of securing teacher buy-in to the mission, transformational leaders instill trust and confidence to follow the vision (Anderson, 2017; Balyer, 2012).

In transformative practices the principal is a learning leader (Toll, 2010). When principals engage in leadership as a learner, they avoid establishing a deficiency model of expectations by being a careful observer of even the smallest of examples of learning (Anderson, 2017; Bredeson, 2000). A learning leader is friendly toward new ideas, welcomes struggles, and facilitates inquiry to stimulate further learning (Grossman et al., 2001). Transformative principals understand how their voice sets the tone for the school but also values listening to empower teachers and build leadership capacity (Anderson, 2017; Bayler, 2012; Bredeson, 2000).

Principals act as learning leaders by providing demonstrations, participating in study groups, and

sharing what they are learning (Toll, 2010). Principals model learning is the core of school

culture with everyone learning through taking risks, valuing reflection, and embracing growth

rather than perfection (Anderson, 2017; Balyer, 2012; Bredeson, 2000).

      A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a transformative practice occurring within

a school setting wherein teachers come together to collectively inquire about teaching and

learning by examining evidence from student learning (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). A Professional

Learning Community builds a collaborative culture aimed at collective responsibility to become

responsive to all students (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Stoll et al., 2006). Principals facilitate this

process through shared leadership, maintaining group focus, promoting strategies for effective

team collaboration, and challenging individuals who do not honor the team's goals. (Balyer et

al., 2015; DuFour & Mattos, 2013). The PLC concept appears to lead to capacity building and

long-term improvement (Stoll et al., 2006). Previous models of instructional and shared

leadership resulted in school achievement but often lacked the ability to sustain practices in a

rapidly changing world (Ratts et al., 2015; Stoll et al., 2006).

      The five characteristics of a PLC are shared values and vision, collective responsibility,

reflective professional inquiry, collaboration, and group learning (Balyer et al., 2015; Stoll et al.,

2006). Shared values and vision provide the foundation for a PLC (Andrews & Lewis, 2007).

Members of the PLC promote collective responsibility for every student's learning at the school

site which in turn reduces feelings of isolation and holds people accountable to take their fair

share (King & Newmann, 2001; Ratts et al., 2015). Instructional practices are deprivatized

through reflection and inquiry in order to find solutions to students' needs not to evaluate

individual teachers (Ratts et al., 2015; Stoll et al., 2006). In a PLC, teachers do not solely

collaborate to share ideas but the focus of collaboration is on developing shared knowledge for a shared purpose (Ratts et al., 2015; Stoll et al., 2006). Learning is a consistent focus of the PLC with value placed on collective learning and collective knowledge creation (Anderson, 2017; Balyer, et al., 2015; Louis, 1994).

The characteristics of a PLC are developed through a collective focus on learning, maximizing resources, managing structure, and developing relationships with stakeholders outside of the school (Anderson, 2017; Stoll et al., 2006). The principal's role in these processes is imperative to the growth and success of the PLC (Balyer et al., 2015; Mulford & Silins, 2003). Through language and modeling the principal ensures learning is the focus for students and teachers (Balyer et al., 2015; Stoll, et al., 2006). Principals create opportunities for professional learning (Balyer et al., 2015; Hopkins et al., 1997). Furthermore, transformative principals are instrumental in establishing a culture of trust so resources can be maximized (Balyer et al., 2015; Stoll et al., 2006). For example, trusting colleagues is necessary in order to tap into individual strengths for peer observations (Anderson, 2017; Stoll et al., 2006). Principals working in a PLC give thoughtful attention to structure by managing time and space for teachers to participate in collaborative conversations and develop partnerships with outside agencies to help support the vision of the PLC (Anderson, 2017; Stoll et al., 2006).

Constructivist Leadership

Principals who approach leadership with a constructivist lens understand that people construct meaning and make sense of the world through inquiry and dialogue (Bruner, 1985). Constructivist leadership practices counter the traditionalists' ideals that there is a single interpretation of ideas (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Leiker & Campos, 2016). Gardner's (1983) work on multiple intelligences (as cited in Gardner, 2001) and Marzano's (1988) work on

learning styles furthered ideas that fell counterpoint to traditional methods for how students should acquire knowledge. Brain research found students had novel ways of processing, storing, and retrieving information (Costa & Kallick, 2008; Lambert et al., 2002). Additionally, understanding of critical theory that recognizes students of color may construct meaning in different ways from white students informs constructivist leadership mindsets (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016).

Other constructs for leadership, including transformational leaders and community leadership, designate a single leader as having the responsibility for growth in others (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). These constructs view leadership as a notion carried out by an individual (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Constructivist leadership lessens the directional relationships and, rather, encourages reciprocity among the group as the designated leader grows along with the team (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Constructivist leadership is viewed as the processes (problem solving, leadership capacity building, task enactment, conversations, and stories) among people rather than the skills of a single leader (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016).

Principals who apply a constructivist leadership approach and engage all stakeholders in a reciprocal process of learning and constructing knowledge together to create the conditions for learning of all stakeholders (Lambert et al., 2002; Yildirim & Kaya, 2019; Simons, 2020). These principals view the whole educational community with a growth mindset (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). Central to constructivist leadership is "the belief in teaching as a calling and school leadership as a spiritual mission" (Lambert et al., 2002, p. 25). Principals create spaces where all persons may have an authentic presence with each other, practice vulnerability, and engage in conversations. They understand the critical nature of human interaction in the

work of schools that includes the practice of empathy (Lambert et al., 2002; Simons, 2020).

Equity, caring, and the consideration of others are central to constructivist leadership as roles and

behaviors are transcended through a cycle of inquiry (Lambert et al., 2002; Simons, 2020).

Effective Leadership Practices of School Principals

Research details skills, traits, behaviors, and responsibilities principals possess that lead

to increased teacher quality, improved school culture and climate, and increased student

achievement (Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2019). The broad concepts of

leadership described in decades of leadership research outline agreement in how principals might

be more effective and play a key role in a successful school (Hallinger & Huber, 2012;

Leithwood et al., 2020). Effective principals lead with a belief in inclusive learning for all

stakeholders. They create a shared vision, exhibit an ongoing commitment to that vision, and

sustain resources needed for meeting the vision (Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hitt & Tucker, 2016;

Robinson et al., 2008). Effective principals are resourceful, understand developing systems of

processes for school improvement, have deep understanding of pedagogy and content, and create

a safe climate (Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2020). Task leadership practices and

relationship leadership practices are integrated within effective school leaders (Robinson et al.,

2008).

The results from a landmark meta-analysis by Waters et al. (2004) provided a solid link

between characteristics of school principals and student achievement in a review of over 5,000

studies between 1978-2001. Their work included 2,802 schools, about 1.4 million students and

14,000 teachers. The researchers identified twenty-one leadership responsibilities of effective

principals and correlated each to student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). The responsibilities

included concepts such as willingness to challenge the status quo, involving teachers in decision

making and policy development, and a high level of contact with teachers and students (Waters et al., 2004).

Leithwood et al., (2008) conducted a literature review and identified seven claims about successful school leadership and revisited these claims considering current empirical evidence (Leithwood et al., 2019). School leadership significantly affects school organization, climate, and culture which influences teaching and learning (Grissom et al., 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2019). There exists a core repertoire of leadership practices that correlate to student achievement, including setting direction, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization to support desired practices, and improving the instructional program (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2019). Effective leaders apply leadership practices based on contexts: situated contexts (e.g., school histories), professional contexts (e.g., teacher experiences), material contexts (e.g., budgets), external contexts (e.g., district office), and legal contexts (Harris & Jones, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2019). Leadership strategies need to focus on the different stages of development specific to the school and adapt accordingly (Hopkins, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2019). School leadership has an indirect impact on teaching and learning by creating conditions that affect knowledge and skills of staff, collective teacher efficacy, environment and culture, and educational cultures in the students' homes (Goodall, 2018; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2019; Sebastian et al., 2016). Widely distributed forms of school leadership, calling for a flattening of the hierarchy, have greater influence on school and student improvement but also vary according to context (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Harris & Jones, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2019). Leadership traits in and of themselves do not explain school leadership effectiveness but a "well defined set of leadership resources" shows promise of effective leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et

al., 2019). Personal Leadership Resources influence the behaviors or practices of school leaders (Leithwood et al., 2019). Three categories organize the Personal Leadership Resources: Cognitive Resources; Social Resources; and Psychological Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019). Cognitive Resources draw upon the leader's capacity for problem solving and knowledge and effective leaders apply systems thinking approaches to their work (Leithwood et al., 2019). The capacity for emotional intelligence and relationship building lies with Social Resources and the effective leaders needs to be able to perceive and manage emotions (Leithwood et al., 2019). Psychological Resources allow the leader to remain resilient and optimistic and have the self-efficacy needed to be proactive in moving schools forward (Leithwood et al., 2019).

A synthesis of literature identified strong evidence of the relationship between principals and student success (Grissom et al., 2021). When principal effectiveness is increased by 1 standard deviation, there is an increase of 0.13 standard deviations in student math performance and 0.09 standard deviations in reading (Grissom et al., 2021). Studies also show the relationship between ratings of principal effectiveness by teachers, superintendents, or others and higher achievement by students (Grissom, et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2016; McCullough et al., 2016;). Principals also have an effect on other student outcomes, such as attendance and discipline (Bacher-Hicks, et al., 2019; Bartanen, 2020).

Grissom et al. (2021) identified four leadership domains that influence the skills and knowledge needed to affect instruction, people, and the organization: 1) Engaging in instructional focused interactions with teachers 2) Building a productive climate 3) Facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities 4) Managing resources and personnel strategically.

Engaging in instructional focused interactions with teachers. Effective principals have the leadership capacity to engage teachers in proactive discussions on instruction through the use of data and a coaching model (Grissom et al., 2021). Time spent on ongoing and consistently coaching teachers is related to higher student achievement growth (Grissom et al., 2013; Huff et al, 2018). Use of checklists or random walk-throughs are unproductive in changing instructional practices and thus student achievement (Grissom et al., 2013). When viewing the instructional leadership domain with the lens of equity, principals focus collaborative conversations and planning on meeting the needs of marginalized students (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Giles et al., 2007). To effectively navigate instructional leadership, principals must have relational capacity and the mindset to co-construct knowledge obtained through a coaching model (Drago-Severson & Blum-Destafano, 2018).

Building a proactive school climate. The relational dimensions of fostering trust, collaborative efforts, collective efficacy, empowering others, and understanding the community's values and needs provides the foundation necessary on which to build a culture of continuous improvement (Goddard et al., 2015; Jacobson et al., 2007; Louis & Murphy, 2017; Pierce, 2014; Sebastian, et al., 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Equity focused leaders facilitate a school climate that celebrates diversity, uses inclusive programming, encourages an asset mindset, and challenge classroom practices that are based on punitive measures (Demerath, 2018; DeMatthews et al., 2017; Larocque, 2007). In their efforts to build a community of learners, principals must draw upon their social and emotional intelligence competencies to foster improvement (Blase & Blase, 2000; Hollingworth et al., 2018; Klar and Brewer, 2014). The principals with the greatest aptitude for awareness of context and reflection have the capacity to adapt leadership practices for any community environment (Klar & Brewer, 2014).

Faciliating collaboration and professional learning communities. A primary action of leadership leading to school improvement is the establishment of a culture of learning by means of systematic collaboration (Min et al., 2016; Taylor, 2010). Stakeholders working together on instructional matters and how the principal supports this work is a determining factor in school improvement efforts (Saunders et al., 2009; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017) and how principals engage families in these processes lead to improved outcomes for marginalized students (Gardiner et al., 2009). Creating and maintaining professional learning communities that move beyond cooperation requires relational capacity of the principal to build trust within the organization by leveraging expertise of other leaders in the school and an internalized focus of the principal to remove barriers (Cravens et al., 2017; Miller & Rowan, 2006).

Managing personnel and resources strategically. Principals must rely on a complex, intertwined set of skills, strategic leadership, to manage resources that are often scarce (Grissom, et al 2021**).** Management of time, social capital, and personnel can have positive effects on student achievement (Grissom et al., 2013; Leana & Pil, 2006; Loeb et al., 2012).

Hiring Practices of School Districts

Regardless of the time period, principals have played a vital role in student achievement, and development of highly effective teachers (Anderson, 1991; Branch et al., 2013; Grissom et al., 2021; Marzano et al., 2005). However, the role of the principal has become increasingly complex (Grissom et al., 2021; Normore, 2004). Recruitment of effective school leaders has become challenging (Doyle & Locke, 2014; Lee & Mao, 2023). Due to lack of knowledge and time constraints the process for selecting a school principal can often lack critical review (Ash et al., 2013; Gates et al., 2019; Hassenpflug, 2013). Compounding the issue, is the continued practice of promoting within the "good-old-boy" network without regard to careful investigation

of qualities and aptitude (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015). Many districts lack a systematic approach to recruiting and hiring principals, and exhibit little regard to assessing leadership potential (Gates et al., 2019; Hassenflug, 2012; Spanneut, 2007). In part, this is due to ineffective leadership instruments that fail to measure actual abilities (Clement, 2009; Condon & Clifford, 2012; Spanneut, 2007). School districts often rely on subjective measures during the hiring process which can lead to inequity (Blackmore et al., 2006; Gates et al., 2019; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Hassenpflug, 2013).

The practices school districts should use during the hiring process include: developing written policies, defining selection criteria, creating a pool of applicants, writing a vacancy announcement, recruiting widely, training hiring committees, developing interview questions, and using performance-based assessments (Anderson, 1991; Ash et al., 2013; Gates et al., 2019)., Districts often use nonspecific selection criteria and inadequate selections techniques (Anderson, 1991; Palmer, 2016). Job announcements should be detailed and give specific information about the school including: needs the principal will address; characteristics of the staff; backgrounds of the students and families and any of their concerns; information about the district administrative team and their roles in supporting the principal (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Spanneut, 2007; Walker & Kwan, 2012). Ideally, school districts take time to clearly define selection criteria and the data that will be used to determine whether a candidate meets their standards (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Walker & Kwan, 2012). Other than California regulations requiring the inclusion of salary ranges on job postings when private employers have at least 100 employees, there are not any California or federal requirements on job descriptions or job postings (California Chamber of Commerce, 2023). However, resources (time and money) are wasted when employers fail to provide detailed job descriptions (California Chamber of

Commerce. 2023). When school districts fail to clearly identify their selection criteria, they continue to hire principals who maintain the status quo instead of leaders who could implement change (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer, 2016). Another important step in the screening process is the inclusion of others: principals, teachers, parents, and students who help curtail business as usual approach and thereby increase the likelihood they select the best candidate based on merit and not on 'fit' where institutions look for someone who mirrors themselves (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015). Written assessments should also play a key part in the evaluation of candidates for principal that allow hiring committees to analyze communication aptitude and reveal philosophies of education (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019). During the interview process, there is opportunity for bias and tendency of the committee to select candidates that look and sound like themselves (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015; Walker & Kwan, 2012). Districts should spend time developing selection criteria for interviewers and training all involved (Anderson, 199; Gates et al., 2019; Walker & Kwan, 2012). Training of the hiring committee should include legal issues in hiring, interviewing techniques, and candid discussions around understanding personal bias (Anderson, 1991). The interview process should focus candidates' ability to navigate situational questions in order the interviewers to understand how the candidates may respond to real issues in the future (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer, 2016; Spanneut, 2007). Performance simulations are another exemplary hiring practice that can reveal suitability of a candidate (Gates et al., 2019). For example, the hiring committee could create a simulation requiring a candidate to view a teaching video and write an observational report on the instruction (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer, 2016; Spanneut, 2007).

Principal Pipeline. In order to increase student achievement, there is a demand for school districts to move away from finding the right fit which leads to status quo toward recruiting and developing leaders according to a developed system. The Wallace Foundation developed the Principal Pipeline Initiative, a six-year study of developing practices within six large, urban school districts to change areas related to the preparation, hiring, development, evaluation, and support of school leaders (Gates et al., 2019). Principal pipeline is the term coined to describe the range of talent management a school district employs to hire and support school leaders (Gates et al., 2019; Turnbull, Riley, & Arcaira, et al., 2013).

The practices of the pipeline lie in contrast to the typical approaches used to prepare and manage school leaders (Korach and Kosner, 2017). School districts participating in the initiative adopted leader standards, a Leader Tracking System, and a hiring process that included practical demonstrations (Gates et al., 2019; Turnbull, Riley, & McFarlane, 2013). Each school district had a district-run principal preparation program for assistant principals and a partnership with a program for principal preparation (Gates et al., 2019). Ongoing mentoring and evaluation were developed from the district's leadership standards (Gates et al., 2019; Turnbull, Riley, & McFarlane, 2013). School that received a principal through the pipeline outperformed other schools by 6.22 percentile points in reading and 2.87 percentile points in math three years or more after the principal started the position (Gates et al., 2019).

The pipeline represents a system for individuals to develop the skills necessary to move them along a continuum of development toward the principalship and the actual hiring practices only represents one aspect of this system (Gates et al., 2019; Turnbull, Riley, & Arcaira, et al., 2013). At the hiring stage, the following are aspects school districts included in their processes: advisory councils with a variety of stakeholders, performance-based tasks during the hiring

process, written responses to scenarios, job descriptions linked to leadership standards and needs of school, and use of surveys such as Gallup Principal Insight (Turnbull, Riley, & McFarlane, 2013). Even though each of the school districts who participated in the initiative had differences in their approaches, they all changed their hiring practices by seeking to improve the quality of data when hiring by implementing real or simulated school environments to observe the candidates' performance (Turnbull, Riley, & McFarlane, 2015).

Summary

Leadership matters. In order to change the conditions of learning, schools need effective leaders (Leithwood et al., 2004; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2019). Even though leadership in schools has been actively studied for five decades, educational institutions have narrowly applied findings from leadership research by applying a one size fits all approach in seeking and training school leaders (Gates et al., 2019; Hallinger & Huber, 2012). Furthermore, research on hiring practices of school leaders has not kept pace with leadership research (Anderson, 1991; Condon & Clifford, 2012; Hassenpflug, 2013; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015 Spanneut, 2007). The Principal Pipeline Initiative has reimagined what the future of hiring school principals could be when school districts focus on building a system of support based on the construct of leadership and how to recruit, hire, and develop those with the greatest potential to lead our schools (Gates et al., 2019).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Educational researchers, policy makers, and school leaders indicate a need for hiring the most qualified people for the principalship. Effective leaders help to create effective schools (Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2019). Research exists regarding the critical qualities of leadership that lead to student achievement and successful schools (Leithwood et al., 2019). Historically, there has been minimal attention in the research regarding hiring practices of school principals as it relates to effective leadership qualities (Condon & Clifford, 2012; Hassenflug, 2012; Spanneut, 2007). An analysis of how school districts identify leadership practices through their hiring practices is lacking in the research. Waters et al. (2004), Robinson et al. (2008), and Leithwood et al. (2019) have synthesized numerous studies correlating leadership qualities to student achievement. Yet the selection processes of school principals have remained relatively unchanged since the 1950s (Palmer & Mullooly, 2015). Rammer (2007) furthered the study completed by Waters et al. (2004) by analyzing how superintendents consider leadership qualities during the hiring of school principals and determined that, although they agreed with the qualities as being important, superintendents did not possess an intentional method for determining whether the candidates for the principalship actually possessed those qualities. By employing a case study approach to carefully collect data on a high poverty, ethnically diverse school district, this study aims to further the work of Rammer (2007) to understand how a district serving the needs of marginalized groups of students systematically attends to leadership during the hiring of site administrators. The case study involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data. Descriptive statistics from the survey responses captured the extent of agreement with leadership statements

offered within a Likert Scale format according to type of leadership. Narrative responses on surveys and from interviews, as well as language used in documents, were analyzed for patterns and conceptual themes were coded and interpreted.

Positionality

As a school leader with over twenty years working in public education, I recognize I have developed a set of experiences related to schooling and leadership. I have also matriculated through the public school system and subsequent private university system as a white female from rural poverty with a single mother and absent father. I was the second person in my entire extended family to attend a university and even though I have learned how to live within a suburban middle-class world, my world view continues to be impacted by the roots of my beginnings. I believe there are three things that saved me from generational poverty: 1) an encouraging grandmother with stable housing; 2) a mother who placed high importance on doing well in school; and, 3) access to educators who saw a greater potential in me. I have questioned throughout my life how I was able to access this educational gateway out of poverty when others in my family did not and this has fueled my drive to create the best outcomes for children.

As I have grown through the years and collaborated with individuals from various walks of life, I have also come to the realization that some individuals have had to cross many barriers that were not part of my experiences: race, ethnicity, language, and lack of resources. It has been my life's work as a teacher and now as an administrator to learn how education transformed my path and what I may do to transform the path for others. I have observed intentional and unintentional decisions all adults working in educational systems make that affect student achievement outcomes. My experiences revolve around how relationship centered decisions are a powerful factor in these outcomes. From my perspective, student achievement has less to do with

curriculum and programs and more to do with instructional practices and the acts of service that each human in the institution exhibits toward students, families, and to each other. These instructional practices and qualities of behaviors are influenced by systemic racism, implicit biases, and white culture hegemony.

Trustworthiness

Many qualitative researchers rely on research by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to outline criteria needed to build trustworthiness or degree of confidence in qualitive research. The qualitative researcher must employ methods to ensure the study is credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

I used triangulation to show the study is credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that establishing credibility is the most important factor in trustworthiness. My research used three sources of data: interview of school superintendent, documents related to hiring practices, and surveys and interviews of school administrators (principals and assistant principals).

To establish transferability, I used thick description to show how the findings may be applicable to the leadership themes. Thick description entails telling a story, providing a vivid picture, and including such details as attitudes and reactions observed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing such detail, others beyond the researcher may see to what extent the findings can be extended (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009).

I performed an audit trail by maintaining a reflexive journal in order to establish confirmability. A reflexive journal details each step of data analysis and the rationale for decisions made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I used peer review and feedback from members on my dissertation committee to establish dependability. Peer review from my dissertation committee, also known as inquiry audits, allow

an outside person to evaluate whether conclusions are supported by data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Design

A qualitative case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) examined how and to what extent a district serving a high percentage of diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds employs a comprehensive hiring process of school administrators that includes assessment of leadership qualities. A case study provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore data from multiple perspectives in order to describe a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). In this case, the phenomenon consists of attention given to research-based leadership qualities in hiring practices. The design utilized quantitative and qualitative data analyzed separately but interpreted together (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research questions guiding the study were as follows:

1. What are the hiring practices used to inform the selection of site administrators by a school district serving a high percentage of ethnically diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

2. How did the hiring practices include assessment of leadership practices as defined by research on school leadership?

3. What are the perceptions of site administrators regarding how leadership practices were assessed during their own hiring process?

Participants

The purpose of this study is to describe the hiring practices of school administrators within a district that meets the selection criteria of being high poverty and ethnically diverse. It is for this reason that the participants included the Superintendent, who is responsible for hiring school administrators and establishing hiring practices, and school administrators currently

working at school sites within School District X. School District X is a small school district serving students in California. Site administrators (principals and assistant principals) were administered the survey; however, only two principals and the Superintendent were interviewed.

School District X was chosen due to meeting the criteria of being high poverty and ethnically diverse. Achievement data of School District X was included for the purposes of discussion on any found relationships between practices within the district and students meeting standards according to the state assessment, Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC) for English Language Arts (ELA). The data related to ELA was chosen because the ELA exam is given to all third through eighth grade students and grade eleven students and students who have been consistently enrolled in California schools would have had access to courses in ELA in grades kindergarten through eleven. In contrast, this not the case for mathematics courses. High schools in California vary greatly in the sequences of mathematics courses they offer in grades six through eleven with some high schools only requiring one year of mathematics.

SBAC data reported on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) website, in 2019, for grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 was used to evaluate academic performance on the SBAC ELA. Included were academic performance of students who are socio-economically disadvantaged (SED), Hispanic/Latino students, English Learners (EL), and those English Learners (EL) who had been Reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (RFEP). For the purposes of discussion on student achievement, the data on similar schools to District X were included (Table 1).

Similar schools were determined through using the website, Ed-Data (Education Data Partnership, 2023). The website allows criteria to be set to determine similar school districts across California. Table 1 shows the selected range for the criteria and the school districts that

were identified from all public school districts in California as similar according to the criteria. The criteria range for enrollment was the minimum range ($n \leq 4600$) that could be selected to find at least three other similar school districts with all other criteria. All other criteria (Ethnicity/Race, EL, SED) were set with a range that fell 10 points below or above School District X. Enrollment data was not included in the table to maintain anonymity of School District X.

Table 1

2019 Similar School District Criteria

Criteria	Criteria Range	School District X	School District A	School District B	School District C
Hispanic %	71-91	80.70	85.90	83.40	74.20
White %	4-24	14.40	11.50	12.70	11.30
EL %	31-51	41.20	40.20	31.30	35.20
SED %	68-88	78.30	84.90	80.40	76.00

Note: School District X is the district in the study. School Districts A, B, and C were chosen as similar school districts.

Once similar districts were determined, the data on SBAC ELA performance was collected on each district, the County of School District X, and statewide performance (Table 2 and Table 3). Subgroups were identified using with and without using the secondary filter of socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Table 2

2019 SBAC Percent Meeting/Exceeding Standards in ELA

	All %	White %	Hispanic %	EL %	RFEP %
California	51.10	65.64	40.81	12.81	60.07
County of District X	42.81	55.55	36.29	11.04	57.29
District X ELA	39.27	48.50	37.98	13.20	69.13
District A	34.54	53.39	32.11	10.95	48.85
District B	31.91	46.02	28.88	5.07	48.41
District C	38.82	56.85	34.68	13.73	56.93

Table 3

2019 SBAC SED Percent Meeting/Exceeding Standards in ELA

	SED All %	SED & White %	SED & Hispanic %
California	38.97	47.41	36.58
County of District X	35.17	42.09	32.87
District X	35.17	41.46	34.96
District A	31.05	31.60	30.12
District B	27.48	40.35	26.36
District C	35.13	53.61	32.02

Data Sources

Data sources were aligned to the six themes of leadership (Lambert et al., 2002) and

consideration was given to review of literature in Chapter 2 with particular attention to the

claims of effective leadership (Leithwood et al., 2019) and effective hiring practices (Gates et al.,

2019). The sources included an interview of the Superintendent of School District X, surveying

site administrators, interviews of two principals and documents related to the hiring process.

Superintendent Interview. The Superintendent was interviewed. Interview questions

addressed the background of person, overall hiring process, and how the person considers

leadership during the hiring (see Appendix A). One question, for example, was "What are key

leadership practices you look for during the hiring of a principal?" Each question would have the

follow up question, "How does your hiring process enable you to ascertain the strength of this

practice in the candidates?"

School Administrator Survey. A survey was administered to all principals and assistant

principals within the district (Appendix B). The survey included demographic information: 1)

What are the education roles/jobs you have held? 2) Number of years in your current position 3)

Number of total years worked as a school site administrator 4) Number of total years worked in

education. The survey had statements aligned with each of the six themes of leadership (Lambert

et al., 2002) and Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019). One statement, for

example, is "The role of the leader is to shape human behavior to match organizational aims."

The principal considered each statement in terms of these instructions: "The hiring committee

placed importance on this notion of leadership during the hiring process." For each statement

rated with Agree or Strongly Agree, the school administrator was asked to provide a narrative

response on how the hiring process placed importance on this notion of leadership.

Principal Interview. The comprehensive high school principal and an elementary

principal in School District X were chosen for an interview to discuss perceptions of the

processes used when they were hired (Appendix C). The purpose of choosing the two principals

was to gain understanding of perceptions at opposite ends of the K-12 continuum. Elementary

schools take an average of three years to achieve institutionalized successful changes and high schools an average of six years (Fullan, 2020).

Documents. All documents related to hiring of principals and assistant principals were requested. The Superintendent provided sample interview questions and job descriptions were downloaded from the district's website.

Data Collection

An email was sent to the Associate Superintendent of Educational Services explaining the purpose of the study, the process of the study, and a copy of the questions that will be asked on the surveys. The Associate Superintendent of Educational Services reviewed the proposal with the Superintendent and received approval to move forward. A virtual meeting with the Associate Superintendent was held to answer any questions and discuss the process. After the meeting, the Associate Superintendent received the consent forms for surveying the site administrators (Appendix D). All signed consent forms were emailed to me. The site administrators working for School District X received an email from me with a link to the survey (Appendix B) on the web-based program, Survey Monkey.

I emailed the Superintendent who preferred to schedule an in-person interview at their office. A consent form was signed (Appendix E). The interview was audio recorded. At the conclusion of the interview of the Superintendent, a request was made for any documents related to hiring. The Superintendent provided job descriptions through acknowledging they were posted on the district website. The Superintendent emailed examples of interview questions.

Site administrators completed the survey, and then a request was made to the Associate Superintendent and Superintendent for me to interview a comprehensive high school principal and an elementary principal. The Superintendent provided the emails for each person and the

Associate Superintendent followed up with them during their leadership meeting. I emailed each of these principals the consent form for the interview (Appendix E) and a virtual interview was held.

Data Analysis

Appendix G outlines how the research connects to the literature, the data sources used for each research question, and how the data was analyzed for each research question. There are a variety of practices and processes a school district uses when hiring site administrators. The process may include reference to board policies and the district's vision and mission. Practices may include specific protocols for recruitment and hiring. By analyzing the documents used during hiring, the language used becomes a valuable resource in observing the core beliefs of the institution and how those are reflected in documents related to hiring. School District X provided job descriptions and sample interview questions used. To address research question one, these documents were analyzed in relationship to effective hiring practices according to the literature review presented in Chapter 2.

The Superintendent is charged with hiring site administrators. This person plays an important role in how core beliefs regarding leadership are embedded into hiring practices and how much importance aptitude related to leadership is placed at the forefront of hiring. The interview of the Superintendent played a vital role in determining to what extent leadership abilities are valued when hiring. The Superintendent's responses were analyzed regarding how the district leader views leadership, the role leadership plays in the district, and the type of leader the Superintendent sought for schools in the district.

Surveying site administrators on their perceptions of being hired and the attention given

to leadership yielded quantitative and qualitative data. Through the survey, data from the Likert

Scale was collected and determinations made according to number of responses. Each question

on the survey related to a leadership theme. The number of responses across the Likert Scale was

tallied for each survey question and totaled for each leadership theme. The narrative responses

on the survey were coded and analyzed according to leadership themes.

The interview of two school principals yielded further information regarding their

perceptions of the hiring processes and attention given to leadership when they were applicants.

Observations were also garnered regarding how leadership is cultivated within the district and

general hiring and recruiting practices within School District X. Discussions also evolved into

their personal pathways to the principalship, relevance to leadership, and their own observations

of the principal pipeline within School District X.

The initial analysis of the sample interview questions and job descriptions provided data

for observing what hiring practices School District X uses. These documents were reviewed

again but during this second round the focus was on connections to the leadership themes. The

details in these documents were analyzed for alignment to each leadership theme. Then a third

round of analysis was conducted to review any indications of attention to Personal Leadership

Resources.

The results of the survey and the language of all sources (Superintendent interview,

principal interviews, narrative responses on survey, and hiring documents) were coded with

regards to leadership themes and evidence of Personal Leadership Resources providing for a

qualitative narrative on the practices School District X uses when hiring site administrators and

thus addressing research questions one and two. A triangulation of data was formed between the

vertices of perceptions of Superintendent, perceptions of site administrators, and documents related to hiring.

Data from the narrative questions on the survey and the documents were analyzed using coding methods associated with constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this process, iterations of data collection and analysis informs the next collection and thus analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Using the Literature Review in Chapter 2, and Lambert's (2002) six themes of leadership, a qualitative codebook was developed (Table 4). This guide is not exhaustive and each theme in the evolution of leadership over the course of time heavily influenced later themes (Lambert et al., 2002). For example, initial research on Instructional Leadership focused on direct teaching and learning because of the influence of the preceding behavioral movement (Lambert et al., 2002). Due to the evolution over time within the social and political contexts of different eras, leadership theories "exercised a dynamic influence on each other" (Lambert et al., 2002, p15). Therefore, the qualitative codebook serves as guide for making judgements and inferences about how attributes fit within a leadership theme while recognizing the themes are not mutually exclusive.

The third round of analysis yielded any data regarding the use of Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al, 2109). Data was reviewed to see if language in narrative responses on surveys and interviews yielded any attention to Cognitive Resources, Social Resources, or Psychological Resources as defined by Leithwood et al., 2019. Therefore, underlying leadership qualities were being analyzed to explain variance in practices. The framework of Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019) provided a tool for determining how I would draw conclusions when there were shades of meaning in the language used by participants.

Table 4

Qualitative Codebook

Leadership Theme	Definition	Examples
Traditional	Application of a single approach	Loyalty; cooperation; basic skills; status quo
Behavioral	Implementing quality control to achieve a standard	Merits; transactional; use of sanctions and rewards to achieve individual behavior; shape all individual behaviors toward a set standard
Contingency/ Situational	Managing others based on perception of followers' abilities	Perceived ability tracking into treatable groups; sort and manage behavior toward perceptions of individual ability
Instructional	Individual leader modeling a culture of high expectations to increase student achievement	Articulated vision and mission; focus on student outcomes; positive school climate; modeling; consistent expectations; monitoring of instruction and data; curriculum and pedagogy knowledge
Community of Leaders	Shared responsibility for all aspects of school governance and continuous improvement with individual leaders viewed as the leader of leaders	Facilitating teacher growth; transformative leader; shared; collaboration; inquiry; facilitating teacher reflection
Constructivist	Constructing meaning through multiple interpretations of ideas with leadership evolving in nonlinear ways	Reciprocity; process; group focused vs single leader focused; growth mindset; equity; "spiritual" mission; practice vulnerability; empathy; cycle of inquiry

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this case study was to uncover how leadership is assessed during the hiring process. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the hiring practices used to inform the selection of site administrators by a school district serving a high percentage of ethnically diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

2. How did the hiring practices include assessment of leadership practices as defined by research on school leadership?

3. What are the perceptions of site administrators regarding how leadership practices were assessed during their own hiring process?

This qualitative case study was bounded in a specific school district located in California and explored the perceptions of the Superintendent, perceptions of the site administrators, and analysis of language in documents related to the hiring process. Drawing on a theoretical framework of leadership developed over centuries, the study assumes that leadership does matter, so the overarching question driving the research is: How do school districts place importance on leadership when hiring school leaders and does the process align with what they value in leadership? The findings will be presented separately from each area collected: Survey of Site Administrators (n=8); Interview of Superintendent (n=1); Interviews of Two Principals (n=2); the Job Descriptions; and Sample Interview Questions.

Survey of Site Administrators

Each of the eight site administrators took the same survey that included demographic data items and a set of questions about leadership themes. There were two questions for each

leadership theme. On the survey, the ordering of the statements from the six themes were mixed

and not labeled with the themes. The questions about leadership were developed from the

theoretical framework of leadership and categorized based on the themes of leadership (Lambert

et al., 2002). For each leadership theme, the participants responded to two statements using a 4-

point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Participants were instructed to rate the

extent to which they (dis)agreed that the hiring process placed emphasis on this statement of

leadership. Table 5 shows the total responses for ratings within each theme. The majority of

participants agreed that the hiring committee placed emphasis on Instructional Leadership.

Table 5

Emphasis Placed on Leadership Theme During Hiring Process

Leadership Theme	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Traditional	0	12	3	1
Behavioral	0	13	2	1
Contingency/Situational	0	12	3	0
Instructional	0	3	11	2
Community of Leaders	0	6	8	1
Constructivist	0	10	6	0

For each statement, participants marked that they agreed or strongly agreed, they were

asked to respond with narrative details on how the hiring committee emphasized the leadership

statement. The narrative statements by the participants were exported into an Excel sheet.

Deductive coding was used to assign words or phrases used by the participants to illustrate each

leadership theme. Since the actual language used by the participants was used, this is referred to as In Vivo Coding. Then those words and phrases were clustered or unitized according to each leadership theme, as the example, shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Participants' Language Used

Leadership Theme	Examples of Language from Participants' Narrative Statements
Traditional	practices that were off limits to change; would fit well
Behavioral	accountability measures
Contingency/Situational	responsive to the needs of staff, students and families
Instructional	a strong pedagogical background; highly visible
Community of Leaders	share in the decision-making; working with staff on a common vision
Constructivist	restorative practices over punitive practices

As detailed in Chapter 2, each leadership theme has shades of the previous theme (Lambert et al., 2002). When making decisions, inferences had to be made within the context of the entire narrative. I reviewed each statement within this context and drew conclusions on where I determined the most appropriate fit would be along the leadership theme continuum by applying the framework of Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019). Traditional Leadership involves maintaining the status quo. When site administrators described a culture of certain practices being off limits to change, this related to the concept of loyalty to traditional practices. Accountability measures is a concept that can be found in various forms throughout Behavioral, Contingency/Situational, and Instructional themes. However, I made the decision to

align accountability measures with Behavioral because the roots of this practice lie within this theme and stemmed from quantitative research that intelligence is fixed and can be measured (Callahan, 1962). The narrative did not provide any detail that could allow me to make a judgement that participants were attempting to describe accountability measures within a Contingency/Situational or Instructional context. The foundation of Instructional Leadership is the modeling of continuous improvement and therefore, it is imperative the leader have a strong pedagogical background and is consistently visible in classrooms. Statements aligned to Instructional Leadership were easiest to recognize without much inferring as several administrators actually used the term instructional leader in their narratives. Sharing in decision making could be applied to Community of Leaders or Constructivist; however, I chose Community of Leaders because the essence of the narrative was leaning toward the concept that there was still one leader who was leading other leaders and not the nonlinear concept of leadership found within Constructivist theme. There was little attention in the narratives to ideas related to Constructivist Leadership. However, details regarding restorative practices I judged as being constructivist because in my own work with restorative practices I understand that the greater school community is involved in the creation of a just outcome. This process of creating and sense making is a critical concept within Constructivist Leadership (Lambert et al., 2002).

Once the leadership units were organized, a percentage was calculated based on number of words/phrases within a theme out of total words/phrases used across all themes (Table 7). This percentage yielded the majority of leadership words/phrases used by participants to describe the hiring process aligned with Instructional and Community of Leaders theme. Instructional leadership focuses on how the site administrator increases student achievement through a focus on teacher effectiveness related to classroom practices (Lambert et al., 2002) whereas the

Community of Learners movement in the leadership framework values mastery of content alongside the sharing of knowledge (Lambert et al., 2002).

Interview of Superintendent

The Superintendent was interviewed in-person using a semi-structured interview process. The interview took place in the Superintendent's office and lasted thirty-two minutes.

Table 7

Participants' Narrative Statements

Leadership Theme	Percentage of Leadership Units
Traditional	9.1
Behavioral	6.8
Contingency/Situational	6.8
Instructional	38.6
Community of Leaders	36.4
Constructivist	2.3

The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. Using the categories of leadership themes, language was analyzed. First, an initial reading of the transcript was done. Then during the second reading of the transcript, all words or phrases related to leadership practices were underlined. A third reading looked at the contextual clues of the question and response to determine the theme of leadership of each leadership word or phrase and was highlighted with a designated color. The total number of leadership related words or phrases used by the Superintendent were counted. Then a count was made of each leadership word/phrase for each

leadership theme. This yielded a percentage of words/phrases used within each leadership theme out of total leadership words/phrases.

The majority of the language used by the Superintendent (Table 8) aligned with the theme, Community of Learners, where processes for individual and collective growth are established (Lambert et al., 2002). The Superintendent placed importance on hiring school leaders that had the capacity to respect a strong sense of community within the district and be able to easily build rapport with many stakeholders which aligns with a leader who has capacity in Social and Psychological Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019). The Superintendent described hiring processes that were collaborative and reflective. Often multiple people conducted the initial application screening. Interview panels would be developed based on the needs of the school site. Interview questions were co-created and revised as needed. The Superintendent also detailed leadership practices within the district which included the district funding an administrative coach for all site administrators and having leadership teams that learn together.

Table 8

Leadership Themes of Language Used by Superintendent when Interviewed

Leadership Theme	Examples of Language from Superintendent	Percentage of Leadership Words
Traditional	A fit; Important to have a degree <of tradition>	18%
Behavioral		0%
Contingency/Situational		0%
Instructional	Getting teachers to focus on the right thing; In classrooms giving feedback	27%
Community of Learners	Build relationships and develop culture; collaborative conversations	44%
Constructivist	Learning together	11%

Determining how the language used by the Superintendent fit within the leadership themes was less of an arduous task than analyzing the narratives from the surveys. Because of the thick description by the Superintendent the ideas of leadership were exemplified and when they were not follow-up questions posed by me allowed for further details. The Superintendent noted importance of finding the right fit for a community that had close ties with the school district and recognized the need to adhere to some practices (Traditional Leadership). I did not find any evidence of leadership that aligned with Behavioral or Contingency/Situational and actually quite the opposite was true in the Superintendent's details to work against a one-size fits all model. The Superintendent detailed a focus on the work inside classrooms (Instructional Leadership and Cognitive Resources) but also has a strong sense of Community of Leaders requiring aptitude in Social and Psychological Resources. The Superintendent often referred to the importance of finding school leaders who could develop strong relationships with others. In

the Superintendent's details regarding the importance of the leadership team to learn together through book studies, discussions, and coaching, it was evident of the importance placed on ideas related to Constructivist Leadership as the Superintendent desired for the team to make sense of the issues the district faced as a social process.

School Principal Interviews

Two principals were interviewed virtually using a semi-structured interview process. One interview lasted fifteen minutes and the other interview lasted thirty minutes. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. The process used for coding and analyzing the language by the school principals was the same process used for the Superintendent interview.

The principals had the majority of their expressions align with Community of Learners (Table 9). Their style of leadership aligned with the ideas of sharing, collaboration, and facilitating others to be reflective in their practices. They also viewed the experiences of their hiring process as one that sought leaders who would have a collaborative mindset and place importance on relationship building (Social Resources). Improving morale at the school sites appeared to be at the forefront of what these principals would be expected to accomplish (Social and Psychological Resources). Constructivist ideas related to vulnerability were expressed. When school leaders engage in processes where they "come to know," they place themselves in positions that allow others to see that they do not have all the answers (Lambert et al., 2002). The principals spoke candidly about their personal pipeline to the principalship, the roles they held previously, and how district level personnel recognized their talents and supported their development over time.

Table 9

Leadership Themes of Language Used by Principals when Interviewed

Leadership Theme	Examples of Language from Superintendent's Narrative Statements	Percentage of Leadership Words
Traditional	Manage; loyalty to community	8%
Behavioral		0%
Contingency/Situational		0%
Instructional	Student Achievement; curriculum	20%
Community of Leaders	Reflection; collaboration	48%
Constructivist	Capacity building; expressions of vulnerability	24%

One of the principals reflected deeply about hiring practices and the most effective practices for hiring the best employees. The principal expressed how training for the principalship does not cover hiring practices outside the scope of human resource laws. The principal referred to readings of research on leadership, effective leadership, and the relationship between leadership and student achievement but had not read anything on developing hiring practices within the institution of education that ascertain leadership potential. However, the principal shared there is some indication of this being done in businesses, such as Google.

Job Descriptions

The job descriptions for assistant principal and principal were nearly identical. The majority of details described under the essential functions of the position and ability skills were related to basic functions which fall under the theme of Traditional Leadership (Table 10). For the principalship, twenty-six functions were listed, thirteen (50%) of those were related to Traditional Leadership, five (19%) were related to Behavioral Leadership, four (15%) were

related to Instructional Leadership, and four (15%) were related to Community of Learners. The

job description for assistant principal had twenty-five functions listed, eleven (44%) of those

were related to Traditional Leadership, seven (28%) were related to Behavioral Leadership, three

(12%) were related to Instructional Leadership, and four (16%) were related to Community of

Learners.

Table 10

Language Used on Job Descriptions

Leadership Theme	Examples from Job Descriptions	Functions Listed for Principal	Functions Listed for Assist. Principal
Traditional	Develops Master Schedule; prepares site budget	50%	44%
Behavioral	Supervises use of buildings; implementing policies	19%	28%
Contingency/ Situational	(none identified)	0%	0%
Instructional	Provides in-service training; evaluates implemented programs	15%	12%
Community of Leaders	Responsible for staff/staff relationships; serves on advisory committees	15%	16%
Constructivist	(none identified)	0%	0%

Overall, the descriptions and duties in the job descriptions primarily related to the

Traditional and Behavioral Leadership. The Traditional theme is defined as the application of a

single approach and is often related to basic skills and management of people and resources. The

Behavioral theme is defined as implementing quality control to achieve a standard and is often

related to management of people and resources through standardization. I had to make decisions

on what I classified as Instructional Leadership versus Community of Leaders since there are

strong connections between these two themes. I based my decisions on best practices of a school

administrator using the framework of Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019).

For example, the job description called for a person who would evaluate programs. Evaluating

programs could be under the umbrella of Behavioral or Contingency/Situational. Also, I viewed

'being responsible for staff/staff relationships' as a function of Community of Leaders because

an effective site leader would need to understand how to create space for collaboration. However,

I recognize that a site administrator could view 'being responsible for staff/staff relationships'

through management of such relationships aligned with Contingency/Situational leadership. My

inferring on these areas drew from the literature on Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood

et al., 2019) and what I learned regarding leadership practices during the interview of the

Superintendent.

Interview Questions

The Superintendent provided three samples of interview questions. Table 13 displays

sample questions and how they were categorized according to Leadership Theme. The vast

majority of the questions aligned with Instructional Leadership which aims to increase student

achievement through a focus on direct teaching practices (Lambert et al., 2002). Leadership

practices related to monitoring student progress, curriculum knowledge, and addressing learner

needs are the crux of Instructional Leadership (Lambert et al., 2002). The interview questions

also included language related to understanding the person's approach to practices within

Community of Leaders and Traditional Leadership. Traditional Leadership based questions

ascertain how the leader will approach management-based skills, such as knowledge of policies

(Lambert et al., 2002). Questions using language related to ideas of community building and collaboration aligned with Community of Learners Leadership (Lambert et al., 2002). I could take a straightforward approach with analyzing the alignment of questions to leadership themes but did have to make some inferencing with regards to questions that fell outside the scope of Traditional or Instructional Leadership. For example, the question aligned with Community of Learners in Table 13 was based on what I came to understand as the belief system of the Superintendent during the interview. A collaborative approach would have been rated highly by the hiring committee and thus a leader who could draw upon the Social Resources of emotional intelligence and relationship building would be highly desirable.

Table 11

Sample Interview Questions

Leadership Theme	Sample Interview Questions
Traditional	Describe a situation where you did not follow a site or district policy and explain why you did not follow the policy.
Behavioral	(none identified)
Contingency/Situational	(none identified)
Instructional	Explain some methods for supporting and monitoring English Language Learners in the middle school environment?
Community of Leaders	What approach would you take in dealing with a parent who is upset with a situation at school or with an individual teacher?
Constructivist	(none identified)

The findings represent a triangulation of data from perceptions of the Superintendent, perceptions of site administrators, and document related to hiring practices. The process of

coding and unitizing the data was based on my inferences using the review of literature in

Chapter 2, reviewing the data within the context of the all the data, and drawing on my personal

experiences as school principal. During times of unclarity, the voice of the Superintendent was

given a high amount of consideration in making determinations and the framework of Personal

Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019) was used in making those determinations. The

areas studied revealed similarities and differences that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The role of the principal has increased in scope and complexity (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Bredson, 1993; Normore, 2004). Leithwood et al. (2004) argued that "efforts to improve recruitment, training, evaluation, and ongoing development should be considered highly cost-effective approaches to successful school improvements" (p. 14). School District X appears to be interested in the role Instructional Leadership plays within the district and has a systematic method for developing leadership skills of site administrators. Attention to Instructional leadership and Community of Leaders is included in the hiring process. Overall, the hiring process relies heavily on traditional practices and Traditional Leadership. Chapter 5 will detail an analysis of the results in the context of the research questions, the review of the literature on leadership, and my own experience as a school administrator.

Hiring Practices Used: Research Question 1

Effective hiring practices include developing written policies, creating job descriptions that include the specific needs of the school, selecting teams for the hiring process, co-creating selection criteria for each new position, and developing interview questions that include performance-based assessments (Anderson, 1991; Ash et al., 2013; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer, 2016). School districts who have adopted a principal pipeline also include items such as developing standards for leaders, a tracking system, and the using leadership surveys (Turbull et al., 2013). The purpose of this section is to detail a response to research question one regarding the hiring practices used to inform the selection of site administrators by a school district serving a high percentage of ethnically diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The

Superintendent of School District X described a process that included posting the position, screening applications, forming a hiring committee, and interviewing.

The job descriptions for hiring site administrators in School District X were typical in what I have observed in education and what has been described in the research as a "one size fits all" approach (Gates et al., 2019; Hallinger & Huber, 2012). The details in the job description used by School District X were mostly managerial in scope, such as budgeting, creating reports, and supervision. All of these are necessary skills; however, effective hiring practices also include consideration of specific characteristics of school demographics, specific needs of the school, and information regarding how the principal will work with the district administrative team (Gates et al., 2019; Spanneut, 2007; Walker & Kwan, 2012).

The job description in School District X begins with a definition: Under the supervision of the Superintendent or designee, supervises and administers all school programs, site staff, student activities, and affairs at the assigned site. When considering how to revise such a job description, School District X would collaborate with a variety of stakeholders in rewriting the job description giving careful attention to attracting leaders the district is seeking and not maintaining status quo (Gates et al., 2019). When considering how to write a summary definition as part of a job description for a principal, the details could be the following: School District North is seeking a principal for South High School. South High School is focused on serving diverse students needing an alternative setting to meet requirements for a high school diploma. The principal will serve approximately 250 students, 80% of which are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and a staff of 20 teachers, 2 counselors and 9 classified employees who have a strong background in shared leadership and trauma-informed practices. Even though there are no legal requirements for job descriptions (California Chamber of Commerce, 2023),by providing

more specific details, a district is able to cast a wider net on the role they are seeking for the site

administrator (Gates et al., 2019).

The Superintendent described a collaborative approach to screening applicants, forming a

hiring committee, and reviewing interview questions and selection criteria. The inclusion of

other members' perspectives is an important component of effective hiring practices allowing for

multiple viewpoints and decreases the likelihood of hiring a candidate that mirrors an individual

leader without regard to merit (Anderson, 1991; Gates et al., 2019; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015).

The Superintendent is not the only one to screen applicants. Often human resources personnel

and an Associate Superintendent conduct initial screenings followed by the Superintendent. The

hiring committee is formed based on the needs of the school and could include district personnel,

site personnel, parents, and/or trustees. The Superintendent noted that the hiring committee

focused their work more so on discussion around what skills and qualities the principal needed

with only minor changes being made to interview questions.

A next step toward developing the hiring practices within School District X could be to

use the hiring committee to review how to change interview questions to include performance-

based questions, simulations or tasks. Tasks that require a demonstration and not solely a verbal

answer allow a hiring committee to observe how a potential principal might respond to a real-life

issue (Gates et al., 2019; Palmer, 2016; Spanneut, 2007). For example, one of the interview

questions asked by School District X was: Explain some effective methods for supporting and

monitoring English Language Learners in the middle school environment. This question could be

changed from standard to exemplary by showing a video of a teacher providing integrated

English Language Development and posing the following questions: 1) Describe the practices for

integrated English Language Development that you observe and the level of English Language

Learner needs met with these practices. 2) Describe the feedback you would give the teacher regarding their instructional practices related to English Language Learners. This level of interview questioning allows a hiring committee to rely on more than the applicant's ability to provide textbook answers. The committee would gain an understanding of the applicant's ability to use knowledge of English Language Learners, analyze instructional practices, and provide meaningful and constructive feedback to the teacher.

Assessment of Leadership within Hiring Practices: Research Questions 2 and 3

In the previous section, I noted what hiring processes were used and analyzed those according to what research states are effective hiring processes. This section will address research question two and three by providing an analysis of how the hiring process included assessment of leadership practices and the perceptions of administrators. The Leadership Themes as defined by Lambert, et al. (2002) were used as an organizational tool for coding and categorizing ideas. The broad scope of the theoretical framework of leadership, with particular attention to the framework of Personal Leadership Resources (Leithwood et al., 2019), was used in determining how words, phrases, and ideas fit within each theme (Lambert, et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2019; Rammer, 2007; Waters et al., 2004).

The job descriptions from School District X were simplistic lists of the duties and functions of the position. Most could be easily categorized under Traditional Leadership (n=0.5 for principals and n=0.44 for assistant principal) because they emphasized basic skills and standardized measures, such as monitoring student records. (Lambert et al., 2002). In the process of this analysis, School District X appeared to have desired another type of leadership for their position. During the interview, the Superintendent focused largely on ideas related to Instructional Leadership and Community of Leaders (Table 10) and placed strong emphasis on

the capacity for Cognitive Resources (e.g., pedagogical knowledge) and Social Resources (e.g., focus on relationship building); however, this was not apparent in the language listed in the job descriptions. For example, *Develops Master Schedule*, was classified as Traditional Leadership because the skill within this category does not necessarily require other types of Leadership. However, principals who use practices of shared leadership (Community of Leaders) or pedagogical knowledge (Cognitive Resources) when developing master schedules create a positive school culture and have greater impact on successful school programming. During the interview, the Superintendent focused on shared leadership practices, related to Community of Leaders and Social Resources. A Community of Leaders centered question regarding development of a master schedule in order to ascertain if a potential applicant had the Social Resources could be framed by the following: Understands how to engage stakeholders in the development of a master schedule. By framing the question in this manner, a school district signals they are seeking someone who understands the process by applying leadership practices (i.e., shared leadership) and thus inherently emphasizes those leadership practices they deem important. If School District X seeks to align job descriptions with their core beliefs, they could consider how to embed the language of leadership practices into the current listing of managerial duties.

The sample interview questions provided exemplified a strong connection to Instructional Leadership. This aligned with what was observed on the survey as well as interviews of the administrators. Analysis of data from the survey indicated administrators viewed their hiring process places emphasis on Instructional Leadership and Community of Leaders. On the survey questions, the percent positive (Agree or Strongly Agree) rated the highest on questions related to Instructional Leadership (n=0.34) and Community of Leaders (n=0.24). Likewise, when the

participants were asked on the survey to respond with narrative details on any question they rated

with an Agree or Strongly Agree, they described how the hiring process placed emphasis using

details and examples that typically aligned with Instructional Leadership (n=0.39) and

Community of Leaders (n=0.36). Likewise, during the interview, the Superintendent voiced

ideas that were most closely related to with Community of Leaders (n=0.44) and Instructional

Leadership (n=0.27). Community of Leaders (n=.48) and Instructional Leadership (n=0.2) was

also a strong presence during the interviews with the two principals. When reviewing the

language used by the site administrators on the survey, half of them noted a focus on

understanding curriculum and majority discussed how being highly visible in classrooms was

important to the hiring committee; therefore, the hiring committee was emphasizing Cognitive

Resources. Two of them made a direct reference to understanding the hiring committee was

seeking someone who understood that the ultimate role of the principal was being an

instructional leader.

School District X has a culture of promoting within and looking for the "right fit."

Narrative responses from the survey detailed selection of principals who were well known to

the district leaders and selected to fill the roles. Creating a principal pipeline within a district has

benefits (Gates et al., 2019) but can also be wrought with typical inequities in hiring practices

and lacking in critical review if not balanced with other checks that are less subjective

(Blackmore et al., 2006; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Hassenpflug, 2013). By adding performance-

based assessments in the hiring process, School District X could add a further layer of review to

the hiring practices.

The framework of Instructional Leadership was developed from a large body of research

that emphasizes leaders attending to the daily practices within a classroom and ensuring

adherence to the curriculum through discussion and staff development (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2016). School District X appears to emphasize hiring a leader who understands Instructional Leadership but also sees the need for hiring administrators who employ approaches related to Community of Leaders. However, the job description for principal and assistant principal do not demonstrate this is the type of leader School District X is seeking. School District X's blending of Instructional Leadership and Community of Leaders aligns with an important shift that occurred in leadership research. Instructional Leadership began in the 1960s with the school improvement movement to increase student achievement through implementation of direct and consistent practices (Lambert et al., 2016). By the 1980s, research was beginning to outline the shortcomings of Instructional Leadership which included not addressing how school culture and collaboration influence learning and leading (Lambert et al., 2002). The Community of Leaders approach was defined by Roland Barth (1988) as an "interactive process of shared leadership" and the hierarchical structure of Instructional Leadership was replaced with shared responsibility. In the interviews of the principals and the Superintendent there was a strong sense of importance of shared responsibility of governance. Each of the principals gave examples of collaborating on decision making they either led or were part of the process. They outlined their capacity for Social and Psychological Resources by detailing a keen awareness of responding to needs of others and a deeper sense of emotional intelligence. The Superintendent described seeking principals who could co-create a strong school culture. Research over the last two decades has described the need for an asset approach to school improvement by focusing on strengthening the environment instead of fixing problems (Bayer et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2016).

The Superintendent described some constructivist approaches to leadership (n=0.11) and the two principals actually showed a strong sense of Constructivist Leadership (n=0.24). The Superintendent gave details on how the entire administrative team does a book study each year, and the process involved making meaning of new ideas together (Fullan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2002; Leiker & Campos, 2016). School District X also financially supports a contract with an individual to provide ongoing leadership coaching to all principals. Both principals described humility in taking a position where they did not know everything and had the desire to create environments that built capacity in others and provided space for reflection. Practices related to reciprocal processes for learning are central to Constructivist Leadership (Yildirim & Kaya, 2019; Simons, 2020).

A starting place for School District X to refine hiring practices may be to consider the domains of practices and Personal Leadership Resources as defined by Leithwood et al., (2019). School District X could ask how do we want our school leaders to Set Directions, Build Relationships and Develop People, Develop the Organization to Support Desired Practices, and Improve the Instructional Program? What are the Personal Leadership Resources that school leaders will need to carry out the practices within our district? By establishing desired leadership qualities within these domains, School District X could then craft job descriptions and interview questions that aligned to these outcomes.

Connections to Student Achievement

Although School District X is classified as an underperforming district in California, they were making gains in achievement on SBAC ELA before the COVID pandemic. When comparing School District X to similar school districts in California (only three existed), School District X outperformed these districts in ELA with Hispanic students, RFEP students, and SED

students (Table 5 and Table 6). School District X outperformed two of the three similar districts with EL students. When comparing School District X to the district's county, they outperformed the county with Hispanic students, EL students, RFEP students and SED Hispanic students. School District X also outperformed California with EL students and RFEP students. Although this study does not make correlational claims, attention to leadership may play a role in achievement within School District X.

Effective leaders carry out traits, behaviors, and skills that lead to increased student achievement (Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2019; Waters et al., 2004). In leadership research these are known as domains of practice and leadership resources (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2019). There is evidence to suggest that School District X places importance on leadership and growing leaders, with more attention given to domains of practice involving the improvement of the instructional program and development of the organization to support desired practices (Leithwood et al., 2019). This may have contributed to student achievement. School District X outperformed similar school districts, the county of residence, and the state in some areas on the SBAC. RFEP students in School District X outperformed all similar school districts, the county of residence, and California by the greatest margin. Between 9.06 and 20.72 percent greater number of RFEP students met or exceeded standards in ELA on the SBAC (Table 5). The process of English Learners becoming designated as Reclassified Fluent English Proficient and performing well on state standards requires consistent attention to the instructional practices across K-12, a growth mindset, and using leadership teams to focus on English Learners over time (Movit, Petrykowska, and Woodruff, 2010). The Superintendent of School District X described using a shared leadership process with district administration, site administration, teachers, other staff, and the community in creating knowledge about English

Learners and how to best serve their needs. Furthermore, the long-term commitment of growing the capacity of the leadership team through annual book studies and funding professional coaching demonstrates the commitment School District X has to developing the Personal Leadership Resources of administrators. This may be a window into the successes School District X has had with English Learners and RFEP students.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is limited by one school district from one region in the state of California and therefore results should not be applied to other contexts. The sample only included one superintendent, six principals, and two assistant principals and thus drawing conclusions on a larger scale within the educational system is not feasible. Speculation that this study's results would be similar to another school district should be avoided. Additionally, the focus of the study was on perspectives of leadership from school and district leaders. A broader scope of participants within the district including certificated and classified personnel, parents and students, may have given more insight into the function of leadership within the district.

In addition to, the nature of creating a qualitative codebook to use as a tool for making judgements and inferences about how the data fit within a leadership theme is the interpretation of one researcher within one study. The leadership construct is complex with all leadership theories influenced by previous theories. Therefore, to make the claim that a unit of data fits within a leadership theme must also recognize this is limited by influences amongst the themes and biases of the researcher when applying the framework of Personal Leadership Resources.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study raise questions that merit further research. Extensive research exists on leadership practices within schools. Hiring practices of school leaders has recently

gained more attention in the research. However, further research could be designed in developing a continuum from what schools need from leadership to increase student achievement to what hiring practices should be used to find those leaders to how leadership within those leaders is developed and refined to meet students' needs. This calls attention of policy makers to prioritize the hiring of school leaders as a component of school reform.

The data from the interviews of the Superintendent demonstrated placing importance on leadership attributes across multiple themes. Leithwood et al., 2019 identified how effective leadership depends on context and how leaders use Personal Leadership Resources. Although not the purpose of this study, further research could uncover how effective leaders negotiate between the leadership themes and how this addressed during the hiring process. Like many areas in education, a one-size fits all approach may not be the most effective and school leaders may need to develop the skills or aptitude to be able to choose from a repertoire of leadership notions in order to meet the demands of society today and in the future.

Conclusion

The journey of this study stemmed from a need to demonstrate how leadership matters and attention to how we hire school leaders is a vital element of creating the best outcomes for schools. This study sought to expand the knowledge regarding how schools value leadership, how schools place importance on leadership through the hiring process, and how schools implement the most effective hiring practices. School District X provided us with an opportunity to observe leadership and hiring practices from the perceptions and practices of the Superintendent and site administrators. School District X's focus on Traditional Leadership in job descriptions of site administrators did not parallel with job interview questions or perceptions of the administrative team. Also, job interview questions largely focused on Instructional

Leadership yet site administrators and the Superintendent expressed ideas related to Community

of Leaders and Constructivist Leadership. Hiring practices relied on a traditional question and

answer approach and lacked in performance-based assessments. Even though this disconnect

existed, it was apparent that School District X valued leadership, especially instructional and

shared, and leadership may have played a role in areas of student achievement on state

assessments where School District X outperformed similar schools, the county, and the state.

School District X should be commended for their commitment to developing their leaders once

they are hired through establishing the concept of a professional learning community with the

administrative team and ongoing coaching for all site administrators. For School District X, an

important next step would be taking all that they value in leadership and backwards mapping

how to center their hiring practices within the leadership construct of what they value.

The process of reviewing literature and collecting data on School District X allowed my

perceptions of leadership to evolve. When I set on this journey, I thought I would find there were

different types of distinct leaders and leadership styles. Through the review of literature, I began

to understand the complexity of the leadership construct. I observed the influences of the

historical context on the development of leadership themes through the work of Lambert et al.,

(2002). The classification of Personal Leadership Resources allowed for consideration of deeper

understanding of leadership traits (Leithwood, et al., 2019). The development of leadership

domains by Grissom, Egalite, and Lindsay (2021) provided understanding of the areas that call

for leadership practices. Even though I had these pieces of information and I initialized my study

using the framework of Lambert et al., (2002) and Leithwood et al., (2019), I was not able to

fully grasp a theoretical framework until I conducted the data collection and analysis. Through

my research, I began conceptualizing how these key research studies could assemble into a concentric notion of leadership in school administration.

There exist many contexts within a school (e.g., political, interests). In order to effectively manage the various contexts, school leaders must negotiate between different Leadership Domains, Instructional Interactions, Building Climate, Professional Learning, and Managing Resources (Grissom, et al., 2001). In doing so, school leaders employ Personal Resources (Social, Cognitive, and Psychological) (Leithwood, 2019). These Personal Resources are influenced by the ideologies of the Leadership Themes (Lambert, 2005) either consciously by means of professional learning or unconsciously by experiences over time. Figure 1 shown below provides a visual of the framework I used in understanding how School District X attended to leadership. The school leader constructs meaning through the Leadership Domains by considering the context and applying Personal Leadership Resources developed within the context of Leadership Themes. School Districts could use Figure 1 to understand how to develop their hiring practices when the complexity of leadership is placed at the forefront of those practices. For example, a proposed interview question could ask the applicant to write an outline for a staff meeting that addresses resolving a financial concern over departmental expenditures by applying shared leadership techniques. The response by the applicant would enable the hiring committee to evaluate the applicant's understanding of how to create an opportunity for professional learning (Leadership Domain), balance needs and interests of departments with the needs of financial resources (Contexts), how to engage stakeholders in the decision-making process (Community of Leaders), and how the applicant may use their own Personal Leadership Resources to develop and administer an effective staff meeting. Creating hiring processes such as

described beforehand is an arduous task. However, leadership matters to the success of our

schools and the achievement of our students, so the benefits outweigh the devotion of time.

Figure 1

Leadership Conceptual Flow
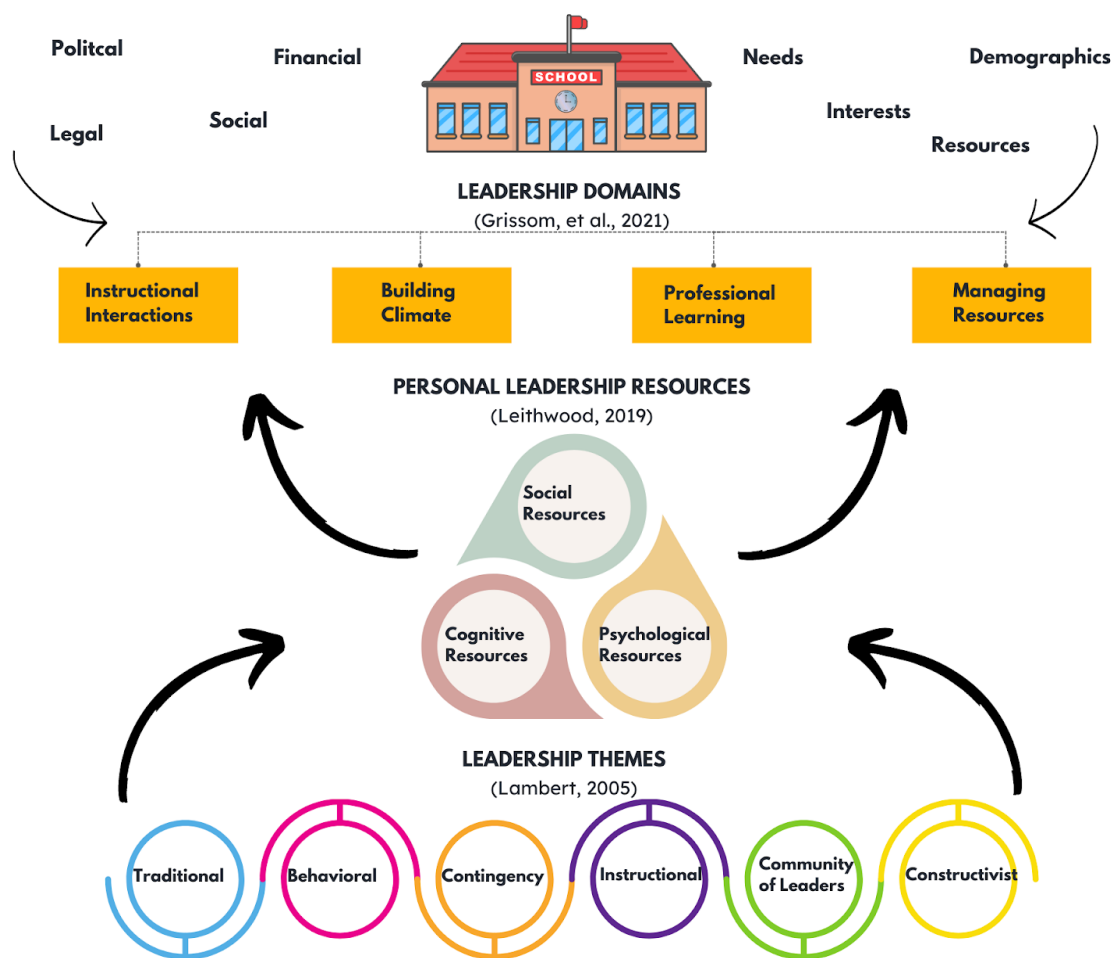
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Appendix A: Interview Questions of the Superintendent

1. Briefly describe your background in education.

2. What is your role in the hiring of school principals?

3. What are the key leadership qualities or practices you look for when hiring a principal?

4. How do you see that these key leadership qualities align with student achievement?

5. How does your hiring process enable you to ascertain the strength of this practice in the candidates?

6. Describe the steps a candidate would move through in order to be hired as a principal. Are there elements of this process that needs revision?

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? What is your reasoning?

   a. The leader serves to maintain tradition.

   b. Leaders are directive in achieving organizational goals.

   c. Leaderships is a reciprocal process.

   d. A leader emphasizes language as a means of shaping school culture and vision.

Appendix B: Survey of Site Administrators

1. Enter the code provided in the email you received

2. What are all the education roles/jobs you have had? Check all that apply.

3. Number of years in your current position. Include current year as a full year.

4. Number of total years worked as a school site administrator. Include current year as a full year.

5. Number of total years worked in education. Include current year as a full year.

6. Read the following statements. If agree or strongly agree that the hiring committee placed importance on this, provide additional information on how the hiring process placed importance on this notion of leadership

Traditional Theme

The leader serves to maintain tradition.
The leader has complete authority over decision making.

Behavioral Theme

The role of the leader is to shape human behavior to match organizational aims.
Leaders use rewards and sanctions to achieve desired behaviors in employees.

Contingency/Situational Theme

Leadership is differentiated based upon maturity level or work style of the employee.
Leaders are directive in achieving organizational goals.

Instructional Theme

Leaders directly participate with instructional functions.
Leaders serve as a visible presence.

Community of Leaders Theme

Leadership is a shared process.
A leader promotes continuous improvement.

Constructivist Theme

Leadership is a reciprocal process.
A leader emphasizes language as a means for shaping school culture and vision.

Appendix C: Interview Questions of Principals

1. Briefly describe your background in education.

2. What are the key leadership qualities you practice?

3. Are these leadership qualities you had at the start of your career in administration or were they developed over time? Explain.

4. How do you see that these key leadership qualities align with student achievement?

5. When you were hired for this position, how did the hiring committee uncover the type of leader that you would be?

6. Have you had the opportunity to hire assistant principals? If so, how were you able to ascertain they may have the leadership qualities you were seeking?

Appendix D: Consent Form for Superintendent

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled "Consideration of Leadership When Hiring Principals." I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is being led by Veronica Tigert, a doctoral student at University of the Pacific. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. Rachelle Hackett, University of the Pacific.

What the study is about
The purpose of this research is to assess the hiring practices of a high achieving, high poverty and ethnically diverse school district to determine how leadership qualities are considered when hiring school principals.

What we will ask you to do
I will ask you to complete a survey that will take approximately thirty minutes.

Risks and discomforts
In simple, non-scientific language, describe any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts:
- Legal risks: I am a mandated reporter and must report any information regarding suspected child abuse.
- Physical risks: There are no known physical risks.
- Social or economic risks: There is minimal risk due to loss of confidentiality.
- Emotional risks: There are no known emotional risks.

Benefits
Although the survey process may have a possible indirect benefit that comes from reflection on one's practices and beliefs that lead to a better understanding, there are no personally direct benefits from participating in this study. Information in this study may benefit the larger education community as I hope to learn more regarding the attention given to school leadership within a district.

Compensation for participation
Participants will each be given a $5 Starbucks gift card.

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security
I will protect the participant's privacy and/or confidentiality by doing the following.
- Signed consent forms will be kept separate from research data in a locked cabinet.
- In research data, you will be identified with a label and the key will be kept separate from research data in a locked cabinet.
- Email correspondence will be printed and kept in a locked cabinet separate from research data. Emails will be deleted after read and printed.

Please note that the survey is being conducted with the help of Survey Monkey, a company not affiliated with University of the Pacific and with its own privacy and security policies that you can find at its website. *I anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet.*

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. I cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance educational practices. I will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information I share. Despite these measures, I cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Taking part is voluntary
Participating in the study is voluntary, you may refuse to participate or discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable.

Follow up studies
I may contact you again to request your participation in a follow up study. As always, your participation will be voluntary and I will ask for your explicit consent to participate in any of the follow up studies.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Veronica Tigert, a doctoral student at University of the Pacific. If you have questions, you may at any time contact Veronica Tigert at v_tigert@u.pacific.edu or at (209) 981-8831.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study. I understand this consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

Your Signature   Date
Your Name (printed)

Signature of person obtaining consent   Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent

Appendix E: Consent Form for Interviews

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled "Consideration of Leadership When Hiring Principals." I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is being led by Veronica Tigert, a doctoral student at University of the Pacific. The Faculty Advisor for this study is Dr. Rachelle Hackett, University of the Pacific.

What the study is about
The purpose of this research is to assess the hiring practices of a high achieving, high poverty and ethnically diverse school district to determine how leadership qualities are considered when hiring school principals.

What we will ask you to do
I will ask you to participate in a virtual interview with me. The interview will take approximately forty-five minutes.

Risks and discomforts
In simple, non-scientific language, describe any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts:
- Legal risks: I am a mandated reporter and must report any information regarding suspected child abuse.
- Physical risks: There are no known physical risks.
- Social or economic risks: There is minimal risk due to loss of confidentiality.
- Emotional risks: There are no known emotional risks.

Benefits
Although the interview process may have the possible indirect benefit that comes from reflection on one's practices and beliefs that lead to a better understanding, there are no personally direct benefits from participating in this study. Information in this study may benefit the larger education community as I hope to learn more attention given to school leadership within a district.

Compensation for participation
Interviewees will each be given a $10 Starbucks gift card.

Audio Recording
The virtual meeting will be audio recorded, transcribed, and may be transcribed using a third party. The audio recording will be destroyed once the dissertation is approved.
Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.
- I do not want to have this interview recorded.
- I am willing to have this interview recorded:

  Signed:

  Date:

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security
I will protect the participant's privacy and/or confidentiality by doing the following.
- Signed consent forms will be kept separate from research data in a locked cabinet.
- In research data, you will be identified with a label.
- Email correspondence will be printed and kept in a locked cabinet separate from research data. Emails will be deleted after read and printed.

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. I cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance educational practices. I will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information I share. Despite these measures, I cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Taking part is voluntary
Participating in the study is voluntary, you may refuse to participate or discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable.

Follow up studies
I may contact you again to request your participation in a follow up study. As always, your participation will be voluntary and I will ask for your explicit consent to participate in any of the follow up studies.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Veronica Tigert, a doctoral student at University of the Pacific. at Cornell University. If you have questions, you may at any time contact Veronica Tigert at v_tigert@u.pacific.edu or at (209) 981-8831.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study. I understand this consent form will be kept by the researcher for five years beyond the end of the study.

Your Signature   Date
Your Name (printed)

Signature of person obtaining consent   Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent

Appendix F: **Research Questions and Connections to Literature, Data, and Analysis**

Research Question	Connection to Literature	Data Sources	Data Analysis
RQ 1: What are the hiring practices used to inform the selection of site administrators by a school district serving a high percentage of ethnically diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?	Anderson, 1991; Ash et al., 2013; Atherton, 2018; Blackmore et al., 2006; Gates et al., 2019; Hassenpflug, 2013; Palmer, 2016; Palmer & Mullooly, 2015; Spanneut, 2007; Walker & Kwan, 2012	• Job Description • Sample Interview Questions • Interview of Superintendent	Qualitative: Practices will be analyzed in relationship to best practices for hiring according to research.
RQ 2: How did the hiring practices include assessment of leadership practices as defined by research on school leadership?	Gates et al., 2019; Grissom et al., 2021; Lambert, et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2019; Rammer, 2007; Waters, et al., 2004	• Interview of Superintendent • Interviews of principals • Narrative responses on survey	Qualitative: Narrative responses will be coded and unitized.
RQ 3: What are the perceptions of site administrators regarding how leadership practices were assessed during their own hiring process?	Gates et al., 2019; Grissom et al., 2021; Lambert, et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2019; Waters, et al., 2004	• Survey completed by all principals • -4 pt. Likert Scale • Narrative responses on survey • Interviews of principals	Quantitative: Data will yield number of times the principal agrees or disagrees to leadership statements. Calculations will be conducted of percentage of responses in each theme according to level of agreement. Qualitative: Narrative responses will be coded and unitized.