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Secondary School Administrators Coping with Overcrowded Classrooms Using Transformational Leadership Strategies

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Abstract

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by

Daryl Keith Anderson

MEd, Johns Hopkins University, 2006

BS, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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December 2021

Abstract

In a school district in the northeast United States, secondary schools are continuing to grow in the number of students enrolling compared to the previous 10 years. The problem is school administrators are challenged to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in three local secondary schools. The conceptual framework used in this study was based on the James M. Burns' transformational leadership theory, which focuses on four components of leadership: intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influences, and individualized consideration. In order to understand how school administrators used transformational leadership to support overcrowded classrooms through specific practices, processes, and procedures, a basic qualitative methodology was applied and data were collected through one-on-one virtual interviews. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 10 participants, who all served as school administrators. The data collected from participants were analyzed using a priori and open coding, as well as thematic analysis. Key findings were: (a)The ability to respond to the needs of students and staff was a critical transformational leadership practice for supporting overcrowded classrooms; (b) Modeling expectations, behaviors, and outcomes were essential practices when providing support; (c) Encouraging creativity and autonomy from staff members in an overcrowded classroom was a strategy referenced by several participants and; (d) Acknowledging followers through praise was integral needed to support teachers in overcrowded classrooms. The findings of this study may promote positive social change by informing school leaders and other stakeholders about ways to provide students in overcrowded classrooms with a quality education.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Flossie Davis, who has earned her wings in heaven. A woman who understood family always looks out for family. The woman who took me in at the most vulnerable stages of a Black boy's life and held me tight and guided me through my adolescent and teenage years.

I also want to dedicate this accomplishment to my children: Kayla Anderson, Kobe Anderson, Kelsi Anderson, Kameron Anderson, and Sydney Rae. Fatherhood is my greatest accomplishment and I intended to expose you to all the endless possibilities the world has to offer.

Completing my doctoral studies would not have been possible without the continuous support and encouragement of my amazing colleagues: Dr. Tarsha Graves, Dr. Toni Brooks, Ms. Diane Winkler, Dr. Donnie Johnson, and Dr. Toni Woodlon.

I would like to thank my aunt, Delores Jordan, who worked hard to instill a work ethic and spiritual understanding of the world that was to become.

I would like to thank my uncle, Jaibe Sivadel, who is no longer here, but who has earned his wings in heaven. My uncle inspired me to dream big and aspire to reach my goals in life and to continue to be a lifelong learner. I would like to thank my mother, Francine King, and my father, James William Anderson, for being so different and creating the balanced man I've become.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the 2019-2020 school year, a northeastern school district's enrollment increased by 4,000 students, the most substantial single-year increase in over a decade. Current figures reflect a 7-year growth trend from 2012-2013 to an estimate of over 130,000 students, which is an increase of over 12,000 students. The increase in enrollment has caused class sizes to increase from an estimated 22 students to 30 students per class. In contrast, a report stated that the average class was 18.75 high school students per class.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (1999), overcrowding exists when the number of students enrolled in the school is greater than the number of students the school is projected to accommodate (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). The NCES suggests that overcrowded classrooms may contribute to the schools' erosion and places challenges on parents, teachers, and administrators. For example, overcrowded schools do not allow school administrators to build meaningful relationships with students because of their numbers (Sowell, 2019). Furthermore, school administrators are challenged to manage students in environments that may not meet the physical space conducive for learning (van Merriënboer et al., 2017). Moreover, overpopulated schools were twice as likely to have at least one building in deficient conditions than schools under their capacity limits (Ed.gov, 2020).

Researchers found evidence of a significant difference in student achievement scores between students in buildings identified as being in good condition versus in poor (Hewitt, 2017). Conversely, some researchers have suggested that the number of student

achievement scores in good and poor buildings is insignificant (Earthman, 2018). However, this may not indicate there is no relationship between school building conditions and student performance. It merely means that their data did not show any significant differences in student scores because of methodological differences (Nhlapo, 2020). Most significant to this study, Nhlapo (2020) found that the intricate knowledge administrators had about the school building's condition far exceeded anyone else in the district. While it has yet to be determined how overcrowded schools impact students' academic performance, the research points to school leadership as a significant factor in overcoming overcrowded conditions.

A northeastern school district is experiencing overcrowded schools and has embraced transformational leadership strategies for the last 10 years. This study provides insight from secondary school administrators on how they use their transformational leadership practices to support classrooms that have reached or exceed capacity. As the U.S. population continues to grow, there is a need to understand how school administrators support overcrowded classrooms. According to the state rate capacity and the district's preferred utilization guidelines, secondary schools in the northern region expect to eclipse the student capacity limits within the next 5 years (Interagency Commission on School Construction, 2019). In spite of issues associated with overcrowded classrooms, ensuring that students have an opportunity to a quality education is necessary for social change. Social change occurs when all stakeholders and decision-makers promote equitable practices across all social ethnicities, gender, and races regardless of their social economic status. This study could affect social change on

the implications of overcrowded classrooms. Subsequently, the problem statement, research questions, and the study's purpose were aligned to examine this phenomenon in a basic qualitative study.

Background

As of 2013, public schools employed over 250,000 fewer people than before the recession of 2008–09, while enrollment had surged by 800,000 and class sizes in many schools are at record highs (Rich, 2013). According to Schäfer et al. (2020), overcrowded classrooms play a role in teacher stress. Teacher self-efficacy and collective teacher efficacy are significant factors associated with student achievement, positive student outcomes, and constructive organizational changes. The importance of teachers' beliefs about their abilities to collectively and individually impact student achievement is a critical component in significant school change (Thorton et al., 2020). Providing teachers with class sizes that allow them to give the students a high-quality education may motivate teachers to go above and beyond when working in conditions that benefit both the students and the teacher (Thorton et al., 2020). Researchers generally agree a class size averaging 18 students is ideal for producing the desired benefit (Thorton et al., 2020). Smaller class sizes have numerous potential benefits, such as individualized instruction, better classroom management, engaging class discussions, and small-group work opportunities (Filges et al., 2018). Students receive more individualized instruction and feedback when there are fewer students in the class and they do not have to compete for the teacher's attention (Filges et al., 2018). Crowded classrooms have occurred due an increase in student enrollment and less teachers employed, which leads school

administrators providing support and/or implementing strategies to offset the impact of overcrowded classrooms.

Teachers look to school administration as a means of leadership support and guidance when managing overcrowded classrooms. It is essential that school administrators provide teachers with strategies to create a positive learning environment for students despite obstacles such as overcrowded classrooms (Batiste et al., 2015). According to Özdemir et al. (2020), administrators' instructional leadership actions significantly impact teacher motivation, interest in student achievement, and their self-evaluation. Teachers who perceived administrators as holding high expectations and providing intellectual stimulation believed they could successfully perform their teaching duties with fidelity (Batiste et al., 2015). Consequently, teachers are continually examining the behaviors of the administrators that support them. Teachers follow leaders who understand and recognize the teacher's perspective, creating value in roles, and modeling collegial equality with staff (Plichta, 2018). Valued leaders that are supportive, create mutual respect, trustworthy, display genuine concern, collaborate, and provide encouragement could meet the challenges of overcrowded schools (Plichta, 2018). To this end, administrators at the northeastern school district considered in this study have adopted the transformational leadership dimensions to support their overcrowded schools.

For decades, evidence has continued to mount that school leadership has a significant impact on student outcomes, second only to teachers' influence in the classroom (Dolph, 2017; Hutton, 2018). Transformational leadership is a leadership style that can galvanize and promote positive change in those who follow by arousing their

motivation and interest to achieve a joint goal (Berkovich, 2016). Transformational leaders focus on humanistic values while turning their followers into leaders (Dolph, 2017; Hutton, 2018). Leaders that are admired, respected, and trusted are the leaders that most people want to emulate (Perreault et al., 2020). According to Polatcan (2020), productive leaders are the individuals who are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and support the team in any facet regardless of the task at hand.

Problem Statement

A large urban school district in the northeastern United States is experiencing overcrowded schools. The problem is school administrators are challenged to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in three local secondary schools. In the 2019-2020 school year, the local enrollment increased by 4,000 students, the most substantial single-year increase in over a decade. Current figures reflect a 7-year growth trend of an estimated 130,000 students, which is an increase of over 12,000 students. The increase in enrollment has caused class sizes to increase from an estimated 22 students to 30 students per class. Classroom sizes have continued to increase while school administrators are left trying to devise effective strategies to improve achievement. In reviewing the literature, several studies have yielded the disadvantages of school overcrowding. Another study confirmed that overcrowded classrooms hinder the teachers' ability to use modern teaching methods (Strogilos et al., 2017). Khan and Iqbal (2012) noted that when classes are overcrowded, students cannot have dedicated one-on-one time with their teachers, causing academic achievement

deterioration. The study examined the challenges of implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the challenges of school administrators in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms in three northeastern secondary schools. School administrators play a pivotal role in providing support to students and teachers despite encountering overcrowding conditions. The board of education at the state level and the local district have continued to provide school administrators with intense leadership training. Notwithstanding, the number of students enrolling in these secondary schools made these classes challenging to manage. The study used a basic qualitative research method to address the problem. Interviews were conducted with 10 school administrators to examine the challenges in implementing transformational leadership strategies used to support secondary school overcrowding.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study was posed to address the problem that school administrators are challenged to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in three local secondary schools. The school district at the center of this study adopted transformational leadership as a framework for administrators to implement. The following research question guided the research process to learn more about the ways used transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms:

Research Question (RQ): How do school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms?

Conceptual Framework

Burn's (1978) transformational leadership serves as the conceptual framework for this qualitative study. Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. I conducted one on one interviews with 10 school administrators to collect data in a large northeastern school district with crowded classrooms. The qualitative method was appropriate in acquiring pertinent data to understand further the transformational leadership practices used by school leaders. The central focus was transformational leadership practices used by the secondary school administrators to support overcrowded classrooms.

Nature of the Study

This was a basic qualitative research study on secondary school administrators' challenges in implementing transformational leadership to support overcrowded schools. Researchers have found that school administrators play an instrumental part in all students' academic success (James et al., 2017). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), qualitative research addresses the "how" and "why." A qualitative study allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of experiences, phenomena, and context. It also enables the ability to ask questions that cannot be easily put into a numerical form to better understand the human experience. Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that qualitative researchers view participants as specialist in their field. Utilizing the professional experience of each participant, data is collected and analyzed to generate an

understanding of its relationship to the phenomena. The qualitative interview approach is best suited for this study because the transformational leadership practices may create new knowledge of how school administrators support overcrowded schools (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The basic qualitative study can contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying the school administrator's strategies and thought processes in addressing overcrowded conditions in the schoolhouse. I conducted one-on-one interviews with 10 school administrators to collect data in a large northeastern school district with crowded classrooms. This investigative method was appropriate in acquiring pertinent data to understand further the transformational leadership practices used by school leaders to address overcrowded classrooms.

Definitions

This section represents a listing of terms that are used in the educational community.

Idealized influence is the dimension in transformational leaders who present in ways that result in their being models for their followers (Bush, 2017).

Individualized consideration is a transformational leadership dimension that stresses a leaders devotion to the needs of followers, serves as a mentor to the followere, and listens to the follower's concerns (Bush, 2017).

Inspirational motivation is the dimension in transformational in which a leader communicates an appealing vision that inspires and motivates others to exceed expectations (Bush, 2017).

Intellectual stimulation is the dimension in transformational leadership of a leader who encourages innovation and creativity, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving (Bush, 2017).

Overcrowded schools exist when the number of students enrolled in the school is greater than the number of students the school is constructed to accommodate (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999)

Transformational leadership is a leadership theory where a leader works with teams to identify needed change, creates a vision to guide the growth through inspiration, and executes the change in tandem with committed members of a group.

Assumptions

During this basic qualitative study, I gathered information on principals' practices related to school administrators' transformational leadership practices. An assumption was that all 10 participants who participated in the study provided me with genuine unbiased responses to the research questions. Another assumption was that the participants did not meet to discuss the study's interview questions while working in the same district. This assumption was vital because the study's nature was to acquire information based on their personal experiences as a school administrator, not on fellow colleagues' points of view. The goal was to ascertain knowledge about principals' behaviors regarding supporting teachers in overcrowded classrooms in three northeastern secondary schools.

In 2015, the state board of education in collaboration with stakeholders developed a rubric to support school administrators evaluations. The rubric was designed to inform

professional learning experiences for school administrators that enhanced their professional practices by identifying strengths and challenges for improvement in each standard. The rubric includes clear expectations of a highly effective, effective, developing, and in-effective school leaders. Those standards were developed incorporating the four dimensions of transformational leadership. Thus, school administrators are challenged to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in three local secondary schools.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was limited to three secondary schools in the northeastern region of the United States. Middle and high school administrators working in with overcrowded classrooms were invited to participate in the study. For this study, 10 secondary school administrators of various backgrounds, ages, ethnicities, and genders were purposely selected based on their years of experience and leadership practices. When addressing transferability, it is the function of the reader to determine if the results of the study may apply to similar situations. For example, readers or researchers looking to obtain information on how secondary school administrators support overcrowded classrooms using transformational leadership practices may look at their current school districts data and determine whether the strategies used by secondary school administrators in the district in this study could be replicated and support their district.

This qualitative study's scope went directly to exploring how school administrators implement transitional leadership practices that support overcrowded schools. This study's conceptual framework focused on transformational leadership

theory (Burns, 1978), and how administrators implement the dimensions associated with this leadership strategy.

Limitations

Although this study can benefit school administrators, teachers, students, and central office staff, this study has limitations. One such limitation is that this study was conducted during a global pandemic. Also, interviews occured through an electronic platform, making it difficult to place the participants at ease throughout the interview. During the pandemic, in-person learning was suspended, eliminating the spatial overcrowding issue. However, schools returned to in-person learning and classrooms were, once again, overcrowded.

Significance

This study examined the school administrators' challenges in implementing transformational leadership to support overcrowded secondary schools. The study's results could be used to identify possible modifications to address how school administrators address overcrowding in their schools. Additionally, the findings from this study could provide school administrators with insight and potential solutions to support overcrowded classrooms. Most importantly, this research could inform school leaders and decision makers about leadership strategies that should be employed when ensuring that students are placed in the most productive environments to succeed.

Summary

The projections for student population growth are that the number of students who enroll in schools in the U.S. will continue to increase while the construction of new

schools remains stagnant. It is essential that school leaders are prepared to embrace all students and provide them with a quality education, despite factors beyond their control, such as school construction. The purpose of this study was to examine how school administrators in a northeastern school district implemented transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded schools.

Research has shown that school administrators are the second most influential element in students' academic success (Mavrogordato & White, 2019). As students continue to move into school districts, school leaders must be prepared to embrace them and provide them with a quality education. The purpose of this study was to explore how school administrators were implementing transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded schools. Research has shown that school administrators play a vital part in influencing student academic success (Dolph, 2017; Hutton, 2018).

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study, the problem statement, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, the study's significance, assumptions, and study limitations. The conceptual framework, based on Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory, is aligned with the research topic. In Chapter 1, I addressed the study's assumptions and expectations that the participants' responses were detailed and authentic. Definitions of key terms were also incorporated in the chapter, as well as the assumptions and limitations of the study. In Chapter 2, I will present a review of literature on the components of transformational leadership and the dynamics surrounding overcrowded classrooms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In reviewing the literature, several studies have yielded the disadvantages of school overcrowding. One study confirmed that overcrowded classrooms hinder the teachers' ability to use modern teaching methods (Strogilos et al., 2017). Khan and Iqbal (2012) noted that when classes are overcrowded, students cannot have dedicated one-on-one time with their teachers, causing academic achievement deterioration. Overpopulated schools and classrooms adversely affect the delivery of instructional practices within the class, which results in a lack of understanding, infrequent hands-on activities, all of which ultimately lead to increased dropout rates, lack of student engagement, and the spread of disciplinary issues throughout the school (Alrabai, 2016).

A large urban school district in northeastern United States is experiencing overcrowded schools. The problem is school administrators are challenged to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in the school district's three local secondary schools. Research has been inconclusive in the evidence of crowded classrooms on student achievement in secondary schools. The purpose of this study was to explore the transformational leadership practices school administrators have used to address overcrowded classrooms. In conducting the literature review, I examined previous studies' findings as they pertain to the questions posed by current research. The critical analysis of the information contributed to the knowledge concerning secondary school administrators' use of transformational leadership practices and overcrowded classes.

According to Ayu (2019), overcrowded school classrooms create many obstacles for present-day school districts. However, the teacher shortage in the United States leaves school systems with no choice but to increase class sizes (Tran et al., 2020). The larger classrooms sizes do not allow teachers to provide the necessary one-to-one feedback needed for struggling students (Wadesango et al., 2016). Larger class sizes also make it difficult for teachers to work in smaller cooperative groups (Wadesango et al., 2016). Furthermore, student discipline may become a concern when students lack personal space leading to personal conflicts and classroom disruption (West & Meier, 2020). The noise level in classrooms that exceed capacity can also create distractions that are not conducive to learning.

Transformational leaders inspire employees in ways that go beyond rewards and personal accolades. This type of leadership style challenges and encourages employees to take risks and solicit team members' input and ideas. As classroom sizes continue to increase, innovative ideas from present and future research will be necessary to support these overcrowded classrooms.

Literature Search Strategy

I obtained the literature for this study through the Walden University library. To explore peer-reviewed articles, I used search engines such as Sage, Google Scholar, and Eric with an emphasis on articles written in the last 5 years. Key terms used during the search *were* transformational leadership, secondary schools, overcrowded classrooms, overcrowded schools, school facilities, and student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

Dutta and Sahney (2016) identified school leadership as a critical component of student achievement. Transformational leadership is regarded as one of the most effective leadership styles of recent times (Bush, 2017; Gumus et al., 2016). In 2005, the board of education for the state where this study was conducted adopted the transformational leadership framework in an effort to build the content capacity of present and future school leaders, thereby increasing student achievement. The transformational leadership theory served as the conceptual framework for this study.

Quality leadership and a positive school climate are essential to the success of every school administrator, student, and school (McCarley et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is considered one of the most renowned leadership styles in education (Bush, 2017; Gumus et al., 2016). Transformational leadership focuses on human relationships in an organizational structure (King & Vaiman, 2019). Transformational leaders participate in practices that motivate, encourage, and inspire teachers to perform at their highest level (Berkovich, 2016). Leaders of flourishing schools overcome obstacles and stay focused on specific actions that afford student success. Transformational leaders build and develop teams, encouraging individuals to put their full talents on display while working in the group's best interest to achieve common goals (Thomas et al., 2020).

While there have been numerous research studies on transformational leadership, minimal research has been conducted on how transformational leadership practices in schools influence overcrowded classrooms. Although many leadership styles are practiced, a northeastern school district has adopted transformational leadership strategies

to be used by all campus administrators. In 1978, James M. Burns introduced transformational leadership theory to describe the ways leaders may build capacity in subordinates by inspiring them to achieve at the highest level by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Anderson (2017) outlined this process by instituting the four components of intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized ocnsideration, and idealized influence. Using the four components, school administrators may work with teams to identify needed change, while creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration and executing the change in tandem with committed members of a group (Berkovich, 2016).

In this study, participants were asked to reflect on the four dimensions of transformational leadership and discuss how they incorporate those practices to support overcrowded classrooms. *Idealized influence* is the dimension in transformational leaders who present in ways that result in them being models for their followers (Bush, 2017). *Individualized consideration* is a transformational leadership dimension that stresses a leader's devotion to fulfilling the needs of followers, serving as a mentor to the followers, and listening to the follower's concerns (Bush, 2017). *Inspirational motivation* is the dimension in transformational leadership which describes a the ways a leader communicates an appealing vision that inspires and motivates others to exceed expectations (Bush, 2017). *Intellectual stimulation* is the dimension in transformational leadership of a leader who encourages innovation and creativity, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving (Bush, 2017).

In 2005, a northeastern state's board of education adopted the transformational leadership framework in an effort to build the content capacity of present and future school leaders, thereby, increasing student achievement. In 2015, the state board revised the framework and created standards for how school administrators' performance will be measured based on standards derived from the transformational leadership dimensions. Meanwhile, in a local district in that state, enrollment has been growing steadily. In the 2019-2020 school year, the enrollment increased by 4,000 students, the most substantial single-year increase in over a decade. Current figures reflect a 7-year growth trend from 2012-2013 in which the district is estimated at over 130,000 students, which is an increase of over 12,000 students. The increase in enrollment has caused class sizes to increase from an estimated 22 students to 30 students per class. Classroom sizes have continued to increase while school administrators are left trying to devise effective strategies to continue to improve achievement (Ahmad et al., 2018). In this study, I examined the challenges of implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms.

The adverse effects of large class sizes appear to matter most in higher grades, which is also when schools are highly populated (Egalite & Kisida, 2016). Overcrowding is the root cause of failed schools and teacher dissatisfaction (Whitehurst, 2020). Overcrowded secondary schools are a problem prevailing in our country. One thing is evident in such an environment: effective teaching is difficult (Khan & Iqbal, 2012). A school is considered overcrowded when enrollment is equal to or exceeds 80% of its permanent capacity. This definition has been used consistently by school districts for

almost 30 years with few modifications. Though, some have argued that overcrowding may be arbitrary (Banisakher & McCauley, 2017). Notwithstanding, the challenge of implementing transformational leadership strategies when classrooms are overcrowded was the basis of this exploration.

Alignment in a qualitative research study allows the fact finders and readers the opportunity to follow the research from start to finish. The study's alignment began with the identification of a problem deserving of doctoral research. As I conducted this study, the conceptual framework was used to examine the relationship between transformational leadership practices and how they were used to support overcrowded school classrooms. This research should prove useful as the U.S. population continues to grow, and administrators are continuously charged with supporting classrooms that exceed capacity.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

The literature review is an essential element in conducting a qualitative research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The literature reviews involves the gathering of information from books, scholarly articles, and other sources relevant to an area of research or theory. Additional original documents such as diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, records, eyewitness accounts, autobiographies compromise a literature review (Frederiksen & Phelps, n.d.). The academic review provides a narrative, synopsis, and critical assessment of these works as they ascribe to the research problem investigated.

Crafting a systematic approach to school management is one of the requirements for an effective school leader in the 21st century (Storey, 2004). Past and current research

suggest that the solution to overcrowded classrooms is to build new schools (Welsh et. al, 2012). However, building new schools in an underfunded community takes an extended amount of time (Hinojosa, 2019). Therefore, students who are currently enrolled in a school would not immediately benefit from smaller classrooms. Other researchers suggest all year-round schools and flexible scheduling will simultaneously mitigate the number of students in the building at the same time. Leaders of educational institutions are expected to create an environment and atmosphere where educators can work more efficiently. High-quality education does not solely consist of sufficient instruction and supplies, but a stable classroom environment where students feel safe, supported and valued (Rönnlund et al, 2020). However, the role of leadership has not directly been researched as it relates to supporting overcrowded classrooms.

Overcrowded Classrooms

The literature used in this study included research about overcrowded classrooms from the historical and current perspectives. The books and scholarly articles reviewed revealed a need for future research. This academic review defined overcrowded classrooms and their impact on teacher efficacy. Previous research suggested that overcrowded classrooms have little effect on student achievement. Conversely, other literature presented suggests that crowded classrooms impede student success. As school enrollment continues to grow across our country, it is evident that class sizes will continue to expand. Overall, public school enrollment rose 29 percent, from 39.4 million to 50.7 million, between 1985 and 2018 (Ed.gov, 2020). The rise in enrollment has been a concern for parents, teachers, and school administrators for quite some time.

Shin and Chung (2009), conducted a meta-analysis to review the determine if there was a correlation between class size and student achievement. The findings concluded that class reduction had a positive effect on a secondary student except for 10th grade. Additionally, according to Fatima et al. (2019), overcrowded classrooms pose a problem in discipline, volume, assessing student understanding, student engagement, management, and movement. Teachers are expected to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses and teach them at challenging levels, including teaching students at a functional level for low performing students (Hall & Woolner, 2010). The ability to provide students with individualized instruction in an overcrowded classroom is challenging.

Robinson (1990) noted that few studies in the scope of class size and student achievement are available; however, his work reveals that smaller class sizes positively affect student achievement. van Merriënboer et. al, (2017) concluded that the lack of physical space inhibited teachers from structuring their students' learning opportunities. Any barriers that prohibit teachers from maximizing learning opportunities are unacceptable, including a surplus of additional students in the class. Mäkelä and Helfenstein (2016), discussed how the educator evaluates their learning environments to determine what pedagogy they will use to deliver a lesson. When faced with overcrowded classrooms, that type of planning and design limits the teachers' opportunity to deliver the most efficient and effective lessons based on their students' needs and learning styles.

According to Kim et al. (2018), a high teacher-student ratio due to overcrowded classrooms is a high school dropout component. The teacher-student ratio is significant

for several reasons. The teacher-student ratio has been used to measure the teachers'

workload and the number of resources allocated for their particular class. Teachers with

class sizes that exceed the average classroom setting become frustrated, and performance

may be affected due to burnout (Bottiani et al., 2019). Teachers with above-average class

sizes are challenged to provide the individualized instruction needed by both her general

and special education students. School administrators are responsible for meeting all

students' social-emotional and academic needs, including students with individualized

education plans (Zarei et al., 2019). Classroom management in secondary schools has

continued to be a barrier for teachers trying to implement the curriculum with fidelity

while meeting the curriculum benchmarks and timelines (Tookes et al., 2020). Teachers

spend an average of one-third of their day addressing discipline concerns in the

classroom. Teachers then reach out to school administrators to support and buffering

student discipline from instruction when all avenues have been exhausted.

Transformational Leadership

Other literature cited indicates that transformational leadership focuses on

developing individuals with selfless skills that support a common goal. This type of

leader may support overcrowded classrooms after understanding that creating more

physical space takes time and planning. While this may be correct, other leadership styles

have yielded comparable results. Transactional leadership, servant leadership, democratic

leadership, autocratic leadership, bureaucratic leadership, and laissez-faire leadership, to

name a few, may all prove useful when used with a particular group of subordinates.

Studies suggest that transformational leaders can transform the people and culture within

an organization (Waruwu et al., 2020). An influential leader creates a culture that positively impacts teachers, impacting students' success (Andriani et al., 2018). Elmore (2000), noted that the school administrator's significant role is to remove non-instructional problems aside to prevent confusion and distractions in schools and classrooms. Supovitz et al. (2010) stated that the position of school administrators is to maintain order. Maintaining order throughout the building reduces the amount of instructional time lost. The school administrator is also responsible for maintaining a smooth-running structure by developing routines and procedures for teachers and students to follow (Lee & Kuo, 2019).

Transformational leaders consider the teachers' needs and explore possible solutions to alleviate any barriers that may infringe upon teaching and learning (Abdullah et al., 2018). Overcrowded classes can be a barrier for teachers in how they deliver instruction. Instituting cooperative learning groups and workstations in classrooms exceeding capacity can be challenging. Grading assignments, entering grades, providing adequate communication with parents may leave a teacher overwhelmed and ineffective. Additional students in the classroom also create a more significant workload for teachers when giving students feedback in a timely fashion. School administrators are challenged with finding solutions that maximize teachers' instructional time and minimize distractions and instructional time lost (Matsepe et al., 2019).

According to Kailasapathy and Jayakody (2018), no single theoretical model will provide school principals with the tools needed to be a successful leader in an anomalous school setting. While transformational leadership is the most prominent style practiced by

leaders, it has its disadvantages (Kailasapathy & Jayakody, 2018). Transformational leaders are great motivators and visionaries, necessary for building capacity in school-based staff. However, those same qualities can be ineffective if the leader is dishonest and egocentric. Transformational leaders process the natural ability to stimulate the minds of their advocates. Nonetheless, inured with authority and credence given to these leaders, there can be moments where leaders can make harsh and abrupt decisions that can be detrimental to the people supporting. While widely used, transformational leadership faces criticism and critique from researchers who have scrutinized the practices and techniques (Kailasapathy & Jayakody, 2018).

Previous studies have suggested that transformational leadership is one of the more favorable and frequently used leadership styles. It has components that have been used in both the educational and business arenas for decades. However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership style, like the others, will continued to be challenged for generations to come.

Summary and Conclusion

In chapter 2, I provided information from literature that highlighted overcrowded schools and transformational leadership. The literature was discussed on how overcrowded school effect teacher efficacy. Additional literature was discussed about whether overcrowded classroom casted a negative effect or no effect on students. Overcrowded classrooms occur when the number of students enrolled in the class is larger than the number of students the classroom is designed to accommodate. What is known is that overcrowded classrooms will continue to exist moving forward, according

to the projections. Further, leadership is the second most important element for student achievement next to good teachers (Jambo & Hongde, 2020). The literature also includes details of transformational leadership and its dimensions and why it is aggrandized over current and past leadership styles. This study was designed to examine how transformational leadership practices support overcrowded classrooms. In chapter 3, I will provide the methods, techniques, and instruments used in this research to collect school administrators' data on how they incorporate transformation leadership practices to support overcrowded classroom settings.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the challenges of school administrators in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms in three northeast secondary schools. In Chapter 3, I present the research methodology and outline the role of the researcher, rationale, and study design. In this basic qualitative research design, I examined how school administrators support overcrowded classrooms using transformational leadership practices. In this chapter, I also addressed trustworthiness as it relates to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The chapter concludes with interview procedures and a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design used for this study was a basic qualitative study design. A qualitative study was selected because it provides the researcher with the most accurate way to record the participants' perspectives, opinions, or experiences in the study. Qualitative research is exploratory and designed to register the participants' thoughts and feelings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A quantitative study was not selected because statistical analysis would not capture the essence of what this study sought to explore. The research question that guided my research was: How do school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms? The qualitative research design was the most efficient and data-point driven way to explore my research question.

Role of the Researcher

In my current role, I serve as an instructional specialist in the department of special education, supporting high schools in a school district. I support the individualized education plan chairpersons in eight high schools in the district. I provide instructional support to special education teachers and support staff implementing individualized education plans (IEP) to students with disabilities and provide support to chairpersons to implement the IEP process. This process supports the admission, review, and dismissal of students receiving special education services governed by the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). While in the role of instructional specialist, I do not evaluate or supervise school administrators in any capacity; I work collaboratively with school personnel supervised by school administrators.

As a former campus administrator, I understand the importance of providing students with a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning and the importance of obtaining class sizes that allow teachers to present various instructional strategies to diverse learners. More importantly, I understand the importance of teacher feedback and the inferences of promoting critical thinking skills to secondary school students. However, I did not bring any personal biases, cultural factors, assumptions, or personal experiences that may taint the study. Throughout the study, I suspended judgment on the participants' responses and only focused on analyzing the data collected. In addition, I kept a detailed account of the research process and the rationale for how and why steps were conducted. Finally, I used a peer/reviewer to check all data for logical construction of codes, themes, and results. Peer debriefing is a method in which a qualified examiner

reviews research for authenticity and accuracy. Given these points, my primary role as the researcher was to present the responses as indicated and intended by the participants.

Individuals selected for this study met a simple criterion. The participants for this study had administrative experience in working in schools where classrooms have exceeded capacity. Gender, race, age, or years of experience was not a criteria for participants in this research. Each participant's responses were derived from their personal experiences, skillset, and knowledge base.

Methodology

A research methodology is a process of procedures, techniques, and tools to collect data on a topic presented in a qualitative or quantitative inquiry (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In this study, I captured the school administrators' experiences and perspectives by exploring how their use of elements of transformational leadership may support overcrowded schools. To conduct this research, the practice of purposeful sampling secured the integrity of the study. Purposeful sampling is used when selecting participants who meet the study's specific criteria or characteristics (Ames et al., 2019). Purposeful sampling is useful when studying a particular condition by examining a sample from which the most information can be obtained (Ames, Glenton, & Lewin, 2019). In this way, the participants selected for a qualitative study are those who contribute the most to understanding the study's problem and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While conducting this research, I collected data on how school administrators support overcrowded classrooms using transformational leadership practices.

Participants Selection

The school district's northern area school administrators, where enrollment has met the overcrowded criterion, participated in this study. For this study, 10 participants were selected based on secondary schools located in the district's northern area that have met overcrowded classrooms' criteria indicated by the districts' planning and school boundaries department. These school administrators implemented transformational leadership practices to support their respective schools as part of their evaluation. The participants in this study consisted of school administrators from all ethnicities, ages, genders, and years of experience. Young & Casey (2019) noted that a sample size between 7-10 is adequate for basic qualitative research design study. The significance of selecting the participants based on the criterion above ensured the collection of diverse perspectives in the study. Additionally, Duffy et al. (2020) advocate using 9-12 participants for qualitative research as suitable. Selecting an adequate number of participants may reduce saturation, which refers to the data collection point when no additional issues or insights emerge from data. All relevant conceptual categories have been identified, explored, and exhausted (Hennink et al., 2016). Therefore, the participants chosen for this qualitative research study had first-hand knowledge on transformation leadership practices and implementing those practices into respective schools as part of their evaluation.

Instrumentation

This basic qualitative study explored school administrators' challenges in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms. The data

collected from conducting these interviews was paramount in this basic qualitative research study (see Yin, 2018). I conducted one on one interviews with 10 school administrators to collect data in a large northeastern school district with crowded classrooms. This investigative method is appropriate in acquiring pertinent data to understand further the transformational leadership practices used by school leaders (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The secondary school administrator's central focus was on using transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms' negative impact.

The settings for each interview were predetermined, and interviewees received advanced notice. Due to the global pandemic, alternative interview techniques were considered, such as Zoom, Skype, and Google Hangout. All interview sessions were recorded, transcribed, and digitally archived. Data were coded and analyzed utilizing a thematic analysis process. The participants' rights were protected by consent letter, confidentiality process, and data storage in a safety deposit box for 5 years after the study concludes.

The following table (Table 1) contains the interview queries that addressed the research question. The interview questions developed were unstructured, open-ended, minimal in number, and intended to obtain views and assumptions from participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Table 1

Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Questions
How do secondary school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms?	(*Idealized influence*) How do you present yourself to teachers in a way that they are likely to follow? Please elaborate.
	(*Idealized influence)* What actions do you model for teachers that may influence them in buying into the school's mission and vision? Please elaborate.
	(*Intellectual stimulation*) How do you collaborate with teachers challenged by meeting the individual needs of students in overcrowded classrooms? Please elaborate.
	(*Idealized influence, Individualized consideration*) Describe how you mentor or coach teachers while ensuring that their voice is heard?
	(*Inspirational Motivation*) Describe how you motivate and inspire teachers to continue to meet expectations in overcrowded classrooms? Please elaborate.
	(*Individualized consideration*) Describe your role in supporting teacher facing behavioral challenges in classrooms with limited space. Please elaborate.
	(*Intellectual stimulation*) Describe what instructional strategies might you subscribe to teachers struggling to teach in an overcrowded classroom? Please elaborate.
	(*Intellectual stimulation*) Describe what suggestions you may subscribe to teachers to address the lack of physical space? Please elaborate.
	(*Individualized consideration*) Describe how you leverage the needs of the teacher against the needs of the students when supporting overcrowded classrooms. Please elaborate.
	(*Inspirational Motivation*) Describe how you communicate the vision of the school to teachers in a way that inspires and motivates them to exceed expectations when the classroom has exceeded capacity. Please elaborate.
	(*Intellectual stimulation*) Describe how you encourage innovation and creativity when teachers have class sizes that have surpassed the state's recommendation for the number of students in the classroom. Please elaborate

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Upon the institutional review board (IRB) approval (#03-25-21-1013127), the recruitment of participants for the study commenced. I reached out to the secondary school administrators from the northern area schools whose capacity has been exceeded by five percent or the number of students enrolled in the class is greater than the number of students the classroom is constructed to accommodate. This information was provided by the district's planning and school boundaries department. I sent an email and set up a Zoom meeting to personally extend an invitation to the school administrators requesting their participation in the study. The invitation explained the consent process in detail and the purpose of the research. School administrators accepting the invitation provided their informed consent in writing. School administrators noted that their participation is voluntary and that informed consent protects the participant's rights throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The selection of 10 participants was based on two criteria. First, the participants are school administrators in secondary schools and are in schools with overcrowded classrooms (Ratvitch & Carl, 2016) that have been deemed overcrowded by the planning and boundaries department. The participants received written confirmation to participate in the study, along with negotiated dates and times of the interview. All communication transpired via phone, Zoom, and email. Before the interview, each interviewee read the informed consent form for clarity and determine whether they wish to proceed with the interview by providing oral or written consent. After obtaining consent, I reviewed the interview norms with the participant to provide a safe and confidential setting. A copy of

the consent form was emailed to all participants. Each participant was interviewed on a date and time predetermined by the researcher and participant within three weeks. The interviews conducted were in English, and a detailed description of the study was provided. Assurance of confidentiality was given at the onset of the interview, understanding that the interview with be conducted virtually and recorded (Ngozwana, 2018). Each interview was conducted without interruptions and occurred within the one-hour allotted timeframe.

One hour recorded interviews ensured participants had sufficient time to articulate their responses and to answer probing questions for clarity. I asked several follow-up questions to gain understanding and clarity when necessary. Transcribing took place immediately after the interview. Each participants' responses were transcribed by listening to the audio recording, recording the responses verbatim, and logging the information on a google spreadsheet. The discussions and transcripts were digitally archived. The participants were allowed ask questions addressing any aspect of the study at the end of the interview.

Data Analysis

According to Yin (2018), qualitative data analysis describes, classifies, and interconnects events by a researcher. Data collection for this study took place using 60 – minute one-to-one semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed using coding methods and a thematic analysis. Once data were collected, I organized and prepared the information for analysis, including transcribing the interviews, typing up follow-up notes, and developing a priori codes prior to analyzing the data. A priori codes are codes that

are identified prior to data analysis (Swain, 2018). These codes might be influenced by the research question or the conceptual framework. The a priori codes I identified were: *leadership practices* and *leadership characteristics*. These codes were related to transformational leadership theory and the research question, and guided my initial thinking about the data. After data collection, I assigned the a priori codes to the data and used a codebook to sort responses using columns labeled major, unique, and miscellaneous topics. Codes are labels assigned to data to summarize or make meaning of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Open coding involves using a word or short phrase to summarize data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used open coding to break down data into smaller chunks to begin the process of looking for patterns or ways of categorizing the data. Lastly, I further analyzed the categories of codes to identify emergent themes. Themes represent a higher level of categorization of the data and tell a story or represent an expression of the data (Williams & Moser, 2019).

Trustworthiness

Researchers are charged with providing honest, reliable, and principled research while never inappropriately exposing confidence. Trustworthiness relies on a person's integrity and character in conducting the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The data collected was based on the school administrators' experiences and opinions on using transformational leadership skills to support overcrowded classrooms. The interview questions were designed to capture their practices in supporting their perspective schools. I used member checking sending each participant a copy of the draft findings to check for accuracy and interpretation of their responses included in the draft.

Credibility

Credibility concerns were addressed during the selection process. School administrators participating in the study met the initial criteria of working in a secondary school with overcrowded classrooms, which was determined by the planning and boundaries department. Credibility also denotes whether the research findings represent feasible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views this was accomplished through member checking (Ellis, 2019). A peer review was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the data. A third-party person was tasked with assessing the quality and contribution of a qualitative research brought to them for review (Professor & Albrecht, 2019). A confidential nondisclosure letter was signed by the reviewer prior to reviewing the data. I used member checking sending each participant a copy of the draft finding to check for accuracy and interpretation of their responses included in the draft. To maintain the study's credibility, I ensured that the study's information is a true and accurate recording of the interviewees' responses. The participants were not privy to the information shared by others during the study. Throughout the entire study I remained neutral, objective, and impartial when collecting and analyzing data. . Finally, I kept a reflexive journal to document my experiences and reflections on the processes I used as a researcher.

Transferability

Transferability is achieved when the study's findings can be transferred to other contexts or settings. Equally, transferability is obtained when the researcher has provided a detailed description of the data analysis (Yin, 2018). To ensure that the information

shared was reliable, participants reviewed transcripts to offer clarifications and modifications if necessary. Member checking was conducted before and after the data has been analyzed. I sent each participant a copy of the draft findings to check for accuracy and interpretation of their responses included in the draft. This research will provide future researchers with insight into how school administrators use their transformational practices to support overcrowded classrooms. The interview questions were designed to capture school administrators' perspectives as they implement those practices. A diverse group of school administrators with various backgrounds, ethnicities, ages, and genders, the data collected may represent a wide range of perspectives on the phenomena. .

Transferability can be achieved when the researcher clearly describes the context of study so that readers can transfer results to similar contexts. In this study, I kept a field journal to record the steps taken throughout the research. Conducting member checking involves allowing participants to review their responses prior to data analysis and after. This helps to ensure that the information collected accurately reflected the participants' perspectives.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the research findings' stability and reliability and the quality to which research procedures are documented (Ellis, 2019). Allowing someone outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the research process is a way of ensuring dependability. In this study, I used an audit trail to incorporate transcripts, video recordings, and field notes for review. An audit trail is a transparent description of the researcher's steps taken from the beginning of a research study to developing and

reporting findings (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). After the data analysis, I used member checking, sending each participant a copy of the draft findings to check for accuracy and interpretation of their responses included in the draft.

Confirmability

Confirmability is essential in all research. It affirms that the researcher's responses are accurate and interpreted as intended to relay the participants views. Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings depict the participants' assumptions and opinions of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure the confirmability of participants, I provided the interviewees with transcripts from the interview to certify that they represent the participants' perspectives. I also provided a second review of the draft findings to confirm that all the data was accurate. All field notes, follow up questions, and recordings were made available via the audit trail. I conducted a peer review by allowing a third-party individual researcher to analyze a detailed audit trail. As the researcher, I eliminated my personal biases, assumptions, and behaviors related to how secondary school administrators support overcrowded classes through the implementation of transformational leadership practices (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

<div align="center">

Ethical Procedures

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This dissertation required IRB approval (#03-25-21-1013127) by Walden University. I conducted this study to examine how 10 school administrators used transformational practices to support overcrowded classrooms in 3 schools in the northeastern U.S. This study presented minimal risk for misinterpretation by allowing participants to ratify their

responses. The consent forms helped to ensure the participants understood the research process, procedures, and expectations. The consent letter protected the participants' rights and confidentiality throughout the process. Adequate data storage for transcripts, recordings, and field notes was provided through a safety deposit box for five years after the conclusion of the study. I provided transparency for the study's duration by recording the participants' responses verbatim, eliminating any interfering behaviors that may interfere with the research findings. I provided the participants with an environment that enabled them to share their experiences and share their practices without judgment or bias. Maintaining a lucid environment through a harmonious relationship with each participant during the interview was paramount. I ensured that the interview retained its integrity by keeping the agreed upon time allotment and ensure that the technology is working correctly. A summary of the study was saved to ensure credibility in the form of an audit trail.

Summary

The problem being addressed by this study is school administrators are challenged to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in three local secondary schools. A qualitative study design was most aligned with the research problem because of the inquiry-based nature of qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The research methodology described in this chapter, including the use of interviews to collect data, made my exploration of the research problem feasible.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the results of this study. I will provide details about the method I used to collect data and I will discuss the results on the data I

collected. Next, I will describe ways I ensured trustworthiness of this study. Finally, I

will summarize the chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the challenges of school administrators in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms in three northeastern secondary schools. The research problem aimed to understand administrators' challenges to implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms in three local secondary schools. I sought to discover the behaviors, practices, and processes that secondary school administrators implement in supporting overcrowded classrooms. Research in this area was needed to understand how secondary school administrators could implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms. I used purposeful sampling to collect data from 10 secondary school administrators to examine their transformational leadership practices when supporting crowded classrooms. Categories and themes were derived from the data to analyze the secondary administrator's transformational leadership practices used to support classrooms that exceed capacity.

The conceptual framework used for this study is Burn's (1978) transformation leadership theory and its four dimensions: *idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation.* The research question captured the use of Burn's transformational leadership theory, which is expounded upon in the conceptual framework section of Chapter 2. The research question is:

RQ1: How do school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms?

To answer the research question for this qualitative study, data were collected through semistructured interviews. I have described the methods of collecting, organizing, recording, and analyzing the data in detail in this chapter, which also includes an explanation of the findings of the study and the setting of the participants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results related to Burn's (1978) transformational leadership theory.

Setting

The research study took place in a northeastern area of the United States in the mid-Atlantic Region. I conducted the interviews via Zoom due to the protocols put in place by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). I emailed the interview protocol form to obtain consent from the superintendents from the participating school district. I also received approval from the principals included in this research. Ten secondary school administrators agreed to participate and completed the interview. The 10 secondary school administrators who agreed to participate replied via email with the words "I consent" or "I agree to participate in the study." Once the secondary administrators agreed to participate, I created a Microsoft Word codebook document with each participant's information. Each secondary school used in this study and its secondary school administrators met the state's criteria for overcrowded classrooms set by the district's planning and school boundaries department. I scheduled all interviews at the leisure of the school administrator. Table 2 shows the participants' profiles used for this study.

Table 2

Participant Profile

Participant	Job Title	Gender	2-4 years Administrative Experience	5+ years Administrative Experience
HPHS1	Secondary Administrator	Female		X
HPHS2	Secondary Administrator	Female	X	
HPHS3	Secondary Administrator	Male		X
HPHS4	Secondary Administrator	Female		X
PHS1	Secondary Administrator	Female		X
PHS2	Secondary Administrator	Female	X	
PHS3	Secondary Administrator	Male	X	
PHS4	Secondary Administrator	Female	X	
PHS5	Secondary Administrator	Female	X	
NWH1	Secondary Administrator	Female	X	

Data Collection

Before conducting the interviews, I sent a leader interview consent form to all participants, outlining how the steps for analysis using the transcriptions as part of the study. The leader interview consent form outlined the interview procedures per the district policy from the office of research and development. The procedures detailed how the video-recorded interviews would take place. Also outlined in the form was the

voluntary nature of the study, risks, benefits, the study's privacy, confidentiality, and the duration for transcripts storage.

For this study, I received written consent from each of the participants via email. Per the Walden University guidelines, the participants needed to provide written permission via email before the research began. If the participants agreed to the interview, participants were asked to reply to the email with the words, "I consent." After I received consent, I provided participating individuals with general information about the study. In addition, I provided participants with Walden's ethics approval number for this study (03-25-21-1013127), along with a contact number for participants to discuss their rights.

Participants were contacted by email and/or telephone to schedule their interview at their convenience. After the confirmation, I sent each participant a calendar invite with the Zoom meeting ID number and password to participate.

This basic qualitative study examined the transformational leadership practices used by secondary school administrators to support overcrowded classrooms. I collected data for this study through face-to-face interviews. Each interview question that was asked incorporated one of the four dimensions of transformational leadership in as they relate to crowded classrooms. This was done to provide an in-depth examination of the research question. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), interviews provide a great source of data collection, allowing follow-up and probing questions to gain a more conclusive understanding of the participants' responses. I collected all of the data in this research and carefully organized and analyzed it to answer the research question.

I allotted 45-60 minutes to capture the responses from all 11 interview questions (see Appendix A). The interview duration varied per participant due to the length of the participants' responses but did not exceed the 60-minute time restraint. Before each interview, I read directly from the interview guideline script and explained to the participants that the interview would be recorded and transcribed for analysis. It was explained to the interviewees how their responses would be transcribed and sent back to them for clarification purposes. I reminded the participants that their responses to the interview questions would follow confidentiality protocols. I further explained to the participants their responses would be assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities, as well as their school affiliation would not be disclosed. Finally, I asked the interviewees if they had any questions before we began.

The interviews took place using the Zoom program, and participants had the option to participate with their cameras on or off. I asked each participant the same 11 interview questions. Probing questions were asked throughout the interviews when necessary to understand the participants' perspectives better. I stopped the recording feature at the end of the interview, and then I thanked the participants for the use of their time and willingness to participate in the study. The video recordings were then placed in a folder and labeled *Interviews for Transcription*.

I used a professional transcription company, Rev.com, to transcribe video-recorded interviews. Then, I compared the transcripts to the video recordings to ensure accuracy. I reviewed the video recordings while following the transcripts to ensure participants' responses were verbatim. I sent the video recordings to the REV.com to have

them transcribe the contents of the recording. I sent the transcribed interviews back to the

participants to member check. According to Simula (2018), member checking is a

method of returning an interview or analyzed data to a participant for validation. The

participants then reviewed and provided clarity via email if any additions, deletions, or

clarifications were needed. None of the participants indicated the need to provide clarity

or any additional information. I then sorted all the interviews by question. I placed all

responses to questions 1 – 11 individual electronic folders and imported them in

MAXQDA for coding and analysis to establish themes as promulgated by Saldana

(2015). The goal of thematic analysis in this study was to discover themes, which

conveyed meaning in the data related to the study's research questions (Braun & Clarke,

2006; Saldana, 2015).

 All interview transcripts were printed and placed in a lockbox to ensure

confidentiality. There was a total of 81 pages of transcripts from the 10 interviews. I

stored the video recordings in an electronic vault app for safe storage. Table 3 illustrates

the participants, the number of pages from each transcript, the interview's time and date,

and the duration of each interview.

Table 3

Virtual Interviews of Study Participants

Participant	Date of the Interview	Duration	Number of Pages of the Transcript
HS1	June 8, 2021	13 min. 26 sec.	5
HS2	June 1, 2021	36 min. 58 sec.	11
HS3	June 10, 2021	24 min. 46 sec	6
HS4	June 6, 2021	25 min. 08 sec.	8
HS5	June 6, 2021	45 min. 39 sec.	10
HS6	June 1, 2021	37 min. 30 sec.	12
HS7	June 9, 2021	28 min. 20 sec.	8
HS8	June 7, 2021	27 min. 34 sec.	9
HS9	June 10, 2021	17 min. 20 sec.	6
HS10	June 7, 2021	19 min 36 sec.	6

Data Analysis

Nowell et al. (2017) described thematic analysis as a qualitative research method that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, describing, and report repeated patterns. I collected the qualitative data through video recordings using Zoom. I sent the recorded interviews to a professional transcription company for transcription. I then compared the transcriptions with the video recording to ensure accuracy. The data collected was then funneled through three-step cycles of coding. Saldana (2015) noted that a code in qualitative research is words or phrases designed to discover themes, which convey meaning in the data related to the research question. According to Saldana (2015), the first step in the data analysis is identifying codes in the data. The second step

in the process requires the researcher to categorize related codes. The third step reviews

the categories and synthesis them to generate themes emerging themes in the research

questions. The steps advocated by Saldana (2015) were followed through the data

analysis and described below.

I labeled the participants' responses and placed them in an electronic folder before

sending them to the REV.com for transcription. The transcription company transcribed

the interviews within 24-48 hours. The Rev.com transcribed the recorded interviews and

emailed them back to me individually. I downloaded each transcription to a folder labeled

Transcribed Interviews. I reviewed the transcriptions and while reviewing the video

interviews for accuracy. I sent each participant a copy of their transcribed interview with

the directions to make additions, deletions, clarity, or email the words "No changes

needed". I sorted each interview by question, having each participant's responses to each

question on a separate word document. For example, each participant's answer to

question one was all on the same word document. I followed this process so that all 10

participants' responses to each interview question were on the same document. I entered

the word document for each question in MAXQDA coding program. I used both a priori

coding and opening coding to identify, analyze, describe, and report repeated patterns

from each participant's responses. I developed a priori codes before the interview based

on my conceptual framework on transformational leadership. The design of the interview

questions incorporated the four dimensions of transformational leadership and literature

review. I used open coding to search for patterns and themes across the different

interviews to identify text passages linked by a common theme into categories (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

During the first stage of the coding cycle, the priori codes used were leadership practices and leadership characteristics. Leadership practices refers to a leader's characteristic behaviors used when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing people (Torres, 2019). Leadership characteristics refer to the actions and strategies leaders employ and implement to build capacity in their team consistently (Torres, 2019). I developed priori codes to examine the participants' responses related to the research question: How do school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms? Using the a priori codes, I captured and examined each of the secondary school administrators' responses as shown in Tables 4 -14. These tables show a priori codes used for this study and participants' responses.

Table 4

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 1

Interview Question 1- (Idealized influence) How do you present yourself to teachers in a way that they are likely to follow? Please elaborate.

Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS6	One of the most important things is to let them know that you are approachable, your leadership styles, and make sure that they feel comfortable enough to come to you to actually coach them and guide them.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS4	Well, I think that it's always very important in any profession that you find yourself, that you model the appropriate behavior that you expect.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS8	So, I try my best to be a role model. So, anything that I ask of any of the teachers, I try to be sure that I can also demonstrate whatever that is.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS7	So, what I do think, and what I have been told is that the energy and the passion that I bring to what I do every day, like I'm excited every day of what's to come, the good, the bad. And so I think that that energy and the passion that accompanies my daily tasks and along with the vision to complete the task.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS9	Well, I like to present myself as a leader by example. So what do I mean by that? I always tell teachers that I'm not going to ask them to do something that I'd not done myself or not be able to do. For example, such as collaborative planning, I like to be part of the breakout rooms so I can be a part of the collaborative process, continue to be reflective in everything that I do, and also to be a part of the eventual solution.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS10	I model the behaviors I expect. Whatever it is I'm asking them to do, I will do it myself. I have taught classes in order to demonstrate what I need to be done, so that they can see that I am willing to do it, if need be.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS6	Yes. I really like this because I feel like people learn by doing, learning by knowing, not only inviting people to be stakeholders and bringing their input of what things work for them or not, or what things that we'll like to see, but also to be a model and the use of these different strategies.	

Table 5

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 2

Interview Question 2- (Idealized influence) What actions do you model for teachers that may influence them in buying into the school's mission and vision? Please elaborate.		
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS2	I think the actions that I do, I'm really big on modeling. So if I'm asking you to do something, I'm doing it as well. So I'm there with you.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS1	So, the actions I try to demonstrate, again, speak to making sure there's clarity around one, what my expectations are. Two, the importance of their role. And three, what the overall benefit of the actual activities are not just for them, but also for all stakeholders, students, parents, and the rest of the community.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS9	When teachers come or students come, I like to always present to them what our mission and what our vision statements are at our school.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS4	Always being clearly visible, clearly articulated in every meeting, in every team meeting, department meeting, faculty meeting.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS3	I'd read aloud those things, the mission and vision.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS5	But I try to model by my expectations, by what I do. If I'm on time, I expect teachers to be on time. If I start a meeting on time and end the meeting on time, I expect them to do the same thing. I analyze data and speak data from everything that I do, because that is what I expect of them to do	Leadership Practices

Table 6

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 3

Interview Question 3- (Intellectual stimulation) How do you collaborate with teachers challenged by meeting the individual needs of students in overcrowded classrooms? Please elaborate		
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS9	Well, I think the most important thing is letting the teachers know that there are needs for the students, a tough task for teachers at all levels to deal with, especially now with what's happened in the last 14 months.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS1	So, working in one of the largest schools, that's where you kind of have to be creative and think outside of the box.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS4	So the challenge for a transformational leader is to get the teachers to come up with solutions. And those solutions is, how do we utilize the resources that we have at hand to improve teaching and learning?	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS7	And so I think that meeting with them, once you start to see, discussing periodically what their grades	Leadership Practices
Participant HS5	So I attend collaborative planning. I expect my assistant principals attend collaborative planning. And we try to meet those challenges together as a team to break down how we can, and share best practices with each other.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS8	So, the first thing I usually try to do is talk about what the issue, because the thing is, what we don't want to do as leaders is pretend like it doesn't exist. We want to make sure we bring it up and then talk about how we can work through it, because there's nothing we can do.	Leadership Practices

Table 7

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 4

	Interview Question 4- (Idealized influence, Individualized consideration) Describe how you mentor or coach teachers while ensuring that their voice is heard?	
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS9	I think teachers need to understand what we're targeting, whether it's classroom management, whether it's classroom culture, whether it's time management, whether it's question and discussion.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS6	Feedback is very important in everything we do. I know feedback could come in many ways. It could be direct feedback from them, from a survey, a one-on-one feedback, especially when we have a progress report and a quarter report, and we analyze and we reflect. I think one of the most important thing here is to be intentional and listen to the teachers.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS5	I like to coach from behind, listen, see what it is the person knows and understands first before I begin to provide my influence or feedback on what they say. I love to use the Six Steps of Effective Feedback by questioning.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS10	Wow. I talk to my teachers a lot, like I said. One of the things I do, my colleagues think it's strange, I have 270 staff. I will say, it depends on the relationship I have with the teacher. Some of them are very open and vocal about what they need from me, because I think that's important too. Just like I have to give them feedback, they have to give me feedback on what they need from me, or what I could be doing differently to support them.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS8	So, the idea when coaching teachers is for me to allow them to identify some of the areas that they feel that they are challenged in, and to help them come up with their own next steps.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS1	So, a part of mentoring and collaboration has to be rooted in reflection. So, when you help teachers to think through for themselves where their strengths are, where their weaknesses are, it also helps them to be more willing to allow you to influence the direction that they move in.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS2	So I've done both mentoring and coaching. I think that using the six steps to effective feedback has been essential in the sense of you really want the individual to look at what areas they need to grow in.	Leadership Practices

Table 8

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 5

Interview Question 5- (Inspirational Motivation) Describe how you motivate and inspire teachers to continue to meet expectations in overcrowded classrooms? Please elaborate.		
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS4	Again, that's something throughout my experience as a high school administrator that I learned. What I have learned is, you build on their strengths. So if you're trying to motivate teachers to continue to meet your expectations for high standards for teaching and learning, then what you want to do is capitalize on the one or two things that that teacher is doing well	Leadership Practices
Participant HPS1	But some of that comes through our quantitative and qualitative data. Where folks are able to see that they are in a place where things are moving, and things are being deemed successful.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS8	Well, I do a lot of praising.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS3	So that was how I keep on encouraging with the little pieces of positive data and built on it.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS5	I think feedback. I always start with something positive.	Leadership Practices
	Sometimes it's just as simple as a gold star on an announcement, or a little letter or a note just to let them know that you recognize what they are doing	
Participant HS10	So, there are different ways that I accommodate the staff who have large classroom sizes, because I feel that's just being fair and appropriate because you're asking them to do more than the average teacher. So, those are the things that I do to make sure they stay motivated. Also, I'm responsive to all of my staff. There to make sure that my staff who have overcrowded classrooms get the responses they need in order to continue with their instruction.	Leadership Characteristics

Table 9

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 6

Interview Question 6- (Individualized consideration) Describe your role in supporting teacher facing behavioral challenges in classrooms with limited space. Please elaborate.		
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS9	So I think the first thing that I would do as an administrator is letting the teacher know that their problem is real, okay, that the fight is real and that we know that time students... or, excuse me, teachers feel overworked or overloaded.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS1	So, it's really around helping them identify some strategies around their classroom management and ways that they can take some of the pressure off of themselves by helping students own a part of what a successful classroom should look like.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS4	As an administrator, I think that I have to be, again, listen to what the teacher's concerns are with regard to behavioral challenges that some of the students may be focusing in the classroom.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS7	So with the behavior problems, teachers first of all, have to know the policy. And then they have to have a behavior plan in place that's aligned with the policy. But I think it's very important for teachers, for me to assist them and encouraging them to build relationships with parents. And build relationships, which is difficult a lot of times, because of course, relationship building is two way, but to try their hardest, to always communicate with parents, not just for bad things.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS2	So one of the things that we have done is really looked at triggers, and what triggers you as an adult and what triggers students.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS5	So I want to give them an opportunity to observe good classroom management, because to me explaining the classroom management, it's abstract. People need to see it from beginning to end, what a good teacher does from the time the kids enter the room, how their room is arranged. So once I give them the opportunity to observe	Leadership Practices

Table 10

A Priori Codes and Participant Respeonses – Interview Question 7

	Interview Question 7- (Intellectual stimulation) Describe what instructional strategies might you subscribe to teachers struggling to teach in an overcrowded classroom? Please elaborate.	
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS1	So, certainly, instructional strategies around things like cooperative grouping, or how to scaffold and differentiate instruction, so that you're able to meet the needs of all of the diverse learners in your classroom.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS4	I should see flexible groupings,	Leadership Practices
Participant HS9	Establishing some small group opportunities within a classroom that might be overcrowded, incorporate some type of self-assessment piece for the students to be able to use, to get feedback, because we know that feedback is important to us as educators, as teachers, as administrators.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS7	So, encouraging groupings with students, because you cannot see this whole classroom	Leadership Practices
Participant HS2	Grouping them in certain groups where maybe looking at the data and assessments to see what student has probably a higher rate, and maybe grouping him around young people that have maybe have medium or lower, and having them help each other.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS6	For sure. One of them will be to, number one, look at the data. When you have a large classroom, you need to look at the data, and you need to be intentional when your lesson planning.	Leadership Practices

Table 11

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 8

Interview Question 8- (Intellectual stimulation) Describe what suggestions you may subscribe to teachers to address the lack of physical space? Please elaborate.		
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS6	I'm a believer that there's always ways that you could declutter a classroom and make it a little bit more manageable and effective in which the teacher has the stability, I think.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS10	So, almost a musical chairs type of approach, where the kids would have to be able to get up and move to a different seat in order to get the work done.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS3	Yeah, looking at relocation could be probably the solution, right there.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS1	Again, that speaks to being flexible and creative.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS3.	There may be short mini-lessons. Then there may be movement outside in the hallway. If it's a math class, you can have the students go around the building, looking for different geometric shapes that are in the building.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS2	It really is about having that flexibility piece.	Leadership Practices

Table 12

A Priori Codes and Participant Respeonses – Interview Question 9

Interview Question 9- (Individualized consideration) Describe how you leverage the needs of the teacher against the needs of the students when supporting overcrowded classrooms. Please elaborate.		
Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS1	But the truth of the matter is we are employed in order to teach and educate children, so it has to begin there. The students' needs have to come first.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS9	. So identifying the needs of the teachers and students, listening to concerns of all parties, and be able to provide positive and constructive feedback to all parties, to support the overcrowded classrooms.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS4	You've got to listen to what the teacher's concerns are, and then you have to offer them a choice.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS5	So one of my mantras is always in best interest of the student, in the best interest of the student.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS6	Once you have the teacher supported, I think everything else will fall into place and you will have the kids addressed as well.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS10	And we have to do what's necessary to support our students, and make sure they're okay.	Leadership Practices

Table 13

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 10

Interview Question 10- (Inspirational Motivation) Describe how you communicate the vision of the school to teachers in a way that inspires and motivates them to exceed expectations when the classroom has exceeded capacity. Please elaborate.		

Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS8	So, I think the best way to really even begin that whole process, that goes back to this whole systems, and structures, and collaborative work, and allowing them to help and assist with that mission and vision.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS9	I practice what I preach.	Leadership Practices
Participant	We have the safe places, brain start smart. We are doing the class meetings in the mornings . . . different breathing techniques. It's changed our vocabulary and how we do things in our school.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS1	So, providing a place for them and fertile ground for them to experiment, challenge themselves, push the boundaries has now become a positive thing versus just towing the company line, the school starts at this time and ends at this time.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS2	Narrative therapy works.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS4	So when I think about teachers that are doing it and doing it well, how can we showcase them?	Leadership Characteristics

Table 14

A Priori Codes and Participant Responses – Interview Question 11

Interview Question 11- (Intellectual stimulation) Describe how you encourage innovation and creativity when teachers have class sizes that have surpassed the state's recommendation for the number of students in the classroom. Please elaborate.		

Participant	Interview transcript excerpt	a priori code
Participant HS6	Be present for them. Be present for their ideas. Encourage autonomy also, and help them develop different methods in the classroom.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS10	I think it's the same thing, providing them with strategies and professional development.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS5	So one of the things is I always say yes. A teacher asks me can they do something and my answer is always yes. "Yes, you sure can." "Can I take my ..." "Yes, you can." "Can I take my kids outside?" "Yes, you can." "Can we have class on the school football field?" "Yes, you can." There's never been a teacher to ask me can they do something, bring in a guest speaker, do a field trip or something that my first answer is not yes.	Leadership Characteristics
Participant HS3	So one of the things that I do, for instance, I saw a paraprofessional doing these activities that they were very engaging. So I asked her to share that in our different collaborative plans.	Leadership Practices
Participant HS7	Well, I think encouraging them is showing them that it works, that it's something that's going to assist them.	Leadership Characteristics

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), the open-coding phase examines the text (e.g., transcripts, field notes, documents for salient categories of information supported by the text. During the second stage, I used opening coding, where codes emerged directly from the data. Words or short phrases were used as codes to describe the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Then, each participant's transcript was examined and read to find commonalities among the participants' responses. During this stage, I searched for common phrases, words, and general or specific ideas among the participants, which influenced the organization of codes into categories. Lastly, the

categories were further analyzed and themes emerged to more broadly describe the data

(Williams & Moder, 2019).

Table 15 shows the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the data.

Table 15

Overview of Open Codes, Categories, and Themes

RQ: How do school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms?		
Codes	Categories	Themes
• Model • Small group • Collaborative planning • Collaboration	• Professional Development • Modeling • Collaborative Planning	1. School leaders must support teachers' professional growth individually and collectively.
• Listening • Showcasing teachers • Mission and vision • Feedback	• Support • Acknowledgement • Transparency • Motivation	2. Transparency encourages trust and motivates teachers to work for a common good.
• Teacher needs • Student needs • Flexible • Wellness • Innovation • Creativity	• Responsiveness • Reflection • Flexible	3. The ability to reflect upon and respond to stakeholder needs, and make necessary changes, models and encourages growth mindset.
• Classroom management • Building relationships • Expectations • Inclusion • Instill pride	• Relationships • Clear Expectations	4. Fostering and maintaining positive relationships makes teachers feel good about the work they do with students and helps them feel safe.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I maintained credibility in the study by addressing all concerns during the selection process. All participants in the study met the criteria of working in a secondary school with overcrowded classrooms, predetermined by the planning and boundaries department. The findings in this study represent feasible information drawn from the participants' original data and are a correct interpretation of the participants' actual views. I provided all participants in the survey with their transcribed interviews via email. I directed all participants to examine the responses and provide revisions to their answers as needed. I also led them to respond to the email with the words "No changes needed" if no corrections were required. A current doctoral candidate conducted a peer debriefing to assess the quality and contribution of the qualitative research presented. A peer debriefing occurs when a qualified impartial colleague review and assess your transcripts, methodology, and findings (Simula, 2018). The doctoral candidate signed a nondisclosure form before reviewing the data.

Transferability

A detailed description of the data analysis included labeled tables to inform how the themes derived from priori codes and open-coding. Participants received interview transcripts to examine for clarity and modifications if necessary. Participants were from a diverse group of school administrators who I assigned pseudonyms to protected their identities. Research records were stored to clearly describe the context of the study so that researchers can transfer results to a similar context.

Dependability

Throughout this study, I documented each of the procedures used when conducting the research. Transcripts, video recordings, and field notes were made available for review using the audit trail, which contained an outline of the research from the beginning of the study to developing and reporting findings.

Confirmability

I provided the participants with the interview transcripts for affirmation and accuracy after the interviews concluded. I offered those transcripts to participants to certify that they represent the participants' perspectives. A doctoral candidate conducted a peer review to analyze my detailed audit trail. Throughout the study, I maintained unbiased personal judgment, behaviors, and assumptions about how secondary school administrators support overcrowded classes by implementing transformational leadership practices.

                                    Summary

In this study, I examined how secondary school administrators uses transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms. I analyzed these practices against the conceptual framework of transformational leadership and its four dimensions. Participants revealed how they employ the four dimensions of transformational leadership to support crowded schools. The data showed that secondary school administrators declared that modeling expected behaviors and being responsive to the needs of the subordinates is an effective way of supporting overcrowded classrooms. Participants also emphasized that a mission and vision that is clearly defined inspires,

motivates, and encourages individuals to work through challenges presented in crowded classrooms.

In chapter 5, I will detail the interpretation of the data and implications of the results. I will discuss study limitations and recommendations for further study. I will also present my final conlusions.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the challenges of school administrators in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms in three northeastern secondary schools. I investigated the transformational leadership practices used by 10 secondary school administrators to support overcrowded classrooms in a school system that has continued to grow in student enrollment over the last 10 years. This research was relevant to understand how secondary school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms as there were gaps in the knowledge due to previously limited research. Key findings of this study were that idealized influence and individualized consideration were the transformational leadership dimensions used most often by the secondary school administrators to support overcrowded classrooms.

Interpretation of Findings

According to Dutta and Sahney (2016), school leadership is a critical component of student achievement. Transformational leadership is frequently regarded as one of the most effective school leadership styles in promoting student achievement (Bush, 2017; Gumus et al., 2016). Moreover, Burns (1978) specified that transformational leaders use their actions to elevate others and put them on a path to greatness. Student achievement is hindered in overpopulated schools and classrooms because of the strain on instructional staff as it pertains to the delivery of instructional practices within the class. Strain and hindrances to instructional delivery result in a lack of understanding for students and infrequent hands-on activities, which ultimately lead to lack of student engagement, the

spread of disciplinary issues, and increased dropout rates (Alrabai, 2016). Findings from this study add to the knowledge of secondary school administrators' strategies and practices supporting overcrowded classrooms and promote student achievement.

The research question that guided my investigation stemmed from Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory. The question was: How do school administrators implement transformational leadership practices to support overcrowded classrooms? Burns (1978) focused on the four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. The 10 secondary school administrators who acted as participants shared their experiences of implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms. Through semistructured interviews, I asked each participant 11 specifically crafted questions that incorporated at least one of the four dimensions of transformational leadership. The purpose of the questioning was to allow participants to share their experiences, strategies, and how transformational leadership practices supported overcrowded classrooms. The data generated from this basic qualitative study used priori coding, open coding, categorizing, and note-taking to generate common themes from which four key findings were derived.

Key Finding 1

The ability to respond to the needs of students and staff was a critical transformational leadership practice for supporting overcrowded classrooms. Transformational leaders that exercise individualized consideration aspire to provide their followers with more individual support (Anthony, 2017).

It was abundantly clear that participants felt that acknowledging and tending to instructional staff needs was necessary when supporting classrooms that exceed capacity. Each respondent provided answers focusing on listening, being compassionate, and modeling expected behaviors as effective practices for support. Research has shown demonstrating a genuine concern for the needs and feelings of instructional staff as an administrator is necessary when influencing an instructor to perform at their full potential for the betterment of the students and school at large (Lin, 2021). Modeling effective feedback can provide individuals with alternative strategies for completing a task or enhancing the practices previously demonstrated. The feedback allows individuals to discover challenges and formulate effective solutions (Cherasaro et al., 2016). Essentially, participants in this study emphasized that providing effective feedback is a best practice when supporting instructional staff with students in overcrowded classrooms.

Key Finding 2

Participants emphasized idealized influence as a dimension of transformational leadership practice of secondary school administrators necessary to support crowded classrooms. Idealized influence is the dimension in transformational leadership that requires leaders to model expectations that instill pride in followers for being associated with the leader. It posits that a leader will go beyond their self-interest for the group's greater good and make sacrifices for others' benefit (Bush, 2017). Participants revealed that modeling expectations, behaviors, and outcomes were essential practices when providing support. It was evident through the data that participants' desire to model was a

major priority. In practicing idealized influence, participants modeled instructional

strategies, classroom management strategies, and leadership expectations for supporting

overcrowded classrooms. Each participant found that providing clarity around

expectations was an effective practice for providing support. Setting clear expectations is

an ongoing event and should be revisited frequently (Lowry, 2016). Furthermore, in

setting clear expectations, the participants cited the importance of reviewing the school's

mission and vision often to guide the practices of the instructional staff and their own.

Moreover, expectations and strategies are best leveraged when there is a coherent

and cohesive implementation structure. According to Masumoto & Brown-Welty (2009),

school administrators are also responsible for maintaining a smooth-running system by

developing routines and procedures for teachers and students to follow. Providing staff

with models and structure to follow using clear and concise expectations was a practice

noted by several administrators. Essentially, the practice of modeling expectations and

strategies cannot be in isolation. Expectations and strategies must be connected back to

the school vision and mission in a structured, cohesive manner to ensure that student

achievement is at the root of instructional work.

Key Finding 3

Encouraging creativity and autonomy from staff members in an overcrowded

classroom was a strategy referenced by several participants. Supporting innovation was a

practice by several of the study's secondary school administrators. Participants in this

study often deferred to their staff members for ways to address concerns from

challenging classroom sizes. Administrators provided teachers with the autonomy to

make classroom decisions based on the best interest of students. The transformational

leadership dimension of intellectual stimulation encourages innovation, creativity, critical

thinking, and problem-solving (Bush, 2017). Once instructors are endowed with practical

strategies and feedback, they should be given the autonomy to employ their learnings in a

manner that best fits their style and classroom culture.

      Transformational leadership is a leadership style that promotes positive changes

within and impacts those that follow. In the case of administrators, they are tasked with

leading a school system towards success and positive growth. Authentic transformational

leadership from an administrator also includes guiding instructional staff and building

their capacity where they are equipped with strategies, feel supported, and are confident

in employing their knowledge to promote student achievement. As an administrator, it is

not enough to model expectations and strategies for instructional staff members; they

must be supported in their trajectories as effective and autonomous educators.

Participants in this study used the intellectual stimulation dimension of transformational

leadership, where they encouraged innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-

solving skills of staff members to support classrooms. Many respondents cited

differentiated instruction and flexible grouping as an instructional strategy for supporting

instructors in overcrowded classrooms, allowing instructors to promote student

engagement and desired outcomes. Specifically, one participant referenced the need to be

intentional when planning lessons for students to leverage their strengths and hone in on

areas of growth despite limited space or resources. Therefore, the notion that intentional

lesson planning can be used as leverage is a departure from previous research that

suggested overcrowded classrooms completely hinders the teachers' ability to use modern teaching methods (Strogilos et al., 2017). On the contrary, instructors can be effective through creative differentiation and innovative supports that allow students to succeed in the classroom despite the overcrowding.

Key Finding 4

Acknowledging followers through praise was integral needed to support teachers in overcrowded classrooms. Praise is the process of administrators acknowledging the successes of other staff members. Marzano et al. (2005) noted influential leaders create a culture that positively impacts teachers while impacting students' success. Moreover, Berkovich, 2016 stated transformational leaders participate in practices that motivate, encourage, and inspire teachers to perform at their highest level. These principles can be verified by commonalities among the respondents wherein several of them noted that they frequently provided staff with praise. In particular, one of the respondents stated that allowing staff members to display the strategies they used was an effective way of acknowledging their good works.

Additionally, other respondents noted that data was used to highlight areas of instructional strength and then encourage teachers to perform at a higher level. Lastly, the use of incentives was an additional tool utilized when providing praise. Essentially, several methods of praise and motivation were provided in the responses from the secondary school administrators that are integral to supporting teachers in overcrowded classrooms.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this research was the number of participants in the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), having a smaller sample size allows the researcher to analyze the research problem in-depth. Limitations of the study included a sample size of (10) participants. Purposeful sampling was conducted to ensure variance to render complete answers to the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Secondary administrators invited to participate had a significant number of students enrolled in classrooms that exceed capacity. Saturation in respondents' answers was achieved because the majority of the participants had overlapping similarities in their responses, and further coding was no longer feasible. I recorded similar responses from each participant to the research questions. The study's trustworthiness was not compromised. Though, the small size may limit the transferability of the study's findings due to saturation. Throughout the study, interview transcripts were securely stored to ensure confidentiality.

Recommendations

A recommendation for practice related to the key findings one, two, three, and four are aligned directly to the four dimensions of transformational leadership. For key finding one, I recommend that additional studies be conducted to provide insight into how administrators can best support the needs of supervisees that will enhance teacher efficacy. Transformational leadership practices allow administrators to support the needs of students and staff amid a challenging environment. While some students may strive in any condition, other students need the nurturing and additional support and strategies to

perform satisfactorily. According to Elmore (2000), school administrators are responsible for removing barriers that prohibit students from achieving optimal levels. School administrators are limited in what they can do involving the infrastructure of the building and who can enroll in their school. Transformational leaders understand that addressing the needs of staff is the most effective way of managing overcrowded classrooms under these conditions.

Essentially, administrators challenged to support overcrowded classrooms recognize the importance of teacher potency in their pursuit to create an environment that is conducive for student learning. As it pertains to key finding two, I recommend that secondary administrators become well versed in modeling instructional strategies that can be used in overcrowded classrooms settings. Providing professional development around instructional strategies and behavior interventions was a predominant concern for respondents in this study. Modeling expectations and recognizing teacher successes were also critical for maintaining teacher morale and efficacy in conditions that were not conducive for educating students. Fundamentally, administrators need to model the expectations if they wish instructors to implement them according to the vision. Then, it is essential to praise instructors to reinforce the expectations and encourage continued efforts. Lastly, I recommend that secondary school administrators support overcrowded classrooms with an interdisciplinary think tank. This transformational practice seeks to gain insight from non-instructional stakeholders, which is significant because overcrowded classrooms appear as solely a teacher concern. Still, it is also a safety and

facilities concern. Future research conducted should examine the effects that crowded classrooms and schools have on the community.

Implications

Overcrowded classrooms are becoming more numerous in schools across the United States, in particular the northeastern region of the country. According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (1999), secondary school enrollment projections are on the rise. At the same time, the simple fix may appear to be to build more schools is not a solution that many school systems can implement immediately – if at all. Building a new school may take from 24 to 30 months to plan and develop prior to construction. Also, one has to consider if the funding is available to do just that. Simply providing a free and appropriate education for students, albeit in subpar conditions, does not allow those students to experience success nor access to the same opportunities to compete globally. Research in this area was needed to inform how administrators could leverage the human capital in their instructional staff to be creative and innovative about the strategies they use to continue promoting student achievement despite the strains of overcrowded classrooms. My findings support the use of transformational practices when supporting crowded classrooms. The themes in my research emerged from the four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. From this research, school leaders and administrators will understand how important it is to address the needs of their followers in the instructional team. Readers will also view strategies for encouraging and motivating staff to exercise critical thinking while working toward the mission and vision

of the school. The implication of this study will provide school administrators across the country with an in-depth look into a leadership style that can support school classrooms exceeding capacity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the challenges of secondary school administrators in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms. Previous research suggested overcrowded classrooms to be the cause of teacher efficacy and reduced student performance. After interviews with (10) secondary school administrators, it was evident that transformational leadership practices are effectively used to support crowded classrooms by promoting teacher innovation to promote student achievement. Effective transformational leadership is grounded in interpersonal relationships in an organizational structure (King & Vaiman, 2019). Influential transformational leaders consistently support the teachers' needs and growth areas, nurture their strengths, and explore possible solutions to alleviate any barriers that may infringe upon teaching and learning (Stewart, 2006). Whether it is building staff capacity through professional development, mentoring, or providing hands-on behavioral support in the classroom, transformational leaders bear that responsibility in guiding a school by promoting the growth and achievement of instructors and students. Past research suggested that school administrators are charged with finding solutions that maximize teachers' instructional time and minimize distractions (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). This research confirms that transformational leaders are consistently challenged with the same tasks. Overcrowded classrooms are no longer viewed as the

cause of reduced student performance but a reality of more school systems that pose a challenge. By leveraging the human capital of staff members in the findings mentioned above, this challenge can be overcome.

The research implications from this study include the positive social change in schools in which transformational secondary school administrators utilize their practices to support overcrowded classrooms. Other studies conducted addressed teacher efficacy in challenging work environments. According to Bottiani et al. (2019), teachers with class sizes exceeding the average classroom setting become frustrated, and burnout may affect performance as well as desired student outcomes. From this research, transformational leaders emphasize cultivating instructors by supporting their needs and nurturing their strengths, which can alleviate frustration and teacher burnout. Effective leadership and cultivation include strategies such as guidance in accordance with the school mission and vision, effective feedback, modeling of instructional and classroom management strategies, and nurturing innovation and autonomy. This research shows that while overcrowded classrooms will continue to be problematic for school districts across the United States, secondary school administrators who implement transformational leadership practices can effectively support schools with overcrowded classrooms. This is significant as some socio-economic constraints and barriers do not deem the construction of additional schools as the immediate answer to promoting student achievement. Therefore, the findings from this study contribute to positive social change by showing that transformational school leaders have the power to support quality instruction for all students, despite factors beyond their control such as overcrowding.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Hi, my name is Daryl Anderson. Thank you very much for participating in this interview today. As you know, the purpose of this interview is to examine the challenges of school administrators in implementing transformational leadership practices in overcrowded classrooms. This should last about 45 to 60 minutes. After the interview, I will be examining your answers for data analysis purposes. However, I will not identify you in any of my documents and no one will be able to identify you with your answers. You can choose to stop this video at any time. Also, I need to let you know that this interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. Do you have any questions?

Are you ready to begin?

Interview Questions

1. (Idealized influence) How do you present yourself to teachers in a way that they are likely to follow? Please elaborate.

2. (Idealized influence) What actions do you model for teachers that may influence them in buying into the school's mission and vision? Please elaborate.

3. (Intellectual stimulation) How do you collaborate with teachers challenged by meeting the individual needs of students in overcrowded classrooms? Please elaborate.

4. (Idealized influence, Individualized consideration) Describe how you mentor or coach teachers while ensuring that their voice is heard?

5. (Inspirational Motivation) Describe how you motivate and inspire teachers to continue to meet expectations in overcrowded classrooms? Please elaborate.

6. (Individualized consideration) Describe your role in supporting teacher facing behavioral challenges in classrooms with limited space. Please elaborate.

7. (Intellectual stimulation) Describe what instructional strategies might you subscribe to teachers struggling to teach in an overcrowded classroom? Please elaborate.

8. (Intellectual stimulation) Describe what suggestions you may subscribe to teachers to address the lack of physical space? Please elaborate.

9. (Individualized consideration) Describe how you leverage the needs of the teacher against the needs of the students when supporting overcrowded classrooms. Please elaborate.

10. (Inspirational Motivation) Describe how you communicate the vision of the school to teachers in a way that inspires and motivates them to exceed expectations when the classroom has exceeded capacity. Please elaborate.

11. (Intellectual stimulation) Describe how you encourage innovation and creativity when teachers have class sizes that have surpassed the state's recommendation for the number of students in the classroom. Please elaborate

Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time.