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Principals' Experiences Initiating, Implementing, and Sustaining Change Within Their School

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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2015

Abstract

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MA, University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2002

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Many research studies have investigated the role of the principal in implementing change. Despite the information gleaned from those investigations, principals continue to struggle with initiating, implementing, and sustaining change in their schools. Guiding this narrative inquiry study were theories related to principal leadership, educational change theory, and the theories associated with school culture, with the intent to understand the experiences of principals as they initiated, implemented, and sustained change in their schools. This study explored the challenges and successes principals experienced along with the specific actions that contributed to successful implementation. Five principals from southern Idaho were interviewed. Narratives were co-constructed based on each of the principal's experiences. Polyvocal analysis was used to analyze the data and co-construct the narratives with the participants. Common themes were examined and compared to recent research related to principals implementing change. A cross narrative analysis was used to compare the common themes and actions attributed to the successful implementation of change. Analysis of the data revealed that, among these 5 principals, successful implementation of change was created by obtaining buy-in from staff, building trust, distributing leadership, providing structured time for teachers to learn and collaborate, building capacity through targeted professional development, and seeking input from all stakeholders. These findings will promote social change by helping principals to understand the experiences of other principals with initiating, implementing, and sustaining change. Also, the common themes identified will inform principals on how to successfully implement change that will positively affect students.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my wife and children that have patiently stood by me and provided endless support and encouragement. Lara, you are the greatest person I know and you make me strive to be a better person every day. This study is also dedicated to my parents for always being there for me and for teaching me the value of hard work. And to my in-laws for raising such a wonderful woman and for their encouragement. You are the motivation for all that I do, I love you!

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Principals struggle to initiate, implement, and sustain change initiatives within their schools (Fullan, 2007). A change initiative is any reform or program that is intended to fundamentally alter the culture of the school and improve student-learning outcomes (Kruse & Louis, 2009). However, change initiatives are rarely sustained over an extended period of time and often do not meet initial expectations (Hargreaves, 2009; Harris, 2011). Ideally, a change initiative is research-based, and evidence has indicated a defined set of expected outcomes if implemented correctly (Fixsen, Blasé, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009; Harris, 2011; Shachar, Gavin, & Shlomo, 2010).

The *knowing-doing gap* is the divide between knowing what needs to be done (the research-based initiative) and action (implementing the research-based initiative) (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). The *knowing* part of this concept, as it relates to the field of education, is the evidence-based research associated with programs, reforms, and initiatives that are intended to improve student-learning outcomes. The *doing* portion is the actual initiation, implementation, and sustainability of the research-based initiatives. Turan and Betkas (2013) referred to the knowing-doing gap as transforming vision into action while Fixsen et al. (2009) referred to it as science to service. However, in this study the term used is the knowing-doing gap. Bridging the gap from knowing to doing is fundamental to the challenge of implementing change.

The gap between knowing and doing is illustrated by the following example from a school I worked at from 2004 to 2007. The limited English proficient (LEP) population and the evidenced-based program associated with this example are not a focus of this

study, but they are presented here to illustrate the process of initiating, implementing and sustaining a change initiative within a school. Consider a school with a large LEP student population and a significant achievement gap between the LEP students and other subgroups of students. The principal and leadership team review various reforms and the research related to closing the achievement gap for LEP students. The principal and leadership team select the research-based program the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) model (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006) and feel that if implemented correctly, SIOP will assist them in closing the achievement gap between the LEP students and the Caucasian students. Once the change initiative or program has been selected, the school begins the process of implementing the change initiative.

The most difficult part of the change process is the implementation of the reform (Fullan, 2007; Kaniuka, 2012), the SIOP model, so that it closes the achievement gap for LEP students and is sustainable from year to year. To understand the problem of principals initiating, implementing, and sustaining change it is necessary to define successful implementation. An effectively initiated and implemented change initiative has a specific purpose to meet a specific need, is implemented uniformly throughout the school, addresses and meets the specified need, and is sustained over time and becomes entrenched in the culture of the school (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). Furthermore, a principal manages the change process and leads a school from knowing what needs to be done to implementing the desired change to fulfill its intended outcomes (Starr, 2011). Additionally, the principal needs an understanding of the change process in order to be able to lead successful change within their school (Kaniuka, 2012).

The school moves from knowing what needs to be done to improve LEP student achievement to actually improving the achievement of LEP students by engaging in the change process. The selection and implementation of any reform or initiative imposes change on the school and its culture. This example illustrates how a principal leads change within the school and translates vision into action. The knowing-doing gap was not the focus of this study, but a reason change theory is studied.

This study focused on how principals experience the implementation of change and lead their schools from a vision to actions that accomplish the intended purposes of a change initiative. Many researchers have documented how reforms and initiatives show improvement in student-learning and achievement (Echevarria & Vogt, 2010; O'Gorman & Hard, 2013; Thompson, 2009). However, leading the change process is difficult and principals struggle to initiate, implement, and sustain research-based reforms and initiatives (Reeves, 2009).

The change process has three widely accepted phases: initiation, implementation, and sustainability (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). However, research suggested school leaders struggle with initiation, implementation (Hall & Hord, 2006), and sustainability (Tam, 2009) of change initiatives. The initiation of change includes the selection of a reform initiative that will meet identified needs and the planning that leads up to the next phase of implementation. Implementation is the management of all the factors to carry out the plans for the change initiative (Fixsen et al., 2009). Sustainability is the actions taken to make sure the benefits of the change initiative are sustained (Holms, Clement, & Albright, 2013). A change initiative is any reform or program that is implemented within

a school or district with the intent of altering current practices to improve student achievement and the culture of the school (Fullan, 2007).

Educational change theory is the field of study that addresses all aspects of moving an educational institution from knowing what needs to be done to actually initiating, implementing and sustaining any initiative, reform, and program that would impose change upon the system (Guhn, 2009). An essential and indispensable component of the change process is strong focus and focused leadership (Auerbach, 2009). The focused leadership within a school is the responsibility of the principal (Finnegan, 2010).

Principals play an instrumental role in closing the knowing-doing gap (Fullan, 2006) by successfully implementing change (Leech & Fulton, 2008). A deep base of research exists related to the impact of an effective principal on the success of a school (Finnegan, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Starr, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2010a). Researchers also suggested a correlation between effective principals and their ability to guide the change process to produce the intended results of the reform or initiative (Bryk, 2010; Chen, 2008; Priestley, 2011). The principal also plays a central role during the initiation, implementation, and sustainability phases of the change process (Guhn, 2009). Additionally, strong principal leadership is a major factor in the success of any change initiative (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). Furthermore, Chen (2008) concluded, the role of the principal is indispensable in initiating, implementing, and sustaining change initiatives. Ultimately, the principal is accountable, responsible, and the catalyst for leading change within their school (Starr, 2011).

Improving student achievement is the focus of school reform and the role of the principal in the change process is paramount; however, education reform initiatives rarely fulfill their intended purposes (Fixsen et al., 2009; Gordon & Patterson, 2008). The issue that affects many principals is their inability to lead successful change that is sustained and permanently alters the culture of the school (McCall, 2009). The lack of success, in part, is attributed to principals who do not understand the change process and how to use it to leverage reform within their school (Russell, Warren, Minnick, & Richardson, 2011). Therefore, principals need to understand the change process before they can lead successful change (Jerald, 2005).

Understanding the change process is essential for principals when the expectations to produce results are so high (DuFour & Marzano, 2009). With the accountability measures associated with No Child Left Behind (NCLB), principals are expected to implement change that will rapidly improve student achievement (Masci, Cuddapah, & Pajak, 2008). This expectation is the impetus for principals to search out and implement change initiatives that will produce results quickly.

Principals find themselves under greater pressure than at any other time in the history of our nation's education system to increase student achievement (Ravitch, 2010) and to meet the requirement to do it rapidly (U.S. Department of Education, 2010 a). Much of the pressure that principals feel concern changes impacting student achievement as a result of NCLB and programs such as the School Improvement Grant (Daly & Finnigan, 2010). Recent studies show that accountability and making adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the number one concern of principals (Powel, Higgins, Aram &, Freed,

2009; Styron & Styron, 2011). The stress principals' experience to increase student achievement is compounded by their inability and lack of understanding of how to successfully reform their schools by implementing initiatives that would produce desired outcomes (Elmore, 2004).

An extensive review of the literature revealed some of the major factors impacting the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of change within schools. Most noteworthy were the culture of the school (Kruse & Louis, 2009), the source of the change initiative to be implemented (Sevier, 2008), the readiness of the school to accept change (Reeves, 2009), and strong leadership from the principal (Taylor, 2010). In Section 2 of this study, I present a comprehensive review of the literature on aspects of the change process and how a principal can become an agent for sustainable change within his or her school.

The issue of principals leading successful change initiatives is a problem that permeates schools throughout southern Idaho. In an effort to meet the accountability demands of NCLB, the Idaho Department of Education instituted many large-scale statewide reforms. Principals are expected to implement these change initiatives to assist the schools in making adequate yearly progress as defined by NCLB. However, the change initiatives experienced varying degrees of success. In some schools, principals implemented the initiatives and achieved the intended results while in other schools the initiatives were a dismal failure. Mulford, Edmunds, Kendall, Kendall, and Bishop (2009) found successful principals demonstrate their ability to lead major change initiatives.

A review of the literature revealed little qualitative narrative research concerning the experiences of principals leading their schools to make sustainable change and ultimately effected student achievement positively. The focus of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to interview principals from southern Idaho, delve into their lived experiences as agents of change within their schools, understand their experiences, and tell their stories. This study will add to the research base related to principals implementing change initiatives from a narrative inquiry perspective.

Statement of the Problem

A problem exists in K-12 education in southern Idaho as it relates to principals leading the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of change initiatives that will improve student achievement and fundamentally alter the culture of a school. Currently, the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDOE) is pushing large-scale reform initiatives down to districts and schools to meet the accountability requirements of NCLB. The urgency and pressure created by the current culture of accountability has increased pressure on principals to implement the reforms supported by the ISDOE to search out and implement research/evidence-based reforms that will rapidly and significantly improve student achievement. However, the mandated change initiatives result in varying degrees of success in the schools in which they are implemented and rarely are sustained. The problem of principals being able to lead successful change impacts schools throughout southeastern Idaho and their ability to significantly reform to increase student achievement.

The problem many principals face is what Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) referred to as the knowing-doing gap. Principals have a vision for a program, initiative, or reform that will positively affect their school, but they rarely, effectively and successfully implement the change (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2000a; Hall & Hord, 2006; Harris, 2011; Marzano et al., 2005). Little qualitative narrative research exists describing how principals experience leading the change process. This study explored the lived experiences of principals to tell their stories as they initiated, implemented and worked to sustain change within their schools. Meier and Stremmel (2010) suggested the use of storytelling or narrative writing to better understand personal experience. Additionally, storytelling and narratives are often the initial means of processing personal experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I used narrative inquiry methods to tell the stories and understand the experiences of principals as they initiated change within their schools. An extensive review of the related literature revealed little qualitative narrative research that specifically seeks to understand the experiences of school principals as they initiate, implement, and sustain change.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative, narrative inquiry study explored the experiences of school principals as they went through the challenging and difficult process of leading and sustaining change within their schools. The participants were five principals from southern Idaho. The study required that each of the selected principals had been in their current position for at least five years. This requirement was chosen, under the assumption that the principals had been in their current position long enough to

experience initiating, implementing, and sustaining change. Research suggested a principal must be in his or her position for at least five years to have a lasting positive impact on change (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

The data were analyzed using polyvocal analysis as described by Hatch (2002). This method of analysis is structured to provide the participants with multiple opportunities to provide input to ensure the accuracy of their narratives and, as purely as possible, understand their experiences. Narrative inquiry, by design, requires the researcher and participants to work closely together to tell their stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin (2007) suggested that narrative analysis is the process of analyzing narrative data to search for common themes amongst the narratives. The common themes were compared using a cross narrative analysis as described by Creswell (2013). Narrative inquiry is the process of doing research through the telling of stories and then striving to understand the experiences of the participants in relation to the focus of the research questions (Creswell, 2013). The underlying assumption of all narratives is that we learn from and understand our experiences through the telling of stories (Kim, 2010).

This study recounted the stories of each of the participants in relation to their experiences with implementing change within their schools. Co-constructed narratives summarized the experiences of each of the participants with respect to the problem of study. The narratives were analyzed for common themes to identify the challenges and successes that principals encountered as they implemented change and the specific actions they took that aided in the success of the change initiatives. The common themes

were compared to the research from the literature review on educational change theory to see if the experiences of the principals aligned with current research.

This section is an overview of the nature of the study and research method. An in-depth review of the literature related to the methods and the reasoning for selecting narrative inquiry is given at the end of Section 2. In Section 3 I present the methods that were used for the study, data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Questions

This study was guided by three questions that focused on the experiences of principals as they initiated, implemented, and sustained change within their schools.

1. What are the experiences of principals as they initiate, implement and strive to sustain change within their schools?
2. What are the challenges/successes that principals encounter as they initiate, implement and sustain successful change initiatives within their schools?
3. What are the specific actions that principals report aided in the success of the change initiative?

The research questions influenced the interview guide used for the semi-structured interviews with each of the participating principals. The interview guide was based on the major themes related to educational change theory, school culture, and principal leadership that emerged in the literature review. The interview guide assisted with keeping the interviews focused on the purposes of this study, the research questions, and the themes from the research. Due to the varied responses and experiences of the participants, the follow-up questions for each of the interviews were different. However,

careful attention was given to keep the interviews focused on the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the purpose of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to tell the stories and understand the experiences of principals as they lead change initiatives within their schools. Clandinin (2007) suggested the process of narrative data analysis identifies common themes amongst the stories of the participants. This study investigated the stories and experiences of the participants to find common themes between successful and unsuccessful change initiatives and the actions of principals that assisted with the successful implementation of change. The purpose of this study was to tell the stories of the participants' experiences with implementing changes in their schools in narrative form. Additionally, this study compared identified themes from the principal narratives using a cross narrative analysis (Creswell, 2013), to compare identified themes with the most recent research on educational change, and use the findings of the study to promote social change by suggesting how principals can lead successful change initiatives that are sustainable.

Conceptual Framework

The foundation of the conceptual framework for this study consisted of three theories associated with change and the field of education. The first is educational change theory with its three widely accepted subcategories: initiation, implementation, and sustainability (Berman, & McLaughlin, 1974a; Curry, Lowery, & Loftus, 2010; Fullan, 1999; Guhn, 2009). Second, the theories related to school culture and how the culture

affects a school's readiness and willingness to accept and foster the initiation, implementation and sustainability of change (Kruse & Louis, 2009; & Muhammad, 2009). Third, the change leadership theories related to principal leadership and more specific the theories related to the principal as an agent for change (Fullan, 2007; Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2006; Ho, 2010; Pere, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2011).

The first of the three frameworks, educational change theory, is the study of how to initiate, implement, and sustain change initiatives within a school setting (Towndrow, Silver, & Albright, 2010). Additionally, educational change theory encompasses changing the culture of schools to achieve a desired outcome, usually to increase student achievement (Fullan, 2007). In order to increase student achievement, change will be required (Aitken & Aitken, 2008). The change mentioned relates to practices, initiatives, and reforms that will increase student-learning and achievement. The type of change desired will fundamentally alter the culture of the school to accept, and embrace the initiative or reform being implemented (Muhammad, 2009). Protheroe (2011) suggested that "At its most basic, school improvement is change – change that might require people to abandon long-held beliefs and practices, shift roles, and learn new skills" (p. 1). Educational change is an emotional and personal experience, and if those leading the reforms do not consider those, the probability of success will be decreased (Balyer, 2012; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987).

The change process includes three widely accepted phases (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Fullan, 1991; Fullan 2007; Hall & Hord, 2001; McNeal & Chrisy, 2001). The first

is the adoption or initiation phase (Blackbourn et al., 2011-2012; Nolan, 2007). A need is identified and a course of action is selected. The second phase is the implementation of the reform or innovation to meet the identified need (Navickaite, 2013). Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, & Wallace, (2007), define implementation as the process of establishing practices that have a lasting and intended impact on the school. The third phase is the long-term sustainability of the change initiative (Navickaite, 2013). The purpose of educational change theory and its three main phases assists change agents with moving a school from vision to action to sustainability that permanently improves student-learning outcomes and alters the culture of the school (Morrison, 2013).

The second of the three frameworks was the impact of school culture on the implementation of change. The existing culture of a school greatly influences the ability to implement change within that school (Clayton & Johnson, 2011; Sevier, 2008). Principals need to understand how the culture of school and the success of any change initiative are interconnected (Connolly, James, & Beales, 2011). Donahoe (1997) suggested that if the culture of a school changes then the school has been permanently altered to reflect the desired outcomes of the change initiative. The work of Kruse and Louis (2009), and Muhammad (2009) was used to present the importance of understanding the culture of a school before real and institutionalized change can occur. The culture of a school and its readiness to accept and foster change influences the success of any change initiative (Bourke & McGee, 2012). A principal needs to understand the school culture before leading implementation of change, and must work to slowly alter the culture (Sahin, 2011). The ultimate goal is to alter the culture of the

school so that the change being implemented becomes the new culture of the school (McMaster, 2013).

Diagnosing and understanding the culture of the school is essential before meaningful change happen (Hall & Hord, 2006; Kruse & Louis, 2009). How faculty accepts and adjusts to change regarding grading practices, expectations for student behavior, and the structure of faculty meetings, encompasses the culture of a school (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The culture of a school is complex and continually evolves (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013). Some of the major factors to consider when assessing a school's culture are makeup of the faculty and staff, community values, economic base of the community, and geographic location (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

Muhammad (2009) discussed four types of teachers: believers, tweeners, survivors, and fundamentalists. In order to alter the culture of a school, it is necessary for the principal to understand these teacher types and be able to interact with them in a way that increases the likelihood of success of the reform initiative (Fullan, 2000b). The human element, the teachers, will have the greatest influence on the success or failure of change (Seo et al., 2012).

The third framework that guided this study was the literature related to the theories of the principal as an agent for change within his or her school. The research is abundant and clear that strong and effective principal leadership is essential to the success of any change initiative within a school (Chan, 2008; Fawcett, Brobeck, Andrews, & Walker, 2001; Hinde, 2003; Kearney & Smith, 2010). However, there is an increasing interest in distributed leadership within the school setting (Harris & Spillane,

2008). Distributed leadership shares the leadership with specialists, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders (Finnigan, 2010). According to Jackson and Marriott (2012) recent research shows an interest in distributed leadership, however, this does not contradict the research related to the essential role of a principal to lead change in his or her school (Kearney & Smith, 2010). The success or failure of any change initiative within a school is directly proportional to the principal's skills as an agent for change (Fullan, 2007).

To summarize the conceptual framework for this study, the leadership of the principal permeates all phases of the change process and is important in creating a culture for change (Chen, 2008). A logical progression would be for the principal and leadership team to identify a problem, select a reform or change initiative to address the problem (Hall, 2013), assess the culture of the school to accept the intended change (Sahin, 2011), implement the change initiative (Fixsen et al., 2009) and finally work to sustain the change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Morrison, 2013). The implementation of change, however, does not happen in a series of sequential steps (Hall & Hord, 1984). The three components to the conceptual framework: understanding the culture of the school, the three stages of the change process, and the theories related to principal leadership, guided each phase of this study.

Definition of Terms

Buy-in: Within the scope of educational change theory, the term buy-in refers to the change agent acquiring support for a change initiative from teachers, parents, students, and community members.

Change agent: A change agent, for the purposes of this study a principal, is a person that leads change within an organization or school. The change agent seeks to obtain buy-in from the people that will directly implement the change initiative (Rogers, 2003). The change agent has the vision for the change initiative and persists until it is successful.

Change initiative and innovation: A change initiative is any reform that is intended to alter the culture of the school to ultimately impact student achievement (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

Change theory: Change theory is the study of how people and organizations react to, accept, and implement an innovation or reform (Fullan, 2007; Hall, & Hord, 2006). The theory includes the process of initiation, implementation and long-term sustainability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Rodgers, 2003).

Implementer: The person charged with the implementation of the change initiative (Fullan, 2007).

Knowing-doing gap: The gap between knowledge of how to change an organization to achieve desired outcomes and the actions that accomplish those outcomes (Peffer & Sutton, 2000).

School culture: "A school's culture is characterized by deeply rooted traditions, values, and beliefs, some of which are common across schools and some of which are unique and embedded in a particular school's history and location" (Kruse & Louis, 2009, p. 3).

Stakeholder: Any person that has a vested interest in the operation of the school. For the purposes of this study, stakeholder refers to teachers, parents, students, and community members.

Sustainability: Sustaining an implemented change initiative so that it becomes a component of the culture of a school, achieves desired outcomes, and lasts from one school year to the next (Hargreaves & Fink, 2000).

Assumptions and Limitations

This study made the following assumptions with regard to the structure of the study. All of the principals interviewed for the study have been in their current position for at least five years. The research shows a principal must be in his or her position for at least five years to have a lasting positive impact on change (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Additionally, I assumed that the participants would have been in their positions long enough to experience the complex process of initiating, implementing, and sustaining change within their school. Research shows that it takes at least three and likely five or more years to implement sustainable change (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). I also assumed that there have been enough statewide reform initiatives in Idaho in the past 5-7 years that a principal in his or her position for at least five years has been there long enough to provide meaningful input about leading change in their school. I assumed the principals are currently in the process of implementing change.

I recognize the following limitations. The rural setting of the participants may not allow the results of the study to be generalized to suburban, urban, or inner-city principals. The results might only promote social change for principals in Idaho and to

areas of the country that have a similar rural setting. Some of the follow-up interviews were conducted over the phone rather than in person. I used vacation days during the school year to conduct the initial interviews in person. However, the follow-up interviews with three of the five participants were done over the phone. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted with principals within a 130 mile radius due to convenience. I selected this distance because 17 elementary school principals, 14 middle school principals and 9 high school principals fit the criteria of being in their position five or more years. These constraints provided a large pool of potential participants. Additionally, all of the participants came from rural schools.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included principals from southern Idaho who agreed to participate in interviews and follow-up correspondence. I used contact information from the Idaho Department of Education's website and personal networks to identify possible participants for the study. Due to the in-depth nature of the interviews of a narrative inquiry study, only five principals were included.

Delimitations of the study centered on the size and lack of diversity of the sample. Due to proximity, the participants for the study came from southern Idaho. Therefore, the results of the study may not be generalizable to other populations.

A final delimiting factor recognized, the initial and follow-up interviews were the only data collection methods used. Creswell (2013) discussed the benefits of using multiple methods of data collection to triangulate the data and gain a better understanding

of the problem. However, the interviews were extensive and follow-up interviews were conducted to assure that the narratives accurately reflected the principals' experiences.

Significance of the Study

This study will add to the research as it relates to the principal as a change agent, for sustainable change in his or her school. This study told the stories and explored the experiences of principals as they implemented change within their schools. The narrative data and associated data analysis will help principals to better understand the change process (initiation, implementation, and sustainability), the need to assess the culture of the school, and the essential role of the principal on the implementation of successful change within his or her school.

According to Fullan (2007), the research on the principal as an agent for change is in its infancy compared to the educational change research. Some quantitative (Kearney & Smith, 2010; MacBeath, 2006; Shun Wing, 2009) and some qualitative (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006; Shepard & Salembier, 2011; Shipps & White, 2009) research exists relating to the principal and how her or she experiences the change process. Little qualitative, narrative inquiry research exists relating to principals implementing change (Veel & Bredhauer, 2009). The Veel and Bredhauer (2009) study is a narrative inquiry study focused on the experiences of principals as they work with teachers to change their pedagogy. However, many narrative inquiry studies exist related to the field of education with a peripheral connection to change theory (Craig, 2010; Gray, 2009; Kim, 2010; Meier & Stremmel, 2010; Ospina & Dodge, 2005; Parker & Scott, 2010). This study will add to the research on the principal as an agent for change by providing rich narratives of

principal experiences with initiating, implementing and sustaining change that permanently alters the culture of his or her school. I was unable to find any qualitative narrative inquiry studies that had the topic of the principal as an agent for change within his or her school. This study will be unique to the field of education and will add to the research with respect to principals leading change.

This study sought to tell the stories of principals as they led change within their schools. The interviews and subsequent narratives focused on each principal's experiences as they initiated, implemented, and sustained change within their schools. Common themes were identified from the narratives which were then compared using a cross narrative analysis as described by Creswell (2013). Additionally, the common themes were compared to the recent research in the field of educational change theory. I will use findings from this study to effect social change within each of the schools I supervise as I work with principals to implement change initiatives. The findings will also be presented at to a secondary principals' conference at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year.

Summary

This narrative inquiry study explored the experiences of principals as they worked to implement change within their schools. The sample consisted of five principals from southern Idaho. The research questions and the conceptual framework guided I in co-constructing the narratives with the participants. I analyzed and compared common themes from the narratives with the most recent research on educational change theory to gauge if what the principals experienced aligns with the research. Chapter 2 reviewed the

literature related to change theory, the impact of school culture on the implementation of change, principal leadership, the pitfalls encountered throughout the change process, differing methodologies considered for the study, and the qualitative method of narrative inquiry. Chapter 3 outlined the specifics of the design of the study, data collection, and data analysis.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The rapid pace at which knowledge is being added to all fields of study increases the need for understanding the change process and the ability to thrive in a culture of constant change (Bakioglu & Dalgic, 2013).Much like other fields of study, education experiences a state of constant change (Fullan, 2001). This is due in part to legislation that increased the accountability placed on schools to rapidly improve test scores (Terry, 2010). The culture of constant change and accountability has influenced and altered the role of a principal (Fullan, 2010 a). Additionally, the responsibility to effect change within a school lies with the principal (Smith & Engelsen, 2013).

Although many people contribute to the implementation of a change initiative within a school, the principal manages and leads the process (Starr, 2011). Recent research in the field of educational change theory suggests the principal has an essential role in the implementation of change that will improve student achievement (Starr, 2011; Kearney & Smith, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Harris, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). The role of leadership in corporate change has been studied for decades, however, research related to what principals do and how they experience the change process is relatively new (Fullan, 2007). This study focused on understanding the experiences and telling the stories of principals as they initiated, implemented, and sustained change within their schools. This narrative inquiry study endeavored to tell and understand the stories of principals as they initiated implemented and sustained change. I compared the themes that evolved during the data collection and analysis process to the research presented in

the literature review. Finally, the themes that align with the research will be presented to help principals' effect social change through the successful initiation, implementation, and sustainability of change in their schools.

This literature review aligned with the conceptual framework and focused on educational change theory and its three main components initiation, implementation, and sustainability, school culture, and principal leadership. The review also focused on ancillary topics in the field of educational change theory that emerged through the research process, and have a direct impact on the implementation of change within a school. The review investigated the indispensable role of the principal in initiating, implementing and sustaining change. Finally, the review focused on how the culture of a school impacts the initiation, implementation and sustainability of change.

Content of the Review

The content of the review is related to the problem statement, the research questions, and the conceptual framework presented in Section 1. The problem identified in this study is the challenge principals have initiating, implementing, and sustaining change that impacts student achievement and alters the culture of the school. The review of the literature sought to identify the major factors affecting the successful initiation, implementation and sustainability of change by a principal within his or her school.

The review also explores the quantitative and qualitative methodologies considered for this study and states the reasoning behind selecting narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative method of conducting research. The review explores various qualitative methods and states the reasoning for selecting narrative inquiry. It also

includes an in-depth look at narrative inquiry and the various components essential to designing the data collection and analysis for this study.

Organization of the Review

A brief history of educational change theory was presented, an in depth review of the recent literature on educational change theory and its major theorists was outlined. An extensive review of the research revealed that educational change theory has three main phases: initiation, implementation, and sustainability. Each of the three phases will be covered in separate sections of the review. As the review, progressed, major themes were identified. The review focused on those topics and their influence on successful and long-term change led by the principal. The review concluded with an inspection of quantitative and qualitative methods and the reasoning behind the selection of the qualitative method of narrative inquiry.

Strategy Used for Searching the Literature

This literature review focused on the principal as an agent for change within his or her school. The review explored the components and major themes of educational change theory as they related to the purpose of this study. I conducted an extensive search of literature related to the topic of study. The following tools were used to search the literature: Walden Library, Google, Google Scholar, and other searches of the internet. The main source of gathering references were the education databases ERIC, Education Research Complete, and Education from SAGE located in the Walden Library. Additionally, I reviewed the reference section of selected journal articles, books, and other relevant resources to find additional related sources. I compiled an extensive

annotated bibliography for all of the sources used in this study. I used the annotated bibliography to identify common themes in the research and write Section 2.

History of Federal Change Initiatives

In order to understand the current state of educational change, and the challenges facing principals as they initiate, implement, and sustain change within their schools an understanding of federally derived change initiatives is helpful. External sources for change initiatives effect the change process (Gilstrap, 2007). External forces relate to mandated change initiatives pushed down to the school level from federal, state, and district levels (Priestley, 2011). This review of the history of educational change presented the external forces that have spawned each era of federally derived change. This part of the review focused on federally initiated change initiatives and their impact at the local school level.

On October 4, 1957, *Sputnik I* launched into the stratosphere and caused fearful introspection among politicians and citizens regarding the viability of American's education system to keep pace with the Soviet Union (U.S. Department of Education, 2010a). This historic event began a period of education reforms that have been renewed and intensified with each decade and administration. Because of the launching of *Sputnik 1*, Washington passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958, which infused the nation's education system with more than a billion dollars for science and math (U.S. Department of Education, 2010b). The passage of the NDEA began a trend of greater federal control of the nation's education system.

Federal control increased in 1965 when President Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as part of his War on Poverty. The War on Poverty was a social change initiative conceived by the Kennedy administration and carried out by the Johnson administration with the main goal of eradicating poverty through education reform (Moynihan, 1969). Additionally, a major element of the ESEA was the introduction of Title I (U.S. Department of Education, 2010b). Throughout the latter half of the 1960s and through the 1970s, most of the education reforms focused on civil rights, the needs of minorities, and the economically disadvantaged in an effort to close the achievement gap between their white counterparts (Spring, 2008). During the middle of the 1970s, the U.S. Office of Education and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare commissioned The Rand Corporation to study the Federal Programs related to education to assess their impact on educational change (Berman, & McLaughlin, 1974 a). The resulting work of Berman and McLaughlin (1974a), Berman and McLaughlin (1974b), and Berman and McLaughlin (1975) spanned multiple years and hundreds of pages on educational change, implementation and the impact of Federal Programs to effect lasting change that increased achievement for all students. The studies found implementation of the federal programs marginally increased student achievement, varying degrees of implementation were experienced, and statistically significant student achievement did not occur. These studies concluded in 1975, ten years after the ESEA went into effect.

The end of the 1970s brought the formation of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) by the Carter Administration (Spring, 2008). President Carter formed the

USDOE to consolidate accountability for federal education programs, to increase efficiency, and to heighten the nation's attention to education (Carter, 1979). Also, during this period, scrutiny on the nation's education system began to wane and complacency and a lack of focus on rigor occurred (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). As accountability and attention to the nation's education system decreased, educators became complacent and achievement fell (Urban & Jennings, 2009). The prevailing attitude amongst educators at the federal, state, and local levels led to renewed commitment and the eventual publication of the document *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which shaped and encouraged the reforms of the 1980s (McNeal & Christy, 2001). One of the hallmarks of the Regan Administration was the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which critically scrutinized the nation's education system (Spring, 2008). It is important to note, that the focus here is on external change forces that effected national education agendas. *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) introduced new accountability measures that were not grounded in research (Fullan, 2005). Government and education leaders alike felt a need to improve education, however, their methods were not as successful as intended and the burden would be passed to the next administration (Spring, 2008).

In 1991, President George H. W. Bush unveiled Goals 2000: Educate America Act, a plan for achieving national education goals by the year 2000 based on meeting benchmarks established by Title 1 (H.R. 1804 Goals 2000: Educate America Act). The four main components of the plan were the creation of model schools, national standards,

voluntary national achievement tests, and incentives for parental choice (Spring, 2008). The act sought to promote systemic changes to the nation's education system (H.R. 1804 Goals 2000: Educate America Act). Ultimately, the act continued the trend of shifting control of education from the local level to the state and federal levels. A trend of shifting control from the local level to state and federal levels, although not the intent of the law, continued and increased with No Child Left Behind (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003).

In January of 2002, then President George W. Bush, signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, which was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This was one more attempt, similar to the Carter Administration's purposes for the formation of the USDOE, to increase student achievement and accountability for districts and schools that received federal funds (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003). The purposes of NCLB were well intended, but with the legislation came many intrusive regulations (Daly & Finnigan, 2010).

The impetus of NCLB was to narrow the achievement gap between the subgroups (minority, LEP, and special needs students) identified by the law. NCLB focused on four main ideas: accountability for results, implementing research-based practices, school choice, and increased local control (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Although the aims of the law were good, it came with many unintended consequences (Cawthon, 2007).

The NCLB legislation compelled state, district, and school administrators to increase their focus on student achievement data from state standardized tests that has been disaggregated by the subgroups identified in the law (Ravitch, 2010). The subgroups

(African American, Hispanic, Asian, Limited English Proficient, Special Education, etc.) refer to any minority or disadvantaged group as compared to their Caucasian counterparts. For many districts and schools, this type of data analysis was a new concept (Kim & Sunderman, 2005).

No Child Left Behind places great importance on the collection of pertinent data that can be used to inform decisions regarding the achievement of all students. The era of reform marked by the passage of NCLB characterized an emphasis on using data to make decisions that would increase student achievement (Marzano, 2003). No Child Left Behind required building level to disaggregate student achievement data by subgroup, identify individual students not making progress, and provide interventions (Ravitch, 2010). Principals and teachers were now held individually and personally accountable for the progress of each student (Ravitch, 2010). The accountability microscope under which school and district administrators now find themselves greatly increased pressure to rapidly improve student achievement results (Sahlberg, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2010 a).

The increased expectations of NCLB have also added accountability requirements for states. With the passage of NCLB, each state was required to create a timeline for supporting and sanctioning schools that did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a measurement used to evaluate schools based on their state standardized test results in reading, mathematics, and language. It is used to compare schools within a district or state.

Each year the school does not make AYP, the sanctions and requirements to increase student achievement incrementally rise. Ultimately, the school is restructured with new administration, a portion of the staff is replaced, the possible adoption of new curriculum, and any other changes are made to ensure student achievement will rise (School Improvement Grant 1003g [SIG], 2009). The accountability requirements of NCLB and SIG lead to severe and unprecedented consequences.

A requirement of the recent School Improvement Grant offered by the U.S. Department of Education is that SEAs must identify the lowest 5% of "persistently lowest-achieving schools" in the state (Waddell, 2011). The identified schools are required to apply for the grant or risk the loss of all-federal funding. Once identified, the schools choose one of four options for restructuring: Turnaround Model, Restart Model, School Closure Model, and Transformation Model. The Turnaround Model requires the LEA to replace the principals and 50% of the staff. The Restart Model requires the LEA to close the school and reopen as a charter school or turn governance over to an education management organization. The School Closure Model requires the LEA to close the school and enroll the students in other higher achieving schools within the district. Finally, the Transformation Model requires the district to replace the principal and implement research-based interventions in an effort to transform the school. The SIG is currently at the apex of the accountability system (Waddell, 2011). These high stakes consequences place an enormous amount of pressure on principals to implement change initiatives to produce rapid results (Kearney & Smith, 2010).

The School Improvement Grant 1003(g) catches the attention of school boards with the promise of large sums of money to turnaround their schools (Waddell, 2011). This grant punctuates the constantly increasing era of accountability that began with the launch of *Sputnik I*. President Obama, in a speech given on December 6, 2010, at Forsyth Technical Community College, referred to the current state of our country's education system as "this generation's Sputnik moment" (p. 1).

This brief, but comprehensive history of how federal reform initiatives have shaped the landscape of education has been presented to show how federal mandated change initiatives have placed immense pressure on principals to rapidly improve their schools or face punitive and harsh accountability measures (Hochbein & Cunningham, 2013). Many of the reforms imposed on schools are a result of the accountability measures associated with the current legislation (Gordon & Patterson, 2008). Regardless of the source of the imposition of the reforms, principals are ultimately responsible and accountable for their implementation and success (Shipps & White, 2009).

In order to understand the experiences of principals as they lead change within their schools, an understanding of the forces that drive the requirement for change within schools needs to be acquired (Bourke & McGee, 2012). The two widely accepted sources of change are external and internal (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). For a principal and their school, external forces refer to federal and state legislation or mandates, and directives from the local education authority (Hargreaves, 2004). Fink (2003) suggested the external change agents for schools are the policymakers, the external implementers are the state and district leaders, while the internal change agents are the principals and

the internal implementers are the teachers. Often the external and internal change agents and implementers (principals and teachers) are not on the same page, thus the reform efforts are stifled (Sevier, 2008). The source of the change initiative is important, but not as important as whether or not the decision to begin the change process is inclusive or exclusive of the principal and teachers (Hargreaves, 2004).

This history of federal change initiatives outlines many of the external forces for change that have trickled down to the local school level. Other externally derived change forces come from state and district levels. State legislation and the mandates coming from the state education authority are another source of external forces that impose change on principals and schools (Hargreaves, 2004). Another major source of external change forces that affect schools comes from the district level. Federal, state, and district levels continually inundate principals and their schools with mandated change initiatives (Hargreaves, 2004). Externally mandated change initiatives contradict the research that the success of a change initiative is increased when there is input and buy-in at the building level (Zulfu & Meryem, 2012).

This history of federally/externally derived change initiatives presented an explanation of a major source of pressure placed upon principals to make rapid changes that positively influences student achievement. The externally derived forces act as a catalyst for change within schools and exacerbate the challenges principals face as they initiate, implement, and sustained change within their schools (Priestley, 2011). The implementation of change is an arduous and long process and the difficulty is increased by externally mandated change (Putnam, 2010-2011).

Historical Beginnings of Change Theory

This section of the review focused on the beginnings of the main theories of the change process and the major theorists in the field of educational change theory. These theories and theorists were identified because much of the recent research in the field of change theory and educational change theory can be traced back to their work. Each of these theories and the work of the theorists aligned with the purposes of this study. Their work represented the fields of agriculture, education, and business. The theorists and theories presented here discussed the rate at which change permeates an organization, the human element of change, the importance of school culture on change, the principal's role in change, and the sustainability of change. This is not an all-inclusive list, but a collection of the beginnings of the main theories and the major contributors to the field of educational change theory as revealed throughout the literature review process. The theorists' work greatly affected the field of educational change theory and are considered to be seminal works.

Diffusion of Innovations

Rogers' work on the rate of adoption of innovations is widely accepted in the general field of change theory and more specifically within the field of educational change theory (Fullan, 2007). His work gained popularity in the field of educational change theory over the years. His major contribution to the field of educational change theory involves the rate of adoption of innovations/change initiatives (Ellsworth, 2000). Adaptations to his theories accommodated the human element of education as opposed to agriculture.

Rogers (2003) developed a model for the rate of adoption of innovations. His model outlines five variables that determine the rate of adoption: *perceived attributes of innovations, type of innovation decision, communication channels, nature of the social system,* and *extent of the change agents' promotion of efforts* (Rogers, 2003). This model, though not intended directly for an educational setting, is transferable. Each of the five variables determining the rate of adoption can be viewed through the lens of education. The following explanation shows how this is done. The perceived attributes of an innovation, relate to the components of the initiative to address the problem and eventually the selection of a reform or initiative (Rogers, 2003). The type of innovation decision relates to who is making the decision to implement the change initiative: top down (external forces), or grassroots campaign begun in the teacher level (internal forces), and how much input principals and teachers have in the selection of the initiative (Rogers, 2003). The *communication channels* translate to what Fullan (2000b) refers to as coherence making. This is the process of communicating the initiative to those that will be charged with its implementation. The nature of the social system refers to the culture of the school and how it responds to the change initiative (Rogers, 2003). The extent of change agents' promotion efforts directly relates to the principal and his or her leadership in implementing the change initiative. The rate of adoption of the change initiative is directly dependent upon all five of the variables determining the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003).

Environment/Culture

While the work of Rogers focuses on the diffusion of an innovation throughout an organization, Ely's (1990) work looks at how the innovation or change initiative interacts with the culture of a school to impact implementation and sustainability. Ely's work laid the foundation for the study of the culture of a school and its willingness and readiness to accept and implement change (Ellsworth, 2000). Ely was one of the first researchers to examine the environment in which change was being introduced and how the environment affected the success of the initiative (Ellsworth, 2000).

1. Dissatisfaction with the status quo: The organization senses stagnation and realizes the need for change.
2. Knowledge and skills exist: Do those within the organization have the skills and the ability to make the needed changes?
3. Resources are available: Are the resources currently available or will they be available to ensure that the change initiative has the support needed for success?
4. Time is available: Those leading the change have or will set aside a Ely's Eight Conditions for Change (1990): substantial amount of time for proper implementation.
5. Rewards or incentives exist for participants: Will the implementers be rewarded either extrinsically or intrinsically for their role in facilitating the change initiatives?
6. Participation is expected and encouraged: Not only are the key stakeholders expected to participate, but they are encouraged to do so throughout the entire

process.

7. Commitment by those who are involved: Throughout the process, it is necessary to assess the level of commitment of all involved.

8. Leadership is evident: Strong leadership drives every step of the change process, and for the purposes of this study, directly relates to the leadership of the principal. (Ely, 1990, 300-302)

Each of these conditions must be assessed in order to predict the readiness of the organization (school) for the implementation of a change initiative (Ely, 1990). The conditions for change can be used as a needs assessment during the beginning phases of the change process (Ely, 1990). Ely's (1990) work on the conditions for change laid the foundation for future work on school culture and how this effects the implementation of change within a school.

Concerns Based Adoption Model

The previous two researchers focused on change in fields not related specifically to education. Hall and Hord (1984) completed some of the earliest research on the change theory and how it directly related to education and the improvement of schools. In this book, Hall and Hord focused on the *concerns-based model* for implementing the change. Their model for change was based on a concern by those implementing change for those that would be most impacted by it and how they perceived the changes (Hall & Hord, 1984). Within an educational setting, the implementers are the principal and teachers, and those affected by the change are the students. In order to select the correct reform and

ensure implementation, the locus of concern must be for the students (Hall & Hord, 1984).

Specific to educational change, Hall and Hord's work provided school leaders with models on how to assess the need for change, and examples on how to implement change at the school level. More specifically, their concerns based adoption model gave principals a framework for individualizing the implementation of change to the needs of the implementers (Hall & Hord, 2006). The more recent work of Hall and Hord (2006) updated their Concerns Based Adoption Model to reflect advances in research related to the field of educational change theory.

Leadership

The work of Elmore (2004), with regards to the field of educational change theory, focused on leadership and its paramount importance. A strong leader who maintains focus on the goals to be achieved (the change initiative) and continually provides appropriate leadership for each situation cannot be underestimated (Elmore, 2004; Wise & Jacobo, 2010). However, in order for a change initiative to experience its intended purposes, leadership must be shared and distributed throughout the organization (Morrison, 2013). Elmore (2004) suggested a correlation between leadership and successful change. Additionally, strong leadership from the principal is essential to the success of any change initiative (Elmore, 2004).

Sustainability

Hargreaves and his colleagues wrote extensively on the topic of the sustainability of educational change initiatives (Hargreaves, 2007; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003;

Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Hargreaves' work referred to an intentional and ongoing effort to achieve sustainability of change initiatives implemented within schools (Hargreaves, 2007; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; & Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). A main tenet of his work is to manage leadership turnover or succession so that there is continuity of the change initiatives from one principal to the next (Tam, 2009). An in depth review of the research associated with educational change theory uncovered that the work of Hargreaves and his colleagues is unique in that it almost entirely focuses on sustainability of change. The work of Hargreaves and his colleagues on the subject of the sustainability change has guided this study.

Change Theory

Michael Fullan has focused on leadership and its correlation with the implementation of change (Fullan, 2007; Fullan, 2002 b; Fullan, 2011). His view of leadership is a systems approach, where the leader acknowledges and recognizes that their actions impact the entire system (classroom, school, district, state, and nation) (Fullan, 2011; Fullan, 2004). Within that system, the principal plays an important role in the change process (Fullan, 2010 b; Fullan 2008 b; Fullan 2002 c). Throughout his writings he refers to the principal as an agent for change within his or her school (Fullan, 2008; Fullan, 2002 b). Though the success of any change initiative is dependent upon the entire system (teachers, parents, students, administrators, etc.) the role of the principal in effecting change within his or her school and upon the entire system is the most important (Fullan, 2010 b).

The contributions of Rogers, Ely, Hall and Hord, Elmore, Hargreaves, and Fullan have shaped the landscape of educational change theory over the past four decades. Their contributions are the history of the field and continue to be the future. This study draws heavily upon the work of Elmore, Hargreaves, and especially Fullan for its structure and direction. As the review of the literature progressed, the work of the aforementioned theorists and that of Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, and Wallace (2005) revealed three main phases of educational change theory, which are presented, in the next section.

Three Phases of Change

Educational change theory has three main and widely accepted phases: initiation, implementation, and sustainability (Berman & McLaughlin, 1974 a; Curry et al., 2010; Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Fullan, 1999; Guhn, 2009). Initiation comprises the selection or mandate of a reform to meet identified deficiencies or needs (Hall, 2001). Implementation refers to the adoption of practices related to a change initiative that has desired outcomes to address a specific need (Fixsen, et al., 2005). Sustainability refers to change that lasts and continues to meet the intentions of the reform (Hargreaves, 2009). Each of these phases has many components that make the process more complicated than it might initially appear. The following sections expound on each of the three phases in detail.

Initiation

Initiation requires that a need/problem be identified, the selection of a change initiative to address the identified need/problem, development of a plan for implementation, and communication of that plan to all stakeholders especially the

implementers (Fixsen et al., 2009). Initiation is the first phase of the change process (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). The initiation phase encompasses all of the activities that lead up to the second phase of the change process implementation (Fixsen, et al., 2005).

A needs assessment that identifies areas within the school or district that require improvement is the beginning step of the initiation phase of the change process (Roach, Kratochwill, & Frank, 2009; Ely, 1990). The leader of a school, the principal, must identify and create a need for change (McMaster, 2013; Gilstrap, 2007). Additionally, all stakeholders must see the need for the intended change initiative (Priestley, 2011). A "moral imperative" to ensure that all students receive the best education possible should guide leaders as they seek to initiate reforms (Fullan, 2011). The need for change must be communicated to all of the stakeholders: administrators, teachers, parents, etc. (Guhn, 2009). Throughout the initiation phase of the change process constant, clear, and coherent communication is essential to gain buy-in for the initiative to have a chance of being successful (Daly & Finnigan, 2010).

Once a need has been identified, and communicated, the next step is to select the initiative/reform to address the identified need (Fixsen, et al., 2009). The selection process should be discriminating and thorough when deciding on which reform/change initiative to implement (Mulford, 2006). Throughout this process, the principal and implementers continually evaluate whether the selected change initiative effectively addresses the problem (Hall, 2013). The inclusion of teachers and those responsible for the inevitable implementation of the initiative is crucial to gain buy-in and create a sense of ownership with the selected initiative (Reeves, 2009).

After the selection of the initiative, the principal and leadership team create a co-constructed vision for how it will address the identified need (Russell et al., 2011). The literature related to school change suggests the change process begins with a vision of what the stakeholders want to accomplish and how the initiative will affect the school (Protheroe, Shellard, & Turner, 2003). The vision guides the initiators and the implementers throughout the change process (Finnigan, 2010). The more people involved in its creation, the greater the likelihood of eventual success (Reason & Reason, 2011). The responsibility to create the co-constructed vision rests with the change agent or for the purposes of this study, the principal (Putnam, 2010-2011). When discussing the creation of a vision for the change process, it is important to note some of the literature related to this subject suggests that all stakeholders must be consulted and included in the creation of the vision (Bergman &Brough, 2007; Mehan, Hubbard, & Stein, 2005; Morrison, 2013). Conversely, some research suggests that top-down initiatives often are and can be successful (DuFour, 2007; Fixsen, Blasé, Metz, & Van Dyke, 2013; Russell et al., 2011). However, the majority of the research suggests including as many stakeholders as possible in the creation of the vision for the change process (Morrison, 2013).

Throughout the initiation process, the principal continually assesses the readiness of the school to accept and embrace the impending changes (Ely, 1990; Reeves, 2009). The impact is so important that there is an actual need to measure the readiness of the school for the change process (Akbulut, 2009). The research on the subject dates back to the work of Ely (1976) and continues today with the focus on the culture of the school and its readiness to accept change (Muhammad, 2009; & Kruse & Louis, 2009). Failure

to include the key stakeholders in the change process and to consider the intricacies of the culture of the school can slow or even stop the progress of the change initiative (Porter, 2005). For the purposes of this study the organizational members refers to students, parents, teachers, and principals. Along with the need to assess the readiness of the school for change, there is a need to evaluate the readiness of the individuals within the school for the change process (Reeves, 2009). Two other integral components to be considered and evaluated are the capacity of the school to implement the intended changes (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Mulford, 2006) and the need to assess the culture of the school to gauge how it will respond to the reforms to be implemented (McMaster, 2013; Kruse & Louis, 2009). Each school will respond to the change process differently based on the internal culture, the individuals within the school, the community, and the leadership provided by the principal (Sahin, 2011).

The initiation phase of the change process can be compared to the preparation, planning, and launch of an ad campaign for a product going to market. Essentially, the principal is doing just that, selling the change initiative to the stakeholders (Morrison, 2013). Once the implementers have acknowledged the need for change, the principal and the leadership team create a systematic and structured plan for the implementation of the change initiative (Protheroe, 2011). Next, informal and formal collaborative structures and social networks of communication are constructed in order for knowledge and practices to be shared with in the school and sent out to the parents and community (Daly & Finnigan, 2010). Constant communication between building administrators and teachers, throughout the initiation phase of the change process, increases the likelihood of

success (Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011). The plan for the implementation includes the marketing of the initiative to all stakeholders and promotes action rather than just another document that does not have an impact on the change process (Reeves, 2009).

Coherence making of the initiative by those responsible for implementation is an important step in the initiation process (Fullan, 2000 a). Coherence making refers to gaining an understanding of the initiative and assimilating it into the beliefs and knowledge base of the teachers/implementers (Fullan, 2007). This encompasses providing teachers and administrators with the opportunity to give input, make suggestions, and providing them with time to mentally incorporate the intended initiatives within their system of beliefs (Rosenblatt, 2004). Change is difficult and often teachers experience a sense of loss when they begin this process (Zeppeda, 2008). A principal leading a change initiative cannot expect teachers to change immediately - time must be provided for them to go through the coherence-making process (Turan & Bektas, 2013).

To summarize, the initiation process requires constant and clear communication between the principal and those responsible for implementation (Louis, 2007). The principal assists the implementers and stakeholders in realizing the need for the initiative (Fullan, 2007) and creates a shared vision of how the intended changes will positively impact the school (Putman, 2010-2011). Likewise, the principal must create a sense of urgency based on the identified needs (Thomson & Sanders, 2010). Based on the identified need, the stakeholders select a change initiative to address the identified need. A systematic and well thought out plan, constructed with input from all of the stakeholders guides the change process (Protheroe, 2011). The change agent, the

principal, allows time for teachers to understand and incorporate the initiative into their individual beliefs (Fullan, 2007). The initiation process should contain the aforementioned components to avoid premature failure of the change initiative.

Implementation

Implementation is the next phase of the change process. It is essential that all stakeholders associated with the intended initiative have a deep understanding of the implementation process (Harris, 2011). The research of Berman and McLaughlin (1974a) contains one of the first mentions of the implementation process. However, the emphasis and research placed on this part of the change process has evolved and been extensively written about since then by: Curry et al., 2010; Datnow & Castellano, 2003; Fixsen, et al., 2005; Fixsen, et al., 2009; Fixsen, et al., 2013; Fullan, 2000b; Higgins, Weiner, & Young, 2012; and Hord et al., 1987.

The implementation phase of the change process is complicated and requires a firm understanding of its essential components (Higgins et al., 2012). "Implementation is defined as a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions" (Fixsen, et al., 2005, p. 5). Within this definition, "a specified set of activities" refers to a plan for implementing the change initiative. Additionally, "activity or program" refers to the intended change initiative. Finally, “known dimensions” refers to the intended outcomes of the change initiative if implemented successfully. The implementation of change is a complex process with many stages to manage and requires a level of expertise on the part of the principal and implementers (McCall, 2009).

Three main factors effect implementation: characteristics of change, local factors, and external factors (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). The characteristics of change relate to a need for change, the vision and plan associated with it, the length of time needed, the identification of the stakeholders to involve, and the selection of an initiative (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). The local factors refer to the culture of the school and district, the capabilities of the change agent (principal), the implementers (teachers), and the beliefs and values of the community (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Some of the external factors are state and federal legislation, societal expectations for achievement, and externally imposed accountability measures (Shipps & White, 2009). The three major factors effecting the implementation of change lead to the next logical step - a more granular look at the specifics of the implementation process.

Fixsen et al. (2005) suggested three general degrees of implementation: paper, process, and performance. Paper implementation refers to plans, policies, and procedures formulated during the beginning stages of the change process and disseminated to the stakeholders as a document (Fixsen et al., 2005). This is a written plan for the intended change initiative. Often organizations, including schools, stop at this stage of the process and fail to implement the desired change (Kotter, 2007). Process implementation refers to the professional development, adoption of practices, and structures put in place to support the implementation of the change initiative (Fixsen et al., 2009). However, this is not enough; performance implementation is required. This represents altering the culture of the school by adopting new standard operating procedures that align with the change initiative and continually monitoring progress (Fixsen et al., 2005). The difference

between process implementation and performance implementation is the intentional and evaluative manner in which the procedures and processes are monitored and, if necessary, changed (Fixsen et al., 2005). Each degree of implementation contributes to helping a school to attain the level of performance implementation.

Fixsen, et al. (2009) identified six stages of implementation: exploration and adoption, program installation, initial implementation, full operation, innovation, and sustainability. The first two stages, exploration and adoption and program installation refer to the initiation process and the last one, sustainability, refers to the third major phase of the change process which will be explored in depth later in the. The middle three stages of initial implementation, full operation, and innovation, will be expounded upon here.

Initial implementation pertains to increasing the skill level of implementers, professional development related to the initiative, the assimilation of it into the culture of the school, and initial discussions in learning communities (Fixsen et al., 2013). It also involves breaking ranks from the status quo and formulating new habits and operating procedures to guide continued implementation (Nolan, 2007). Throughout the initial implementation stage, the principal constantly assesses the culture of the school and its tendency to reject the intended change (Ntinas, 2008).

Fixsen et al. (2013) suggested that full operation occurs when the change initiative has become the new culture of the school and is evident in the actions of the teachers. At this point, the implementers recognize signs of success and some of the intended benefits are beginning to be realized (Fixsen et al., 2013). Of the six stages of

implementation, full operation requires an enormous and unified effort by the principal, implementers, and stakeholders (Fullan, 2007).

During the innovation phase, the implementers begin to feel comfortable with the change initiative and can see the results (Fixsen et al., 2009). The implementers evaluate the change initiative and make judgments or decisions as to changes that might better fit with the unique requirements of their situation (Fixsen et al., 2005). Subsequently, the implementers introduce innovations to improve the desired outcomes of the initiative, which evolves and becomes more effective (Fixsen et al., 2005). Though presented here in three phases, it is not to say that the implementation process is linear or that it can be accomplished within a given timeframe by following a list of sequential steps (Nehring & O'Brien, 2012). The implementation process is complex and fluid (Timperley and Parr, 2005) and the time to accomplish the desired outcomes will be impacted by the culture of each school (Ohlson, 2009).

A desire exists to affix a timeline to the implementation of a change initiative; however, many factors affect this process making it difficult to accurately predict (Porter, 2005). The entire process of initiation, implementation, and sustainability can take a minimum of three years and up to five (Hall, 2013) and even as long as seven years (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). When a principal, implementer, and stakeholders choose to begin the process of implementing change they can expect many years of work with numerous challenges and diversions (Hall, 2013).

One such diversion is the implementation dip, refers to the paradigm shift, new skills, alignment of old beliefs with new ones, and the challenges associated with

working through the implementation process (Fullan, 2010 a). Actual performance often dips below previous performance and definitely below the eventual intended performance (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Associated with the implementation dip are frustration, a sense of loss for formerly held beliefs (Gialamas, Pelonis, & Medeiros, 2014), and confusion (Yan, 2012). Human beings within the organization and their natural resistance to change contribute to the effects of the implementation dip (Seo et al., 2012). Additional consequences of the implementation dip are decreased morale and lower levels of performance (Louis, 2007). Consequently, change agents/principals need to plan and prepare for the implementation dip (Fullan, 2010a).

Once the change initiative is past the initial dip, it goes through a period of equilibrium while the organization adapts to the change (Parsons & Fidler, 2005). This period of equilibrium signals steady progress (Fullan, 2001). Hall (2013) referred to this progress as bridging the implementation dip on the way to a sustainable change initiative. The implementation dip will come (Mascall, & Leithwood, 2010), it can be bridged (Hall, 2013), and one of its main origins are the human beings and how they respond to the change initiative (Seo et al., 2012).

The factor that will have the greatest impact towards the success or failure of any change initiative is the human element (Muhammad, 2009). The human element refers to the people within the school that are directly responsible for the initiation, implementation and sustainability of the change initiative (Seo et al., 2012). The people within the school directly engaged in the implementation process have the greatest impact on the success or failure of the change initiative (Gialamas et al., 2014). Therefore,

considerable effort by the principal should be given to understanding and forming positive working relationships with the people they work with throughout the implementation process (Turan & Bektas, 2013).

If the people within a school have the greatest impact on the success of the implementation of change (Muhammad, 2009), then understanding them and how they adapt, resist, and respond to the implementation process becomes important (Zembylas & Barker, 2007). Rogers (2003) categorizes those charged with the implementation of an innovation/reform initiative into five groups: Innovators (venturesome), Early Adopters (eager), Early Majority (deliberate), Late Majority (skeptical), and Laggards (traditional). The innovators and their interests and influence usually extended beyond the local setting thus having little impact (Rogers, 2003). The early adopters embraced the innovation and implemented it at the local level without hesitation (Rogers, 2003). The early majority accepted and adopted the change initiative before the remaining teachers were ready to commit (Rogers, 2003). The late majority was skeptical about adopting the innovation and did so only after much hesitation (Rogers, 2003). The laggards hung onto the status quo for as long as possible and their halfhearted adoption of the innovation rarely produced the intended results (Rogers, 2003). The work of Rogers (2003) represents five decades of research on the subject of the diffusion of innovations, and how people influenced the implementation process.

Recognizing that the people directly involved in implementing change initiatives have the greatest impact on the process and with the significance of the Rogers' (2003) work, similar research was sought within the field of education. Muhammad (2009),

presented his own list of adopters specific to the field of education: believers, tweeners, survivors, and fundamentalists. The believers, much like Rogers' (2003) early adopters, lead the change initiative within their school and are an example and a resource to their colleagues (Muhammad, 2009). Muhammad (2009) described the tweeners as those new to the profession who have an enthusiasm for what they are doing but lack direction and experience. Rogers (2003), in his categorization of implementers, does not have a group similar to Muhammad's (2009) tweeners. Muhammad's (2009) description of the implementers is specific to the education profession while Rogers (2003) is more general. The survivors, similar to Rogers' (2003) late majority, implemented the reforms later than others. However, Muhammad (2009) found that the survivors made up only about 2% of the implementers. He also suggested one of the reasons they struggled was due to issues in their personal life that did not allow them to focus on the task at hand. The fundamentalists seem to be a mix of Rogers' (2003) late majority and laggards. They cling to the status quo, feel they can outlast the change initiative, and in general resist as long as possible (Muhammad, 2009). A distinction between the work of Rogers (2003) and that of Muhammad (2009) is the specific link of Muhammad's work to the education profession. It is essential for a change agent, a principal, to understand the people they work with and their various motivations and beliefs as they work to implement a new reform or initiative. The work of Rogers (2003) and Muhammad (2009) focused on a crucial factor in the change process, the people who will be expected to do the work of implementation.

The people within a school and their willingness to transform their practices have the greatest influence on the success of change initiatives (Lodge and Reed, 2003). Because the people and not the programs or initiatives or reforms are a critical component for the success of change initiatives, then support for them and their professional development becomes a priority (Keys, 2007). Professional development for teachers, related to change initiatives, improves professional practice and the likelihood of successful implementation (Zepeda, 2008). Weiss and Pasley (2006) suggested that principal support for and participation in professional development related to the change initiative increases teacher participation and their willingness to adopt new practices. Some research suggests the principal needs to provide relevant professional development to build the capacity of the teachers to successfully implement the change initiative (Aitken & Aitken, 2008; Bryk, 2010) and then provide continual and intense support (Popp, 2012).

Sustainability

Implementation of change is relatively straightforward and the easier part of the process when compared to sustaining the change initiative over time (Hargreaves, 2003; Higgins et al., 2012). Sustainability is widely accepted as the most difficult phase of the change process (Chen, 2008; Guhn, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Sustainability is deep change that lasts and becomes the new culture of a school (Gordon & Patterson, 2008). Sustainability is one of the most significant issues facing leaders as they strive for reform and implement change that lasts for decades, survives leadership changes, and endures the continuous onslaught of new initiatives (Lodge, 2003; Tam, 2009).

Strong, visionary principal leadership is essential for a school to sustain change (Lambert, 2007). The principal is responsible for keeping the vision for the change initiative and its intended purposes continually on the minds of the implementers (Morrison, 2013). Therefore, the role of the principal requires complete commitment to the change initiative and its intended purposes (Seo et al., 2012). If the implementers see the principal lacks vision or commitment to the change initiative, they will likely follow the principal's lead and give minimal effort resulting in failure of the initiative (Goodson, 2001). Therefore, leadership is one of the main factors influencing the sustainability of change initiatives (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). However, what happens to the initiative if there is a change in leadership?

If leadership is one of the most important factors in the sustainability of a change initiative (Lambert, 2007), then leadership succession is its biggest hurdle (Langran, 2010). Leadership succession refers to a principal leaving a school during one of the phases of the change process and being replaced by someone not familiar with the change initiative(s) being implemented within a school (Hargreaves, 2004). When change in leadership occurs an organizational structure needs to be in place to keep the current initiatives moving forward or they will likely go with the leaving principal (Fullan, 2002a). Therefore, planning for leadership succession becomes important when maintaining the work of implementing and sustaining a change initiative (Ryan & Gallo, 2011). A strong organizational structure at the building level coupled with shared leadership can help the school transcend leadership succession and attain sustainability (Hargreaves, 2002).

Distributing leadership to teacher leaders spreads the responsibility for implementing and sustaining a change initiative (Reason & Reason, 2011). Leadership should be distributed so when a change in school leadership occurs the initiatives can keep moving forward with the remaining leaders (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Additionally, distributing leadership helps to diffuse the change initiative more quickly throughout the school (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Building the capacity of all responsible for implementing and sustaining the change initiative helps to distribute leadership throughout the organization and insulates the school from leadership change (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). More specifically, capacity building requires all stakeholders to be well educated on the intricacies of the reform, passionate about its success and have a clear vision of its purpose (Kaniuka, 2012).

Many factors contribute to the likelihood of an initiative being sustained over time. Building the capacity of all stakeholders through sustained professional development is one factor (Spelman & Rohlwmg, 2013). Involving parents in each phase of the change process garners their support and helps carry the school through the inevitable challenges ahead (Guhn, 2009). Sustained and intense support from the district office enhances the likelihood of the longevity of the initiative (Protheroe, 2011). Additionally, the district office can write policies and procedures to support the change initiative (Taylor, 1995). Although many factors contribute to the sustainability of change, the principal maintaining vision and purpose through the many difficulties associated with the change process is the most important (Bryk, 2010).

The goal for any school that embarks on the change process is to sustain the change initiative so that it fulfills its intended purposes (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Ideally, the implemented change will be firmly rooted in the culture and become the new standard operating procedure of the school (Avidiv-Ungar & Eshet-Alkakay, 2011). Sustainability is the end goal of the change process (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Educational Change Theory

The previous three sections on initiation, implementation, and sustainability are a subset of the larger field of educational change theory. Educational change theory is the field of study concerned with all aspects that influence initiating, implementing, and sustaining change initiatives within schools (Fullan, 1999). The following sections review the literature related to the major forces that influence the implementation of change. Each of following topics emerged as major themes in the research influencing the change process.

Forces Influencing/Impacting Change

A principal leading change encounters many forces that either positively or negatively impact the process. A review of the research revealed the following main forces influenced the change process

- the source of the change initiative (Sevier, 2008);
- whether it included school level leaders and teachers (Morrison, 2013);
- the culture of the school (Ohlson, 2009);
- the level of trust for those charged with implementing the change initiative (Harris, 2011); and

- the history of initiatives previously implemented within the school (Abrahamson, 2004).

The following sections outline the factors with the greatest influence on a principal's ability to implement successful change. The topics below emerged as the review of the literature progressed and represent major themes in the research related to forces that influence the implementation of change.

School Culture

The culture of the school needs to be diagnosed and understood before meaningful change can take place (Hall, 2013). Assessing the culture of a school is a complex and lengthy process that may require the assistance of an impartial observer (Kruse & Louis, 2009). The impartial observer could be another building principal in or out of the district or a superintendent from a neighboring district. For a principal and their staff, it is often difficult to impartially assess the culture of the school because they live and are a part of the culture (Kruse & Louis, 2009).

The culture of a school encompasses many things from how a faculty dresses, conversations in the faculty room, willingness to change, instruction, assessment, grading practices, and their belief in the ability of every student to learn (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The culture of a school is complex and continually evolving (Connolly et al., 2011). Some of the major factors to consider when assessing a school's culture are: makeup of the faculty and staff, community values, economic base of the community, and location (Roach et al., 2009).

The culture of a school has three distinct parts: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004). First, artifacts of a school's culture refer to what a visitor observes and feel as they walk through the school (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Artifacts are easily observed, but more difficult to interpret (Kruse & Louis, 2009). For example, artifacts include a mural on the wall, the school's song, dress of the students and faculty, and the mascot. Artifacts are often taken for granted and not even really consciously noticed on a day-to-day basis by those functioning within the culture (Meier, 2012). Second, espoused values are the commonly held beliefs and conduct shared by members of the staff (Kruse & Louis, 2009). These are actions and beliefs that define the workings of a school (Connolly et al., 2011). For example, at Johnson Junior High faculty meetings are on the first Monday of every month and last 30 minutes. If a meeting is scheduled for another day or lasts longer than usual, it would upset the balance of the school and be the topic of conversation in the teacher's lounge. Third, underlying assumptions represent the deepest level of understanding concerning a school's culture (Kruse & Louis, 2009). The prevailing opinion of a faculty that the test scores have gone down over the years because of the growing ELL population is an example of an underlying assumption. This is also the least discussed component of the culture and often the greatest deterrent to change (Schein, 2004). Espoused values and especially the underlying assumptions must be revealed to thoroughly understand the culture of a school (Reeves, 2009).

Understanding the personnel dynamics within a school is a vital component to implementing change (Seo et al., 2012). Undoubtedly, some faculty members will openly

resist any initiative or professional development that diverges from the status quo (Zimmerman, 2006). Sustainable change requires identifying resisters and seeking to validate their concerns (Bergmann & Brough, 2007).

Resistant to change describes how most organizations respond to any initiative that might upset the equilibrium (Zimmerman, 2006). For a principal to institute sustainable change in a school, it is necessary to understand its culture (Connolly et al., 2011). Understanding the following subcultures (student, teacher, school administrator, district, community, and parent) is required before implementing change (Kruse & Louis, 2009). It then becomes the responsibility of the principal, to build a consensus or a shared vision among the various subcultures (Popp, 2012).

Before a principal can unify the identified subcultures, he or she needs to spend time diagnosing the current culture of a school (Lumpkin, 2008). Before a principal can lead change that permanently alters practices and beliefs, he or she needs a comprehensive knowledge of the school's culture (Kruse & Louis, 2009). This process will take time and require the principal to focus their energies on identifying and understanding each of the subcultures (Lumpkin, 2008). A principal new to a position, school, district, region, or state can expect this process to last anywhere from a few months to a few years (McMaster, 2013). The amount of time depends on how familiar the principal is with the culture of the state, region, district, and school (Schein, 2004). Additionally, a principal who takes over a school in another state in an entirely different region of the country will have a much steeper learning curve (Schein, 2004). Understanding the culture of a school takes time, but is required before a principal can

begin planning how to implement change that will not be resisted or rejected (Irez & Han, 2011).

Once a principal has a grasp on the culture of his or her school, he or she is ready to begin the lengthy process of effecting lasting change on the system (Connolly et al., 2011). The time a principal takes to understand the culture of his or her school provides a sound basis for implementing change and increases the likelihood of success (Gialamas et al., 2014). An understanding of a school's culture and the successful implementation of any change initiative are mutually dependent (Russell et al., 2011).

Leadership and Change

Strong leadership is essential to the success of any change initiative (Bryk, 2010). Additionally, the leader is expected to have a solid and unwavering vision for the change initiative and a dogged determination to see the process through to its completion (Collins, 2001). Along with vision, the leader needs to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to lead successful change (Elmore, 2004). Knowledge refers to the leaders working understanding of the initiative, their firm grasp of the change process, and the culture within which implementation is to occur. Skills refer to their leadership proficiency (Elmore, 2004). When considering the implementation of change, underestimating the pivotal role of the principal is a mistake (Hall & Hord, 2006). Change that has a lasting impact upon an organization or school cannot happen without direction that strong leadership provides (Taylor, 2010).

Resistance

Implementers resisting change is not a new concept. One of the earliest writings directly related to the field of education and change theory is by Berman and McLaughlin (1974a) in their groundbreaking work *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change*. The following quote represents how far back documentation of resistance to change appears in the research. Berman and McLaughlin (1974a) suggested "The organizational perspective on planned change contends that resistance to change persists after a decision to adopt is made, continuing to exert influence throughout the process of adaptation and implementation" (p. 8).

At its most basic, resistance to change sounds something like this "we have always done it this way, and it has worked so why change" (Gordon & Patterson, 2008). Principals leading change need to plan for and expect resistance early on and throughout the process (Harris, 2011). Moreover, resistance to change is an avoidance behavior (Ntinas, 2008). Implementers believe that if they ignore or avoid the change initiative long enough it will go away. Other forms of, or reasons for resistance includes: to protect against pain (James, 2008), a lack of trust in the initiative or those leading the change (Kearney & Smith, 2010), change causes a sense of insecurity (Winter & McEachern, 2001), and it goes against the status quo (Basom, 1991). Many reasons exist to avoid or resist change, and most directly correlate to maintaining the existing state of the school (Bergman, 2007).

Past experiences, influence resistance to change initiatives and formulate the attitudes of teachers towards future reforms (Sarafidou & Nikolaidis, 2009). Often

teachers feel if they resist long enough either the initiative will go away or the principal will move on before requiring them to do the work of implementation (Bergman, 2007). Furthermore, teachers become burned out by going through one failed initiative after another (Hinde, 2003). Experiencing multiple failed initiatives propagates a sense of distrust for future change initiatives, and for the principal who is leading the process (Kearney & Smith, 2010).

Trust of the Principal by Teachers

Resistance towards change closely relates to a lack of trust by teachers for the leadership driving a reform initiative and the change initiative itself (Irez & Han, 2011). Some research suggests that trust between teachers and principals are present for lasting change to be possible (Bates, 2006; & Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Priestley, 2011; Zepeda, 2008). Trust then becomes a foundational principle in the change process; without it there can be no progress (Holmes et al., 2013). It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that trust is present before and during the implementation of change (Holmes et al., 2013).

The principal can build trust within a school by presenting a consistent message, maintaining consistent standards, and providing timely and concrete feedback (Turan & Bektas, 2013). When a principal's actions are unwavering and match verbal and written communications the result is increased trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Principals build relational trust over time through day-to-day interactions that let teachers know they are there for them and are committed to the success of the school (Bryk, 2010). Trust

between principals and teachers create an atmosphere where growth occurs, and the change process thrives (Guhn, 2009).

Repetitive Change Syndrome

Repetitive change syndrome, an idea first referred to by Abrahamson (2004), presents multiple factors that significantly affect the implementation of an initiative by a school. Initiative overload is the tendency of an educational institution to implement and focus on too many initiatives at one time (Abrahamson, 2004). Change related chaos refers to the confusion that result from initiative overload (Abrahamson, 2004). As a result of initiative overload and change related chaos, implementers feel a sense of distrust towards anyone implementing a new change initiative (Bryk, 2010). A lack of trust by implementers is an outcome of the repetitive change syndrome that can halt the progress of any change initiative (Abrahamson, 2004).

Top-Down Versus Bottom-Up

The perception that a change initiative is being forced upon teachers in a *top-down* fashion often breeds resistance and cynicism towards the principal and the initiative (Kearney & Smith, 2010). In a school setting, a *top-down* initiative is derived from an individual or organization outside of the school. A higher authority such as the U.S. Department of Education, legislators, state education authority, or local education authority conceives and initiates a top-down mandate (Levin, 2007). In each case, the person or group initiating the change initiative likely has not sought input from the eventual implementers, the teachers, thus creating resistance (Reeves, 2006). Research on top-down mandates suggests many fail because they did not pursue *buy-in* from the

implementers (Hargreaves, 2004; Hinde, 2003; Winter & McEachern, 2001; Yan, 2012). In contrast, research suggests large-scale, top-down reforms are often successful (DuFour, 2007; Fixsen et al., 2013; Hall & Hord, 2006; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Mascal, 2002; Seashore, 2009). However, a sound practice for a principal is to garner support for an initiative by including as many stakeholders as possible (Shirley, 2011; Bergman, 2007; & Mehan et al., 2005). Research also suggests at some point during the initiation phase the principal must take charge and began leading the implementation of the initiative (Chen, 2008). A balance between building a consensus of support for the initiative and leading in what might be considered a slightly top-down fashion is required (Little & Veugelers, 2005).

Leadership and Educational Change Theory

Educational change theory is the field of study concerned with the initiation, implementation and sustainability of initiatives focused on improving student achievement (Fullan 2007; Priestley, 2011; Taylor, 2010) by altering the culture of the school to allow the change initiative to flourish (DuFour, 2007). However, most change initiatives do not fulfill their intended purposes (Curry et al., 2010). As principals lead change, their lack of understanding of the change process results in failed implementation and sustainability (Guhn, 2009; Jerald, 2005; Keys, 2007). While the research related to this field of study is now in its fourth decade, principals continue to struggle to implement successful change that lasts (Fullan, 2007).

Change is a process that takes 3-5 years for successful integration into the culture of a school (Hall, 2013). Therefore, principals leading change must keep the vision alive

and continually in the forefront of the minds of the implementers (Russell et al., 2011). Harris (2006) found a relationship between strong leadership and school improvement. Additionally, Protheroe (2011) suggested "at its most basic, school improvement is change – change that might require people to abandon long-held beliefs and practices, shift roles, and learn new skills" (p. 1). The principal is the person charged with the responsibility of leading a school through the change process and eventually achieving sustainability of the initiative (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

Principal as an Agent for Change

The role of change agent is an increasingly important responsibility of principals (Masci et al., 2008). A principal may be mandated by the state to institute a new program. They might be required by the superintendent and school board to use a new evaluation system. A principal might see a need to increase the teachers' ability to ask higher order thinking questions. All of these represent implementing change within the school. Regardless of the source of the change initiative the principal is ultimately responsible for its success (Fullan, 2008). Research suggests the success of a change initiative, whether mandated by the district, state, or federal level or initiated from within the building, depends heavily on the leadership of the principal (Kaniuka, 2012; Marzano et al., 2005; Chen, 2008).

A definite need exists for principals to understand change theory; however, it must be presented in a format easily assimilated into their repertoire of skills in a reasonable period (Russell et al., 2011). Peterson (2001) observed that a typical principal deals with hundreds of tasks in a day. Morrison (2013) found that principals are often

overwhelmed with managerial and administrative duties that take time away from leadership. Principals often get pulled away from a single task multiple times before it is complete (Peterson, 2001). They have so many roles and responsibilities requiring their time and attention that leading change may be delayed, put on hiatus or even stopped (Aitken & Aitken, 2008). Due to the nature of the position, principals need to be able to understand and use effective and proven strategies for implementing change (Senge, 1990). If the process cannot be condensed and simplified then the principal of change will not be incorporated into the implementation of the reform and it will likely fail (Russell et al., 2011). Additionally, Fullan (2007) stated that a principal needs to acquire a holistic understanding of the change process so he or she can take appropriate actions when difficulties arise. Given the many tasks vying for a principal's time, the challenge becomes identifying fundamental change concepts to be understood and applied by a principal and integrated into his or her skill set.

The principal is the intermediary between the reforms, initiatives, and ideas being pushed by outside influences (federal government, state legislation, district initiatives, etc.) and the teachers (Russell et al., 2011). The role of leadership and especially that of a building principal in implementing and sustaining change initiatives within a school is omnipotent (Hall, 2013; Hall & Hord, 2006). Many studies extoll the importance of the principal as an agent for sustainable change within his or her school (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2002; & Marzano et al., 2005; Starr, 2011). A substantial amount of research exists related to the importance of the role of the principal

in implementing change, however, minimal research specifically focused on what a principal does to ensure the success of an initiative exists (Fullan, 2007).

Literature Related to Differing Methodologies

The review of the literature focused on the three phases of educational change theory, the theories associated with principal leadership in implementing change, the theories related to school culture, and the forces that influence the change process. Throughout the literature review process, I reviewed the methodologies of each study to assist with selecting the methodology that would best address the purposes and research questions of this study. The studies reviewed here used a variety of methodologies and came from peer-reviewed journals. I analyzed qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method studies either tightly or moderately aligned with the research questions of this study. I examined many studies to assist with making a decision regarding the appropriate methodology to use for this study.

The following quantitative research studies were related to the topic of this study. One study inductively analyzed interview data concerning emotional responses of teachers towards change and translated it into quantitative data (e.g., Hargreaves, 2004). Another study used hierarchical regression to gauge attitudes of teachers towards school change (e.g., Sarafidou & Nikolaidis, 2009). Other studies used quantitative analysis with data from surveys to assess the impact of principals as an agents for change as they implemented reforms (e.g., Ng, 2009; Pang & Pisapia, 2012). Analysis of the quantitative research studies revealed that the stories of the individual participants went untold, and their experiences were distilled down to statistics. I concluded that quantitative methods

were not suitable to tell the stories of principals and their experiences with implementing change.

I reviewed a large amount of mixed method research related to educational change. One mixed method study focused on the process of change and used semi-structured interviews as of the qualitative portion and analyzed the achievement data for the quantitative portion (e.g., Timperley & Parr, 2005). Another mixed method study used quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the process of change within 22 schools (MacBeath, 2006). Other mixed method studies directly measured the effect of principal leadership on the implementation of a reform/change initiative (e.g., Adams & Jean-Marie, 2011; Weshah, Al-Faori, & Sakal, 2012). I could have selected mixed methods for this study, but its focus was on the stories and the lived experiences of the participating principals as they lead the implementation of change in their schools and not on quantitative data. According to Yin (2006), when conducting a mixed method study it is challenging to maintain the integrity of a single study and not conducting two parallel studies. This study focused on the individual experiences of each principal as they implemented change within their school and not on quantitative methods that could confuse the purpose of this study. I reviewed a significant amount of quantitative and mixed method studies, either directly or closely related to the topic of this study. The following paragraphs explain why qualitative methods were selected rather than quantitative or mixed methods.

I reviewed a considerable amount of research within the field of educational change that was qualitative in nature. The following are a small sampling of some of the

studies examined. One study investigated trust and how it impacts educational change using a focus group (e.g., Louis, 2007). Two studies used a meta-analysis of qualitative data to examine organizational change in schools (e.g., Fullan, 2006; Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons & Hopkins, 2007). Another study evaluated the readiness of schools for change using qualitative evaluative inquiry (e.g., Goh, Cousins, & Elliott, 2006). Many studies used qualitative case study methodologies; so many that only the most relevant to the topic of the principal as an agent for change are cited (e.g., Barker, 2006; Curry et al., 2010; Daly & Finnegan, 2010; Giles, 2006; James & Jones, 2008).

The case study methodology was the most commonly used of all the qualitative method studies reviewed for this study. I seriously considered the case study methodology for this study; however, according to Yin (2014), case studies focus on contemporary issues and not historical ones. This study sought to tell and understand the historical stories of principals and their experiences with leading change in their schools. Consequently, the case study methodology was not chosen for this study.

Some studies used qualitative approaches that did not align with methods that are more traditional. Presented below are descriptions of the methods used for these studies and a summary of each. One study focused on educational change over time and used intensive qualitative investigation comprised of observational, archival, interview, and oral testimony data (e.g., Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Another study used observation data gathered from schools and focused on the process of leading change within schools (e.g., Harris, 2006). Other studies focused on change within schools: a comparative approach (e.g., Rosenblatt, 2004), a conceptual study (e.g., Sytsma, 2007), and

ethnographies (e.g., Bates, 2006; Zembylas & Barker, 2007). Each of these methods was not selected because they did not align with the purposes of this study.

The methodology most closely resembling narrative inquiry is phenomenology. Some studies related to educational change theory using phenomenology (e.g., Gilstrap, 2007; Keys, 2007; Nolan, 2007). I did not select phenomenological methods because the studies focused on the problem of implementing change and not on the individual stories and experiences of the principals. Additionally, the purpose of this study, to tell the stories of the participants, did not align with phenomenological methods that emphasize the participants' experiences with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Within the field of education, the qualitative method of narrative inquiry is experiencing popularity and growth in recent years (Atkinson, 2010). The following are a sampling of narrative inquiry studies within the field of education, which do not directly relate to educational change theory (e.g., Gray, 2009; Kim, 2010; Meier & Stremmel, 2010; Parker & Scott, 2010). Each of these studies focused on telling the stories of the participants and their experiences with the "problem" being investigated. However, none of the studies focused on the stories and experiences of principals as they lead change within their school.

The amount of research that directly relates to educational change theory and uses narrative inquiry as a methodology is minimal. One narrative inquiry study peripherally addressed topics related to educational change theory (e.g., Craig, 2010). Another study that had close overtones to narrative inquiry focused on the principalship and change (e.g., Shipps & White, 2009). An extensive search of the literature failed to find any

narrative inquiry studies directly related to the principal as an agent for change within his or her school, and how he or she experienced leading change. Thus, allowing this narrative inquiry study to add to the research base on the subject and providing a new perspective on the topic.

This narrative inquiry study contributes new insight into the experiences of principals as they implement change within their schools. The nature of the narrative inquiry methodology allowed I to tell the stories of principals as they lead change in their schools. I sought to understand their experiences through listening to and telling their stories and finding common themes among the narratives.

In conclusion, I reviewed many quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method studies to align the problem studied and the research questions with a research methodology. The purpose of this study was to tell the stories, and understand the principal's experiences as they implemented change, and analyze each story individually and then collectively as a whole to understand their experiences related to the problem being studied and the research. I deductively concluded that narrative inquiry most closely aligned with the purpose of this study and afforded the best opportunity to answer the research questions.

Literature Related to Narrative Inquiry

The term narrative refers to story, and inquiry refers to seeking understanding. Therefore, narrative inquiry is doing research and seeking understanding through the telling of stories. Human beings have learned through the recounting of stories for thousands of years (Denning, 2011). Stories are how we predict, evaluate, plan, and

explain our world (Turner, 1996), and they help us learn and remember (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Narrative inquiry studies rely on stories to acquire knowledge and understand experiences (Coulter & Smith, 2009).

Narrative inquiry as a methodology is relatively new and continually evolving over the past two decades (Atkinson, 2010). Additionally, its use in the social sciences is increasing (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). However, a great deal of debate still exists regarding the validity of the knowledge claims of narrative inquiry research (Coulter & Smith, 2009). Smith (2009) contends that the narrative inquiry methodology can represent multiple perspectives, but researchers often misuse it. In the November 2009 issue of *Educational Researcher*, much of the issue dedicated a discussion to narrative inquiry as a research method. The articles from Smith (2009) and Barone (2009) were critical of some of the methods and outcomes of narrative studies. While Coulter (2009), Coulter and Smith (2009), and Clandinin and Murphy (2009) discussed and defined the specifics of narrative inquiry as a method for explaining the lived experiences of participants in relation to a given phenomenon. The discussion in this issue gave a glimpse into the merits of narrative inquiry, and the constant battle to legitimize it as a valid research methodology.

Narrative inquiry seeks to tell the stories of participants and aims to understand their experiences with respect to the phenomenon or problem being studied (Hendry, 2010). This method can depict multilayered and complex studies focused on a phenomenon and how people experience it as they live (Craig, 2010). Additionally it also addresses how people make meaning of and understand their experiences in relation to

the problem being studied (Hendry, 2010). Narrative inquiry describes the participant's experiences with a given phenomenon during the time period in which they are living the problem being studied (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This method has its foundations in experience, and experience is the ontological foundation from which all inquiry emanates (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

As researchers use narrative inquiry to describe the experiences of individuals with respect to a given phenomenon and understand their experiences, there is a framework to validate the results. Narrative inquiry has three common places and eight design elements (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The common places and elements serve as a framework and provide boundaries for narrative inquiry studies.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience through collaboration between the researcher and participants with respect to the problem studied. Narrative inquiry consists of three commonplaces used to frame, explore and describe the problem of study (Clandinin et al., 2007). The three commonplaces are temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin et al., 2007). Temporality refers to the events, people and places being studied, and realizing that each is fluid and continually evolving (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Sociality refers to the participants and how their personal and social conditions influence their experiences with respect to the problem (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Place refers to the actual physical place or places where the individual experiences the phenomenon being studied (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). When designing a narrative inquiry study the researcher

needs to be cognizant of all three as they consider the experiences of the participants and understand their experiences.

The three commonplaces described are coupled with eight design elements to give a structured framework to narrative inquiry studies. The eight design elements are:

- justification for the reasons why this study is important;
- named the phenomenon being studied;
- describe the methods of inquiry;
- describe the analysis and interpretation process;
- position the study in relation to other research related to the phenomenon freedom for the researcher to describe what is known about the phenomenon based on the research;
- ethical considerations; and
- how the research will ultimately be presented (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Each of these eight elements guided the design of this study and is addressed in Chapter 3. The three commonplaces and the eight elements give structure and a framework to narrative inquiry studies.

The most common data collection method for narrative inquiry is the interview (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Interviews are often recorded and transcribed (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Additionally, field texts, also referred to as field notes, which is where the researcher records impressions, are another source of data collection (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). The field texts are used to compose the research text, also referred to as the narratives (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010). The field texts are used by the

researcher and participants, to co-construct the research texts or narratives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The process of co-constructing the narratives requires back-and-forth conversations and editing to ensure the accuracy of the narratives (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). Though the three commonplaces, eight elements, and the meticulous recording of field texts to co-construct the research texts give a definite structure to narrative inquiry, it is important to remember that telling the stories and understanding the experiences of the participants is at the core of this methodology.

Summary

Chapter 2 presented and discussed the most relevant and recent research in the field of educational change theory, implementation theory, and the most relevant ancillary topics closely aligned with the research questions and the purposes of this study. This section also reviewed the literature related to narrative inquiry and the reasoning behind the selection of this methodology for this study. Section 3 outlines the specifics of the data collection and analysis procedures for this study.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The review of the literature related to educational change theory and more specifically the role of the principal as an agent for change within his or her school revealed many factors which contribute to the likelihood of successful implementation and sustainability of initiatives. Some of the common themes that evolved as the research progressed were:

- a clear vision for the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of change;
- coherent and ongoing communication of that vision to all stakeholders;
- acknowledgment of the impact of the culture of the school on the change process;
- the need for a systematic plan for implementation;
- a commitment to the change initiative despite difficulties; and
- the determination to see the process through until assimilated within the culture of the school.

Furthermore, a common thread connecting much of the research showed the principal significantly influences the success change initiatives and the principal plays a key role in increasing a schools capacity to implement change (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). As noted above, the implementation of change within schools is complex with a variety of factors simultaneously influencing the process.

The initiation, implementation, and sustainability of change is not a linear process and requires a leader/principal who can multitask (Priestley, 2011; Timperley & Parr, 2005). The complex nature of implementing change requires a methodology that can seek

a deep understanding despite all the different factors influencing the process. The factors referred to here are outlined in Section 2 under the heading Factors Influencing Change. The qualitative design of narrative inquiry aided in telling the stories of principals and sought to understand their experiences as they implemented change within their schools. The nature of narrative inquiry lends itself to topics of study that are complex (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Through narrative inquiry methods, researchers seek to understand human experiences (Hendry, 2010). Narrative inquiry allowed me to dig deeply into the experiences of the participants, to tell their stories, and understand each story individually, identify common themes among the narratives, and to comprehend the intricacies of the problem principals' face with initiating, implementing, and sustaining change within their schools (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The following section contains an in-depth exploration into the methodologies considered for this study and the reasoning for the selection of narrative inquiry.

Qualitative Research Design

This narrative inquiry study in the qualitative tradition focused on understanding the experiences of principals by analyzing the stories they told about initiating, implementing and working to sustain change, reforms, and initiatives within their schools. Qualitative and quantitative methods were reviewed, and the reasoning behind the selection of the qualitative method of narrative inquiry is given. The results of this study present a new way to look, through the lens of narrative inquiry, at the problem principals face as they implement change within their schools.

A long-standing and well-documented intellectual debate exists between quantitative and qualitative researchers regarding the viability of their methods to produce valid and legitimate knowledge claims (Barone, 2009; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006; Hendry, 2010; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Quantitative scholars have long demoted qualitative researchers, their methods and results to a subordinate status in the scientific quest for knowledge in social settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, the choice of research design is based on the experiences and background of the researcher and their assumptions regarding knowledge claims (Creswell, 2013). The selection of methods also depends on the research questions and the intended context of the study (Yin, 2014).

Another important factor in the selection of research methods is the researcher's beliefs surrounding strategies of inquiry and type of results each produces (Mertens, 1998). The researcher needs to have an understanding of the problem being studied and the methods that could be used to explore the problem (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the lived experiences of the researcher contribute to the decision of whether to select a qualitative, quantitative, or a mixed method study (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Once the researcher selects to use qualitative methods to address the problem of study, Creswell (2013) suggested the need for a philosophical understanding of how to derive knowledge. Hatch (2002) suggested researchers have a foundational knowledge regarding ontology, epistemology, and methodological issues before making the decision on which qualitative method(s) to use. "Philosophically, researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), what values go into it

(axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the process for studying it (methodology)" (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). Qualitative researchers consider the problem of study, what they want to know about the problem, and how they will know it to provide the best understanding (Creswell, 2007).

The ontology and epistemology of narrative inquiry are founded on the experiences of individuals, both researcher and participants (Clandinin, 2013). Ontology is the nature and existence of reality and epistemology is the understanding of knowledge (Creswell, 2007). For this study, ontology is related to the reality of the experiences of principals as they implement change and epistemology represents how to understand their experiences.

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

Clandinin and Huber (2010) also refer to a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that includes the past, present and future. Stories told from the past and the more recent present give insight into what the stories of the future might be.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), when considering the place of theory in a narrative inquiry study, speak of "life at the boundaries" with the boundaries being

formalism and reductionism. Formalist inquiry begins with theory while narrative inquiry starts with a focus on the lived experiences of the participants and seeks to tell their stories relative to the problem being studied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Reductionism attempts to explain the problem of study in relation to similar theories and phenomenon that are already explained and accepted within the field (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A formalistic study looks for two commonly desired outcomes: first, to construct a theoretical framework and to add to the literature related to the problem being studied. Second, to replicate the study and generalize the results to similar problems (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, narrative inquiry tells the stories of the participants in relation to the problem of study and seeks to understand their experiences and not to make knowledge claims or add to accepted theories in the field (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The process of selecting the most appropriate research methods to best answer the research questions and produce desired outcomes initially requires a researcher to decide between a quantitative, qualitative, or a mixed method study. It requires a researcher to consider a broad range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method methodologies (Groenwald, 2004). As a researcher goes through the process of selecting the methodology for their study, they need to continually weigh the potential methods against the purposes and research questions of their study in order to choose the one that will best answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013).

The following example represents the reasoning behind selecting a qualitative method over quantitative. In a quantitative study, the researcher analyzed the scores on a

standardized achievement test and reviewed the academic performance level of the students. The researcher noticed that Billy scored very low on the test and concluded that he is below grade level and has deficiencies in certain areas. In contrast, Clandinin and Connelly (2000), suggest a narrative researcher would look at the experiences of the student that might have contributed to the low achievement. If the researcher had questioned Billy, he would have found out that Billy had been up all night helping his family move into a new apartment. Often quantitative research ignores the context of experience that might otherwise explain the data in question (Denzin et al., 2006). Selecting a qualitative method allows the researcher to tell the stories of the participants with respect to the problem.

Once I selected qualitative methods for this study, the focus shifted to the type of study. Creswell (2013) refers to numerous approaches to qualitative research but chooses to focus on five main types: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The following paragraphs include a brief overview of each, and the justification for choosing narrative inquiry over the other methods.

The term case study, used by qualitative and quantitative researchers, describes a variety of studies (Hatch, 2002). According to Hatch (2002), qualitative case study research is similar to ethnography and participant observation studies and the distinction between each is often unclear. Merriam (2009) describes case study as “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community” (p. 8). According to Yin (2014), a case study takes place over a sustained period and due to the nature of the study uses numerous methods of data

collection. Creswell (2007), states the purpose of a case study is the in-depth study of a bounded system with the focus being on the case as a whole or on issue(s) that emerged during the case study. To give clarity to the term bounded system, Stake (1995) refers to boundaries of time, place and phenomenon. The boundaries set by the researcher relate to the unique elements of the case studied, and the focus of the study (Yin, 2014). A narrative inquiry study was selected, rather than a case study, because it focuses on the experiences of the participants and the stories they have to tell as they lived the experiences (Clandinin et al., 2010). A case study seeks to describe a problem (Yin, 2014) rather than the experiences of the participants in relation to the problem of study.

Hatch (2002) stated that ethnography is a particular type of qualitative research that seeks to describe a culture from the perspective of those living within and experiencing the culture on a daily basis. Ethnographic research takes place over a prolonged period and usually relies primarily on observations, field notes and interviews for data collection (Creswell, 2013). A researcher uses field notes to formulate the questions for the interviews (Merriam, 2009). The book *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979), written by James Spradley provided researchers with a framework for conducting ethnographic interviews to collect data that accurately represents cultural patterns and norms (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Considering the purposes of this study, I did not select the ethnographic methodology for two reasons. First, ethnographies often begin with a broad, general focus and then narrow as data is collected and analyzed (Hatch, 2002, p. 80). The focus of this study was specific to the stories and experiences of principals as they initiate, implement, and sustain change within their schools. Second, ethnography focuses

on culture and analyzing the culture through the experiences of those living within the culture (Merriam, 2009). This narrative inquiry studied the stories of principals to understand their experiences and not the culture of the school within which they are leading the change process.

The third qualitative method considered was grounded theory. Grounded theory seeks to generate systematically a new theory to explain the phenomenon of a study (Creswell, 2007). The theory that inductively emerges is grounded in and formulated by the collection and analysis of data (Merriam, 2009). This type of study strives to construct a theory rather than test or explore an existing theory related to the topic of study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A fundamental tenet of this study was to understand the experiences of the principals as they implement and sustain change and not to formulate a new theory on the topic.

The fourth type of study considered at length was phenomenological. Understanding the lived experiences of the participants, from their perspective, as they relate to the phenomenon studied is the essence of a phenomenological study. (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2007), “the participants should be asked two main questions regarding each phenomenon being studied. The questions are: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon” (p. 61). The focus of this type of a study is on the phenomenon. Conversely, narrative inquiry is focused on the stories of the people with respect to the phenomenon being studied (Riessman & Speedy, 2007).

All five of the types of qualitative studies considered can be used to understand and describe a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). However, the tenants of narrative inquiry are that it is problem-based, focuses on the stories of people with respect to the problem, and it is used to seek understanding of those stories individually and collectively. These attributes make narrative inquiry the most closely aligned method with the purposes of this study.

Research Questions

The starting point of most research is the identification of a problem. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "problems carry with them qualities of clear definability and the expectation of solutions, but narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of a search, a re-search, a searching again" (p. 124). Narrative inquiry as a research method is not as concerned with answering a question as much as it is focused on inquiry, which evolves during the data collection process to understand the experiences of the participants associated with the problem (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

According to Maxwell (1996), the development of the research questions is a foundational piece in the process of formulating a research study. Hatch (2002) states that well focused research questions guide the study and provide a reference point for the entire study. Logically, the research questions are the beginning point of any research project. The researcher decides on a problem of interest and the desired outcomes and then builds a study around them. The following research questions helped me to explore, and understand the experiences of principals as they implemented change within their schools.

1. What are the experiences of principals as they initiate, implement and strive to sustain change within their schools?
2. What are the challenges/successes that principals encounter as they initiate, implement and sustain change initiatives within their schools?
3. What are the specific actions that principals report aided in the success of the change initiative?

Context of the Study

As a researcher considers their research questions, the next step in the process is to decide on the context that will frame the study to best answer the questions. According to Webster and Mertova (2007), context should be on the mind of the researcher during every phase of the study and takes into consideration the time frame, location, and people associated with the study. The context of a narrative study informs the audience of many internal and external factors to help describe the setting of the study.

I conducted this study in southcentral and southeastern Idaho. Most of southcentral and southeastern Idaho is rural with the exception of two towns ranging in population from 50,000 to 60,000. I selected principals from two elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school to participate in this study. The principals interviewed work in schools ranging in enrollment from 60-420 students, and in towns ranging from 1,000 to 5,500 in population.

This study sought to tell and understand the stories of principals as they implemented and sustained change initiatives in their schools. The Idaho State

Department of Education introduced multiple statewide change initiatives over the past five years. The following is a list of the main initiatives:

- response to intervention (RTI);
- the Charlotte Danielson framework for teaching;
- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol;
- professional learning communities; and
- Ways to Improve School Effectiveness (WISE) a software program to assist low-achieving schools develop improvement plans.

Principals have attended various trainings for these initiatives during this time. This is not a complete list, but a representation of the major change initiatives that are and were implemented in schools in Idaho. Additionally, it does not include change initiatives introduced at the district or school levels.

Although the principals have attended many of the same professional development trainings, the degree of initiation, implementation, and sustainability varies from school to school. Furthermore, principals lead a variety of change initiatives derived at the building level. This study told the stories and sought to understand the experiences of the selected participants, with respect to the problem studied, as they worked to initiate, implement, and sustain change in their schools.

I have worked in southern Idaho for the past 13 years. Some of the participants are colleagues from surrounding districts, others were co-participants in a statewide professional learning community for principals, and others are co-workers from previous districts with some of these roles overlapping. Though the convenience of interviewing

co-workers is appealing, the research is clear that the data gained from studying one's work setting is often unreliable (Creswell, 2013; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Therefore, I interviewed principals from outside my current district.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

I selected principals from southern Idaho for this study. The general demographic questions asked of each participant framed the setting for each of the environments studied. I assigned a pseudonym to each of the participants that only I know.

Clandinin and Murphy (2009) emphasize the paramount importance of ethically protecting the participants. Because this doctoral study is a document that can be accessed by the general public, I ensured the protection of the participants to the level that if their supervisor, or any teacher, parent or community member read the document they would not be able to identify the setting or the administrator. As the research progressed, and the narratives co-constructed, I carefully excluded any information that could adversely influence the working conditions or personal life of the participants. I sought to maintain the confidentiality of the participants by reading all of the narratives through completely with the goal to identify any information that might reveal the identity of the participants. Additionally, on the advice of the peer reviewer, I changed the specific names of the programs principals were implementing to general descriptions so to protect the anonymity of the participants.

The following example illustrates the type of identifying information excluded from this study and its findings. If a principal implemented a particular anti-bullying program, I would not give the name of the program because it might identify the principal

and the school. Throughout this study, I purposefully excluded any identifying information.

I took all necessary precautions to secure the data by storing it on my personal external hard drive. Additionally, the data is password protected, and I will store it for five years. I followed all prescribed ethical considerations presented in the IRB application.

I sent an email to the participants that included an overview of the purposes and design of the study, and a statement implying they could choose to discontinue participation at any time without giving a reason. I sent a consent form to each of the participants and waited to receive consent before data collection began. During the study, I reminded each participant that they could discontinue participation at any time. I followed all ethical procedures to protect the participants and maintain their confidentiality.

Role of the Researcher

I designed the narrative inquiry study so that it was true to the methods outlined in the literature review and Section 3. The participants met the minimum qualifications of being in their position as principal at his or her current school for at least five years. I interviewed principals outside of my current district. However, because Idaho is a relatively small state I previously had professional interactions with all of the participants. The established professional relationships with the participants positively affected the data collection process and allowed me to gain their trust. Additionally, some

of the participants were colleagues with me in previous districts, but none of the participants were principals that I currently or previously supervised.

I obtained permission to begin collecting data and began contacting principals by phone. The approval number for this study is (11-03-14-0136590). I gave each principal a short description of the study and asked if they would be interested in participating. After expressing interest, the participants received an e-mail with more information and a consent form. I began setting up interviews upon receiving consent from the participants.

I conducted the initial semi-structured interviews in person. I conducted three of the follow-up interviews over the phone and two in person. The Interview Guide, found in Appendix A, steered the interviews. Throughout the interviews, I recorded thoughts and impressions as they related to the purpose of the study and the responses of the participants. I recorded and transcribed the interviews within one week after each interview, and began writing the narratives so that the data was fresh in my mind. I used polyvocal analysis to analyze the data. Polyvocal analysis is described later in the Data Analysis section.

One of the most important roles throughout the study required me to be cognizant of the ethical protections of the participants. If this was not accomplished, the results of the study become null and void. To accomplish this task, I read all of the narratives one time through with the single purpose to ascertain if the narratives included information that could identify the participants.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), research interests and perspectives come from experiences with the problem being studied and help to outline the study. I

experienced the introduction and implementation of numerous reforms and initiatives during my career in education. As a teacher, dean of students, and assistant principal he experienced implementing reforms introduced by principals. Additionally, I led change initiatives as a principal, federal programs director, and director of secondary education. During my career in education, I experienced concern and confusion with the lack of success of initiatives to affect real change in the school and be sustainable. These experiences led to a desire to understand the change process at the building level from the perspective of those charged with implementation, the principals.

I extensively studied change theory and acknowledges the challenge in not to asking leading questions of the participants during interviews, follow-up interviews, and the co-construction of the narratives. One of my biases was the many experiences with failed change initiatives as a teacher, dean of students, and assistant principal. I experienced many change initiatives started at the beginning of the school year and forgotten by the beginning of the next year. However, I only worked in one school long enough to actually gauge the success of initiatives to the point of long-term sustainability.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), “narrative inquirers need to reconstruct their own narrative of inquiry histories and be alert to possible tensions between those narrative histories and the narrative research they undertake” (p. 46). Narrative researchers need to evaluate introspectively potential biases and experiences that might affect data collection and analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I bracketed my biases about experiences associated with the topic of study by identifying possible biases. During the data collection process, I reviewed those biases before each interview.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

When selecting participants for a qualitative study, finding individuals that can provide relevant, specific, and sufficient information related to the topic of study is the goal (Merriam, 2009). As a result, qualitative researchers identify specific qualities they are looking for in potential participants to help them best understand the research questions (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2013) referred to this as purposeful sampling. According to Groenewald (2004), a purposeful sample allows the researcher to select thoughtfully participants that have direct experience with the problem being researched. Rubin and Rubin (2005) mention the importance of seeking out participants with a variety of experiences to strengthen the credibility of the study, which led the researcher to select principals from elementary, middle, and high schools.

The purpose of a narrative inquiry study was to tell the stories of participants and learn from their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The number of participants depends on the design and purpose of the study (Creswell, 2013). For this study, I selected five participants. The participants for this study included principals from two elementary, two middle school, and one high school. Due to the in-depth nature of the interviews, follow-up interviews, and the co-construction of the narratives, only five principals were selected.

The research related to educational change theory clearly states that it takes three to five years to implement, and sustain a change initiative (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Fullan, 2007). For this reason, I only considered principals

who had been in their current position for five or more years. The resulting criteria limited the number of principals who qualified for this study.

Using the criteria previously cited, I considered schools in 21 different districts in southern Idaho. Within those districts, there are 51 elementary schools, 27 middle schools, and 23 high schools. I contacted each of the districts and found 17 elementary school principals, 14 middle school principals and nine high school principals that fit the criteria of being in their position five or more years. I compiled a list the potential participants, obtained phone numbers from personal contacts and the Idaho State Department of Education website, and randomly ordered the list by elementary, middle, and high schools. I began calling principals from each of the three lists until two elementary school principals, two middle school principals, and one high school principal consented to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), referred to data collected in the field as "field texts." They used this term "because they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent aspects of field experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 92). The recorded interviews and notes logged during the interviews compiled the field texts for this study. I used the field texts to co-construct the narratives with the participants. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Additionally, I recorded my thoughts and impressions during the interviews. They were recorded in a notebook and used to write the initial narratives.

Due to the large amount of data collected, I made decisions as to what data was important to include to tell the stories of the principals related to the research questions and purpose of the study and what could be excluded. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), referred to it as “the selective reconstruction of the field experience” with the participant. During this process, the participants and I worked together to accurately represent each participant’s story about their experiences with the problem studied.

I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews to collect data. To attain the depth required for a narrative study, I used an interview guide based on the conceptual framework and asked pertinent follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The Interview Guide, included in Appendix A, directed the interviews to help maintain focus on the conceptual framework and research questions. Creswell (2013) made reference to constructing an interview guide that is used to keep the researcher and participants focused on the problem and research questions. Additionally, the interview guide was grounded in the themes that emerged in the literature review and the conceptual framework. The main themes include: the culture of the school and its readiness for change, the three phases of change theory, and the theories related to principal leadership.

The interviews lasted for approximately 60 minutes. The participants’ individual experiences, as they related to the problem studied, guided the semi-structured interviews. I used the interview guide to ask the participants the same initial and similar follow-up questions that related to the conceptual framework and the themes that emerged during the literature review process.

I sent the transcribed interviews to the participants for member checking. After each participant had approved the transcript, I began writing the narratives. I used the transcribed interviews and field notes to write a narrative for each participant. I wrote the initial narratives that described the experiences of the participants and focused on events related to the problem (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). However, the initial narratives were too long and had to be condensed. Once completed, I emailed the initial narrative to the participant who reviewed it and provided comments. Clandinin and Connelly referred to this step as the co-construction of the narratives. I revised the narratives based on feedback from the participants and sent them back for one final review. Once the participants and I agreed that the narratives accurately reflected each of their stories, the next step was data analysis. The reflection on and the interpretation of each of the narratives took place during data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began almost simultaneously with data collection. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to data analysis as writing research texts or narratives. As I began the process of converting field texts (transcribed interviews and field notes) to research texts (narratives), I found it necessary to have an outline detailing the relevant topics from the literature review and conceptual framework to the research questions. The outline assisted me with narrowing the focus of the narratives to the problem studied.

I used polyvocal analysis to answer Research Question 1, the co-construction of the narratives. I used Hatch's (2002) Steps in Polyvocal Analysis as a guide for co-creating the narratives:

1. Read data for a sense of the whole.
2. Identify all of the voices contributing to the data, including you own.
3. Read the data, marking places where particular voices are heard.
4. Study the data related to each voice, decide which voices will be included in the report, and write a narrative telling the story of each selected voice.
5. Read the entire data set, searching for data that refined or altered your stories.
6. Whenever possible, take the stories back to those who contributed them so that they can clarify, refine, or change their stories.
7. Write revised stories that represent each voice to be included (p. 202).

The voices described by Hatch (2002), Creswell (2013) referred to as themes. I closely followed the steps of polyvocal analysis during data analysis. The following paragraphs illustrate the use of polyvocal analysis to analyze the data.

The methods of analysis associated with narrative inquiry are synonymous with the steps of polyvocal analysis. The first step in the process, I read and reread the transcribed interviews. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested “a narrative inquirer spends many hours reading and rereading field texts in order to construct a chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts” (p. 131). I reviewed the transcribed interviews and coded themes. Additionally, I sent the transcribed interviews to the principals for member checking.

In steps 2 and 3 in polyvocal analysis, I read each interview and identified and coded themes that aligned with the research questions, conceptual framework, and the literature review from Section 2. Step four, I wrote the initial narratives and sent them to

the participants for member checking. Step five, I reread the narratives and searched for themes that might have been overlooked and refined the stories. Step 6, the participants provided feedback on the initial narratives. Additionally, I reread all of the interview transcripts and conducted follow-up interviews before rewriting the narratives. The narratives were rewritten and sent back to the participants. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to this process as co-constructing the narratives. Step seven, after receiving feedback from the participants, I revised the narratives one final time. The participants reviewed the narratives for final consent. I provided the participants multiple opportunities to provide feedback. After the narratives were completed and approved, the analysis of the narratives began to answer Research Questions 2 and 3.

All of the narratives used what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to as "three dimensional inquiry space" for their structure. The first dimension is temporality and includes the past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I asked each participant questions about experiences leading change within their school. The participants shared experiences with leading change from the past and present and plans for the future. The three phases of change theory: initiation, implementation, and sustainability flow chronologically from past, the initiation, to the past and present, the implementation, and finally to the present and future, sustaining the change initiative. The second dimension related to personal and social interactions. The participants fielded questions that relate to their personal and social interactions within their schools and how they influenced the change process. The third and final dimension is the situation or setting of the study. I asked questions about the culture of each participant's school, their

social interactions with the implementers, and how these factors influenced the implementation of change. I intentionally utilized the three dimensions during data collection and used to co-create the narratives.

I used polyvocal analysis to answer Research Question 1, which included the co-construction of the narratives. Next, I explored the narratives for common themes between them and began the process of answering Research Questions 2 and 3. Polkinghorne (1995) refers to this step in the process as the "analysis of narratives" (p. 13). Creswell (2013) presented a method for a cross case study analysis that also applies to narrative studies. I used a cross narrative analysis to identify the common themes between the individual narratives, to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. Section 4 contains the comparison of the themes and the cross narrative analysis.

Validity and Trustworthiness

This section outlines the measures taken to ensure the validity and the trustworthiness of this study. To clarify my biases related to educational change I reflected on and shared my experiences that led me to this study. Additionally, I had each of the participants' member check the transcripts and narratives for accuracy. Finally, I had a peer review the study and provide feedback. The purpose of these actions was to ensure the accuracy, validity, and trustworthiness of this study.

Clarify the Bias

Narrative inquiry is also autobiographical and represents the experiences and interests of the researcher with respect to the problem being studied (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000). In a narrative inquiry study, the researcher writes about their experiences with the problem that is the focus of the study, including what brought them to the topic of study and their biases.

My interest in change theory began 18 years ago as a new teacher. At the beginning of that first year, during the first faculty meeting of the year the principal presented a “new program” or change initiative and expectations for implementation. As the year progressed, focus on the initiative waned and became a distant memory by the beginning of the next school year. This cycle of a new initiative at the start of the year, gone by the end of the year with another new initiative introduced at the beginning of the next year, continued for the next four years. I noticed this same cycle over the following five years at three different schools. At the start of my eleventh year, I started my first principalship and could stop the cycle, but it proved more difficult than planned. I was principal at that school for three years. During that time, I realized the difficulties it in implementing change that spanned multiple years and sustained within the school. These experiences led me to begin an investigation of change theory resulting in the purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, and review of the literature for this study.

I wrote the previous personal narrative about my experiences with the implementation of change as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. The narrative assisted me in bracketing personal biases with implementing change. I recognized that I could not allow personal experiences with implementing change to influence the data collection and analysis process. Additionally, I did not project my experiences on to the participants by asking leading questions and guiding the interview based on personal

biases. It was important that the stories of the principals were their own and not influenced by my experiences and biases. I continuously checked to ensure that personal biases did not affect the interviews, follow-up interviews, and the co-construction of the narratives.

Member Checking

By design, narrative inquiry studies require the researcher and participant to work closely to "co-construct" the story and to ensure that the story accurately represents the experiences of the participant as they relate to the problem of study (Coulter, 2009). I sent the transcribed interviews to the participants to review for accuracy. The participants reviewed the transcripts and replied that they accurately represented their experiences. The participants resubmitted the transcripts with any comments or clarifications. Two of the participants asked to have comments deleted. Russ asked to have a comment related to his school removed, and Mira asked to have a comment about her job eliminated. The comments withdrawn from the transcripts did not affect the stories of the participants. After the participants completed member checking of the transcripts, the participants and I co-constructed the narratives. The participants had multiple opportunities to review the narratives. Additionally, I conducted follow-up interviews and continued the co-construction of the narratives. The participants approved the final narratives as an accurate representation of their experiences. I used member checking throughout the process to accurately represent the experiences of each participant.

Peer Debriefing

I selected a peer within the field of education with experience as an elementary, middle, and high school principal. Additionally, the peer recently completed his doctorate on a similar subject. I educated the peer debriefer on the specifics of the study so he had an informed position as he reviewed the data and its analysis. The peer reviewed the narratives co-constructed from the interviews and the data analysis. He debriefed with me, asked questions, and provided input to ensure the accuracy of the study and to make sure it accurately represented the problem and the research questions (Creswell, 2013).

I incorporated the measures to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Before any data collection began, I constructed a personal narrative, found in the Clarifying Bias section, to identify any biases that might have influenced the data collection and analysis processes. The participants engaged in member checking of the interview transcripts and throughout the co-construction of the narratives. I debriefed with a peer that read the narratives and data analysis to gauge the relevance of the data to the research questions, and for accuracy. I incorporated each of these measures to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

Summary

Section 3 outlined the selection of the methodology, narrative inquiry, and the reasons why it best aligns with the research questions, conceptual framework, and the research from Section 2. Section 3 also presented the relevant components of narrative inquiry used in this study. Additionally, I presented the data collection and analysis

processes. Section 3 also included the role of the researcher, the criteria for selecting participants, and the methods used to address validity and trustworthiness. Furthermore, Section 3 described a comprehensive framework and how it evolved from planning, to the beginning phases of data collection, and finally to the final stages data analysis. Section 4 presents the co-constructed narratives (Research Question 1) and the cross narrative analysis of the common themes (Research Questions 2 and 3) identified between each of the narratives as they related to the research questions.

Section 4: Results

This narrative inquiry study told the stories of principals as they experienced the change process and implemented change within their schools. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of principals as they initiate, implement and strive to sustain change within their schools?
2. What are the challenges and successes that principals encounter as they initiate, implement and sustain successful change initiatives within their school?
3. What are the specific actions that principals report aided in the success of the change initiative?

This study focused on the experiences of five principal from rural school districts in southern Idaho. Additionally, they were required to have been in their current position long enough to have experienced all three phase of change, which according the research is at least three and more likely five years (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). I conducted the interviews and follow-up interviews from the middle of November 2014 to the end of February 2015. Data analysis began in March of 2015 and concluded in May of 2015. Section 4 presents the analysis of the data: the co-construction of the narratives and the cross narrative analysis.

Collection and Treatment of Data

I initially contacted each of the five participants by phone and described the tenants of the study to gauge their interest in participating. Next, I sent each emailed each participant a Letter of Invitation describing the study in detail and a copy of the Consent

Form. The “Letter of Invitation” is in Appendix B. After receiving consent from each of the participants, I scheduled the interviews. The participants selected the date, time, and a location for the interviews. I conducted the initial interviews in person. The Interview Guide directed the interview process. I asked follow-up questions that pertained to their responses and the purpose of the study. I recorded the interviews using a digital recording device. Additionally, I chronicled thoughts and impressions during the interviews. I transcribed the interviews and sent a copy to the participants for member checking. Participants read transcripts and the researcher followed up with a phone call about a week later. Two of the five participants requested minor changes to the transcribed interviews. One of the principals asked to have a comment they made about being in their job too long and becoming complacent. The other principal as to have a comment about a neighboring school district removed.

Tracking of Data and Emerging Understandings

I conducted the semi-structured in-depth interviews using the Interview Guide, and allowed the interviews to develop based on responses from the participants. The participants and I co-constructed the narratives that centered on the conceptual framework and the research questions. After transcribing the interviews and co-constructing the narratives, I searched the data for common themes. According to Creswell (2013), themes are “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (p. 186). The themes used for analyzing the data correlated to the conceptual framework: school culture, the three phases of change: initiation, implementation, and sustainability, and the theories related to principal

leadership. I read and reread the narratives and coded them using the conceptual framework. As the data analysis evolved, I coded direct quotes to the conceptual framework themes. For example, the codes for school culture included: resistance from staff and the community, trust, staff morale, repetitive change syndrome, and how the culture hinders change. I identified and compiled codes to develop each of the themes. The codes and themes that evolved guided the co-construction of the narratives and the cross narrative analysis of the data.

Findings

The participants and I co-constructed the narratives from the transcribed interviews. I used the Interview Guide to conduct the in-depth semi and structured interviews. I formulated the Interview Guide based on the Conceptual Framework and the research findings from Section 2. The Conceptual Framework had three areas of focus: the theories related to school culture and how the culture of a school impacts its readiness and willingness to accept and foster change, the three phases of educational change theory (initiation, implementation, and sustainability), and the theories related to principal leadership and more specifically the principal as an agent for change. The narratives followed the outline of the Conceptual Framework including the salient findings from the literature review.

Participant Narratives

Three research questions guided this study: What are the experiences of principals as they initiate, implement and strive to sustain change within their schools?; What are the challenges/successes that principals encounter as they initiate, implement and sustain

successful change initiatives within their schools?; and What are the specific actions that principals report aided in the success of the change initiative? The following narratives answer research question number one.

Table 1 describes the demographics of the five participants. All of the names are pseudonyms.

Table 1

Demographics of the Interview Participants

Participants	Gender	Years as a Principal in Current School	Size of School	Location (Rural, Suburban, Urban)
Mark	Male	5.5	420	Rural
Russ	Male	25.5	340	Rural
Jenna	Female	8.5	240	Rural
Mira	Female	14.5	60	Rural
Luke	Male	17.5	400	Rural

Participant 1

Mark is in his sixth year as principal at a middle school, in south-central Idaho. The middle school is in a small farming community with approximately 420 students in grades sixth through eighth. During his tenure as principal, the school experienced a significant increase in enrollment and the demographics of the school changed. The rise in student population contributed to the need for some of the changes implemented during his time as principal. The primary focus of the interview was a change initiative on character education that emphasized how students treat one another with the intent of reducing bullying issues.

School culture. When Mark began work at his school five and half years ago, he recognized that before he could make any changes, he needed to assess the culture of his school and understand its inner workings. He "formed a leadership team and really just got involved and listened to the conversations." He also attended the grade level meetings and mostly just listened to get an understanding of the culture of the school. Mark realized that he didn't "want to come in and just overhaul everything if he didn't know what was needed." Mark also attended Student Council meetings and other student groups to listen and get input. Mark stated "I was really kind of looking at those two groups, the faculty, and the students, and trying to insert a little bit of guidance and then really getting a pulse before moving forward in deciding where we needed to go." Mark spent much of the first year observing and listening to understand the culture of the school.

As he assessed the culture of the school, he recognized two issues that created some challenges for him. First, he acknowledged that he was going to receive resistance from one of his faculty members. This faculty member made it difficult for him almost from the beginning, but what "compounded the problem was that she was looked up to, and she was a school leader." The other issue involved the low morale of the staff. He attributed this to the many change initiatives the school experienced in recent years, because "the longest tenure for a principal, before I got here, was two years." Eventually, this faculty member moved on, and Mark gained the trust of his faculty. He earned their confidence by working on building relationships with each staff member in the building. Mark did this by setting aside time each day to visit with individual staff members and

connect on a personal as well as a professional level. One of Mark's strengths as a leader is the emphasis and importance he puts on building caring and professional relationships with students, staff, and parents. Mark stated that he is "a relationship guy" and that "building trust has taken some time, but after five years I feel like we're in a good place."

Initiation. Once Mark took the time to assess the culture of the school and its readiness for change, he began the work of implementing change. Mark identified that bullying was an issue in the school, and he needed his faculty to come to that same realization. Through conversations with his faculty, they came to a consensus that bullying and the way that the students treated one another were the most pressing needs at the time.

Initially, from conversations with other administrators, Mark selected a program he wanted to implement to address bullying at his school. However, he did not solicit input from his faculty and consequently, no buy-in existed for that first program. Mark attributed the failure of that first program to not obtaining buy-in from his staff. Recognizing the error of his ways, he began working with his leadership team and the faculty to select another program. The second time around, Mark worked to gain buy-in from his leadership team, the faculty, and eventually students and parents. He mentioned, "You have really got to look at your teacher leaders and get buy-in, that's the biggest thing." Mark and his leadership team then worked to "get the word out to teachers through faculty meetings and grade level team meetings." The extra time he took to gather input and get buy-in paid off in the initial success of the Project Wisdom program.

Once Mark and his leadership team solidified their vision for the change initiative, they began sharing it with students, parents, and the community. Additionally, they presented their plan to the superintendent and the School Board. Mark recognized the importance of communicating their vision to the stakeholders to gain their buy-in and support.

Implementation. First, Mark did formulated and solidified his own vision for the change initiative so that "staff and students know it's important to me and that I'm not just rolling it out saying, hey, teachers here it is." The faculty and staff needed to see Mark's commitment to change initiative and its success. He felt the failure of the first program they tried to implement partially occurred due to his lack of commitment.

As they began implementing the program, Mark identified a need to provide ongoing professional development and structured resources for his teachers. Mark created the following collaborative structures to assist with implementation: a leadership team, grade level planning time, and monthly faculty meetings. Mark stated, "I needed to provide something for the teachers. I couldn't say, hey, this is what we're going to do and not give them materials or a game plan for them to follow." Mark planned professional development during monthly faculty meetings, and the teachers collaborated daily during their common grade level preparation time.

The implementation process did not always go smoothly. They experienced difficulties with some of the lessons associated with the program and complications finding a fluid way to incorporate the lessons into the school day. However, the collaborative structures established by Mark and his leadership team helped them to work

through the issues. Additionally, one of Mark's strengths as a leader is his ability to form positive and trusting relationships with his faculty, and that helped them through the "implementation dip."

Sustainability. Mark and his faculty are still in the early stages of implementing the anti-bullying change initiative. They have a two-year plan for implementation to assist with sustaining the change initiative. The faculty, students, parents, and community understand the long- term plan that helps with the sustainability of the program.

Mark attributes three major factors to the sustainability of the anti-bullying program. First, Mark had a clear vision for the program, and he shared that vision with all of the stakeholders. Second, they had a supportive organizational structure that promoted professional development, collaboration time, and a safe environment where his faculty could share their thoughts and concerns. Finally, as they implemented the change initiative, they gained buy-in from parents, students, teachers, and the community. Though Mark feels they still have a long way to go until the initiative assimilates into the culture of the school, they have made significant progress.

Principal Leadership. Throughout the change process, Mark identified several of his actions that helped the change initiative succeed. Mark stated, "I play an active part in the implementation which is huge." Mark's determined and sustained actions helped his faculty, parents, and students see his complete commitment to the anti-bullying change initiative. On a daily basis, Mark shares lessons from the anti-bulling program during the announcements. Additionally, he leads discussions and professional development related to the program during grade level team meetings and faculty meetings. Another of his

leadership qualities, his commitment to building strong relationships with all of the stakeholders has stimulated the progress of the program. As he stated, “I am a relationship kind of a person.” Primarily, Mark placed a significant emphasis on getting to know the people associated with his school, making them feel important, and gaining their trust. He formed the type of relationships with his faculty that “if there is a change that comes down and I have got to go to them and say, hey, I really need your help on this, I know that I’m going to get it from them.”

When Mark first took over as principal, he worked to understand the culture of the school and to build trusting relationships with the faculty, parents, and students. Together they identified bullying as a tangible issue in their school and collaboratively worked to select a program to meet the need. They sought buy-in from all of the key stakeholders throughout the initiation and implementation processes and worked to sustain the change initiative.

Participant 2

Russ is the principal of a middle school in a rural farming community in southeastern Idaho. The middle school, sixth through eighth grade, has an enrollment of 340 students. Russ has been the principal at the school for 25 years. He also taught at the school for four years before becoming the principal.

School Culture. Russ had the opportunity to learn about the culture of the school for four years as a teacher before becoming the principal. Despite his experience as a teacher in the school, Russ spent the first year as principal assessing the culture of his school and reconnecting with his teachers in his new role as principal. Additionally,

during that first year, Russ studied the change initiative, the middle school model, which he fully implemented at the start of his second year.

When the new school opened, it was the "first school in the state of Idaho with the title of middle school." A few years before Russ became principal the district constructed a new middle school. Additionally, "they had tried to implement some of the founding middle school practices like advisory, teaming, an exploratory activities program, and mainstreaming of Title I and special education students. When they initially tried to do that, it was really unsuccessful." Because of this failed attempt, when Russ took over the school, the culture was one of skepticism and resistance towards the middle school model. Russ recalled that his teachers stated, "We can't go there, that's one of those middle school things, and the community hated it, we hated it and there will not be buy-in for it." As he assessed the culture of the school for its readiness to implement the middle school model, overcoming the fallout from the first failed attempt would be his biggest challenge.

As Russ analyzed the culture of his school, he also worked to create a culture that fostered the successful implementation of the middle school model. During his first few years as principal, Russ worked diligently to create a culture that focused on the "core belief" of "doing what is best for kids." This one statement guided all of their actions, and eventually became entrenched in the culture of their school. Russ mentioned "Every teacher that works at his school has to have the core beliefs that students come first. Every teacher needs to have a real understanding of adolescence and who they are and how they operate, and they need to work collaboratively in their grade level teams to

meet the needs of every student." Despite inheriting a culture that resisted the middle school model, Russ toiled to build a culture that would help the change initiative, the middle school model, to be successful.

Initiation. When Russ was hired to be the principal at the school, the superintendent asked him to implement the middle school model again. The impetus for this change initiative came with the position. However, Russ stated that the teachers "recognized something different needed to be done" to meet the needs of middle school students. Russ' knowledge about the middle school model and his vision was still developing, but he believed the middle school model would be best to meet the needs of the students.

Russ recognized early on that "someone has to have a clear vision, and that is really key for the principal." He also mentioned the first attempt to implement the middle school model at his school "failed miserably because the teachers really didn't know what to do for sure, they didn't support it, and I don't think that there ever was a clear vision of the change or what it looked like." At the beginning of the second year as principal, a teacher came to him and said, "I can see all the changes you are doing, but I just don't see your vision." That experience helped Russ realize he needed to "spend time really learning what your vision is as an administrator so you can share that with those that you lead." Once Russ solidified his vision, he shared it with his teachers, parents, and the community and to begin obtaining buy-in.

The decision to implement the middle school model the first time did not include input from the faculty or parents. Russ mentioned "I really had to provide a convincing

reason to my staff why we needed to do it." The first group that he worked with to get their buy-in was his teacher leaders. He stated, "If the teacher leaders know your vision, then they are the ones that can help follow through with that vision throughout the year." Next, he worked with the teachers to acquire buy-in, and as they began the process of implementing the middle school model, he mentioned that one of the most helpful aspects was the "hot research in favor of it." He showed his staff the research and gave them valid reasons for adopting the middle school model. Finally, he needed to get buy-in for the middle school model from the parents and the community. He formed a Parent Advisory Committee to share his vision, get their input, and eventually their buy-in. Through careful planning and diligent effort, Russ gained buy-in for the middle school model from his teacher leaders, teachers, parents, and the community.

As Russ and his teachers worked through the initiation phase of implementing the middle school model, he was careful and selective not to overwhelm his teachers with multiple, unrelated change initiatives. He mentioned, "You have to be really careful that you do not run your staff through a whole new change being thrown at them and then another one and then another one." Russ and his faculty focused on taking actions to help them implement the middle school model and not deviate from that course of action.

Implementation. After solidifying his vision for the middle school model and sharing it with his teachers, parents, and the community to get their buy-in, they began the process of implementation. Russ knew he needed early success to erase the memory of the failed attempt, and felt that implementing the exploratory program component of the middle school model was a good first step. As a side note, full implementation of the

middle school model did not occur until his second year. Russ put in long hours that first year planning and preparing for the exploratory program. Russ mentioned, “early on people were watching me to see what I believed in, what I was willing to do as principal, and before we did anything we implemented the exploratory program.” Despite some resistance from staff, Russ showed his commitment to the middle school model by the effort expended implementing the exploratory program.

By the effort, he exerted with that first success, Russ gained the trust and respect of his faculty and displayed his commitment to the success of the change initiative. That first success also enabled them to begin fully implementing the middle school model at the beginning of his second year as principal. Russ stated, “To be quite honest we made in one year a lot of change.” During the first year of full implementation, they “added advisory, broke into teams, and did full inclusion, all in the same year.” Russ attributed their ability to institute numerous changes in one year to a faculty that recognized his absolute commitment, a collective buy-in from staff, and a shared belief in the middle school model to meet the needs of students.

Three other actions assisted Russ during the implementation process. First, Russ distributed leadership to his teacher leaders. Russ said, “Teacher leaders are really critical, and if the teacher leaders know your vision, they then are the ones that can follow through with that vision throughout the year.” Second, Russ provided ongoing professional development on topics directly related to the middle school model. For example, Russ presented his teachers with training that gave them a “critical knowledge base of who an adolescent really is.” Additionally, Russ shared essential aspects of the

middle school model with his staff during faculty meetings. Furthermore, Russ scaffold professional development to the needs of his teachers during precise stages of implementation. For example, if they were working on the advisory program, Russ tailored the professional development to that topic to increase their understanding. Third, Russ instituted a culture of collaboration that provided teachers with teaming time during a common prep each day. Additionally, once a week Russ gave his grade level teachers one-hour of common preparation time to collaborate. Distributing leadership, ongoing and professional development, and providing teachers with time to collaborate were instrumental in the success of the middle school model at Russ' school.

Sustainability. Russ and his teachers implemented the middle school model 24 years ago. They sustained what they started, and have continually improved upon it as new research emerged and by regularly reflecting on their progress. As Russ thought back on the many years since he and his teachers began this journey, he stated many times that "it is the principal that is key" to promoting and implementing school wide change initiatives. Reflecting back, Russ remembered a principal who came to him to learn from their experiences with implementing the middle school model. Eventually, that principal replicated much of what Russ taught him. However, almost as soon as that principal left his position, the components of the middle school model were gone. Russ suggested that when he retires some changes might be sustained, but without him there to keep the vision alive, much of their work would eventually go away.

His commitment to ensuring the success of the middle school model in his school is a significant factor in its success. Russ' actions showed his teachers, students, and the

community, his dedication to the success of the change initiative and complete commitment to making the middle school model the culture of their school. It was not a question of whether it would be successful, but when and how successful it would be.

Principal Leadership. Russ identified some specific actions he took as the person responsible for leading change within his school that assisted with the success of the middle school model. Early on in his principalship, Russ shaped a culture of collaboration by creating structures to foster and encourage teamwork. Russ split the teachers into grade level teams and provided a common preparation period every day. Additionally, he met with all of the students from each grade level once a week during the advisory period to give the teachers a full hour to discuss struggling students, collaborate, and learn about the middle school model. Furthermore, Russ distributed leadership to his team leaders allowing him to spread his influence and vision wider than he could have done on his own. Russ also planned ongoing professional development to provide his teachers with the support needed to keep the vision of the middle school model moving forward. Russ continually referred to the culture he and his teachers created that always focused on "doing what was best for kids."

Participant 3

Jenna is a principal at an elementary school in a rural farming community in southern Idaho. She is currently in her eighth year as principal at the school. Before becoming principal she worked in the district, but not at her current school.

School Culture. When Jenna took over as principal eight years ago, she recognized two things about the culture of the school that would affect the

implementation of change. First, they had “a great support system from the parents.” She mentioned that the “parents have been quite happy with the school, and I feel like the parents were confident with what was happening here.” Second, Jenna realized that the parents didn’t trust her yet because she was new, and trust takes time to establish. First, Jenna established trust with the parents by showing them that she “loved their kids and wanted to do what was best for them.” Additionally, Jenna stated, “That took a little time, and it took a little conflict resolution to talk to the parents and hear their hard words about their perceptions of me.” Over time, she attained high levels of trust with the parents.

Immediately after taking over as principal, Jenna identified an influential teacher that staff sensed was “running the principal - therefore running the show.” Jenna and many of the staff members perceived that this teacher had received preferential treatment in the past creating some resentment. Jenna called her into her office and said, “I know that you might not agree, but I’ve been hired to be in charge of this building and I value your input, but when I make a decision I will try and make a decision based on the good for the entire school.” Over the next two years, Jenna mediated “a lot of conflicts.” After Jenna’s second year as principal, the divisive teacher decided to move on positively impacting the culture of the school and the implementation of future change initiatives.

Jenna is currently in the process of implementing multiple change initiatives within her building. Some of the change initiatives originated at the building level, and many others have been passed down from the district office and the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDOE). Some of the current change initiatives are: professional learning communities (PLCs), the implementation of an early literacy

software program, a student data management system, new report cards based on mastery learning, teacher created assessments to identify student mastery of the curriculum, district-wide vertical curriculum alignment, and an all-day kindergarten intervention. Jenna and her staff are in varying phases of implementation with each of the change initiatives. As a result, they are experiencing initiative overload due to the multiple change initiatives mandated by the ISDOE and the district and the changes imposed from within the school by Jenna and her teachers.

Jenna worked hard to create a culture of caring and support for her teachers. She has "empathy with the teachers and their profession with the amount of time that it takes to plan and prepare meaningful lessons." Her teachers know she "will back them 100%." She listens to their concerns and works to provide appropriate support to match their needs. Jenna's teachers know she listens to their input adjusts the change initiatives accordingly. It is important to Jenna that her teachers know their voice matters.

Initiation. Jenna and her staff are currently in the process of implementing multiple change initiatives. The impetus for each of these change initiatives varies from one initiative to the next. Some of the initiatives resulted from Jenna and her staff identifying a need then selecting a program or devising a solution to meet the need. The district office and the ISDOE directed the implementation of many initiatives while at least one initiative originated from the teachers. At the building level, Jenna and her staff initiated the mastery-based assessments, the accompanying standards-based report card, and the all-day kindergarten intervention. The district office mandated the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs), strategic planning, the

student data management system, the early literacy software program, and district-wide vertical curriculum alignment. Initiated by the ISDOE, they implemented the Common Core State Standards and the accompanying assessment and a school improvement documentation program. As Jenna mentioned, “the last two years have been particularly difficult with initiative overload” and her teachers are “incredibly overwhelmed most of the time.”

Concerning the initiatives that originated at the building level, Jenna worked to acquire a “vision and share that with the teachers and let them know that I feel strongly personally about these things, and then they are more apt to do it.” As she shares her vision, she works to get buy-in with her teachers. Jenna and her teachers worked together to generate a shared vision for the change initiatives that began at the building level and resulted in immediate buy-in. Additionally, Jenna and her teachers worked to get buy-in from parents for the building derived change initiatives. For example, when they switched to a standards-based report card, they invited the parents to an informational meeting where “the parents gave input.” Jenna also stated, “We had the parents come, and we explained the report card, and we had a sample of the report card and explained what it looked like and why we made that change.” While working through the initiation process in her building, Jenna formulated her vision, shared it with her teachers and parents, and worked to get buy-in with all stakeholders by giving them multiple opportunities to provide input. She also mentioned that parents and teachers tend to have more “buy-in when they can see the value of how the change initiative helps kids.”

Implementation. "Implementation is just common sense about what is best for our practice. When you have a staff that is willing to make those changes because they know it is best for kids then it happens." Jenna also recognized the need to have a clear vision for the change initiatives and to keep that vision at the forefront of the thinking of the implementers, the teachers. Jenna mentioned, "It is easier to keep the vision alive, when teachers can see that a change is beneficial for the students." However, a clear vison is not enough, Jenna felt it needs to be accompanied by ongoing "support for teachers" and well established collaborative structures.

Jenna has a leadership team made up of grade level leaders that she meets with "before school ever starts to discuss their concerns," to "unify their vision," and plan for the coming year. Additionally, Jenna meets weekly with her leadership team during the school year. Jenna said, "We have leadership teams that have taken on trying to spearhead some of the change initiatives." Jenna mentioned, "One of the biggest things is trusting my team leaders, the leadership group." She relied on her leadership team and other teacher leaders to provide her with input and guidance as they worked through the change process.

Jenna has collaborative structures in place that allow teachers to learn from one another and discuss the change initiatives. The grade level teams meet every week during "Monday Meetings" to collaborate, discuss and learn together. She "just kind of monitors those Monday Meetings as a support, but the teams really direct themselves to move things forward because they know what their needs are." Additionally, Jenna leads

regular professional development during faculty meetings. She encourages discussion and solicits input to improve upon the current initiatives.

With each of the change initiatives Jenna and her faculty implement, she tries to provide targeted professional development to increase the capacity of the teachers. Within the building, Jenna identifies teachers that are experts with specific initiatives to serve as a resource for their fellow team members. Jenna mentioned that she feels "being a support and giving them time is huge." Teachers need time to learn about the change initiative. However, "the biggest thing is just the support factor."

Sustainability. Jenna and her team are in varying degrees of implementation and sustainability of the many change initiatives. Jenna mentioned that the changes initiated at the building level, such as the assessments created to identify student mastery of learning and the accompanying standards-based report cards continue to be sustained because "the teachers were included in the process and they see the benefit for students." Jenna feels for change to be sustained the teachers need to have an opportunity to give input, to acquire buy-in, and see that the change is having a positive impact on kids.

Principal Leadership. Jenna attributed her success with implementing change to: the support she provided her teachers, her commitment and vision for the change initiatives, seeking to get buy-in from all stakeholders, her leadership team, and well established collaborative structures. As Jenna mentioned many times, she strives to "empathize with the teachers" regarding the difficulties experienced with implementing multiple change initiatives. Jenna genuinely cares about providing her teachers with the exact support they need to address the challenges experienced at any given moment.

Jenna shows her commitment to the change initiatives that include software, by exerting the effort to learn the programs so she can understand the struggles of her teachers and provide support. Jenna gave teachers multiple opportunities to offer input so they could make modifications and improvements to the change initiatives and to obtain buy-in. Jenna formed a leadership team to help conceive and share the vision for the change initiatives. Additionally, Jenna instituted grade level teams and a configuration for meetings that allowed for a free flow of thoughts, ideas, and communication. Jenna acknowledges that the actions mentioned above assisted with the successful initiation, implementation and sustainability of change.

Participant 4

Mira is the principal of an elementary school in a small, rural farming community in southern Idaho. She started as the lead teacher in 1996 and took over as full-time principal in 2000. She has been the principal at the elementary school for 15 years.

The most recent change initiative implemented is a one-to-one device initiative. “We do iPads kindergarten through fifth grade.” Though they worked on other initiatives such as the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, the one-to-one device initiative is the one that was the focus of the interview.

School Culture. Mira’s school is “about 90% poverty and about 50% Hispanic.” Additionally, her school has a large English language learner (ELL) population. An indicator of the level of poverty and the rural nature of Mira’s school is that “most of the students do not have internet access at home.” Mira mentioned, “There is a culture out there of stay-at-home moms who don’t want their five-year-olds gone all day. That is the

culture we do not have." The culture within her district is one where both parents work, and most of them live in poverty. She mentioned "many of these kids we have from 7 o'clock in the morning till 6 o'clock at night because we do before school and after school. The parents really trust us because we have their students for almost 11 hours a day." Additionally, Mira stated, "I think that the culture is that our parents have a really great relationship with the school" and "they really trust me."

Mira has served in a leadership position in the district for almost two decades. She is currently the elementary school principal and the superintendent. Because of her longevity in the district and her dedication to the children in her school and the community, she mentioned, "the community trusts me." Mira has worked at the elementary school long enough that she has "taught most of their parents at some point." Mira possesses a deep connection with most of the parents in her district, and they sense her commitment to the well-being and success of their children. Additionally, Mira has developed a high level of trust with her staff. "This staff is very loyal, and they are a great staff and they are very loyal to me, but they are not afraid to say to me, I can't do that, or I'm not going to do that." She also commented, "I think that that has been really important for us that there is a trust factor between the staff and I."

Mira also gained the trust of her teachers regarding the implementation of the one-to-one iPad initiative by allowing them to "take it one step at a time" and by "telling teachers we are not going to push you until you are ready." However, there seems to be a dividing line between the new teachers and the veteran teachers when it comes to using technology to teach lessons. Younger teachers were more excited and ready to use the

technology. “They were not a bit afraid of using an iPad to teach a lesson.” However, for some of the veteran teachers “the more difficult part was just integrating it into the teachers routine without it being threatening.”

Mira recognized the tendency for teachers to get overloaded with the many changes and initiatives thrust upon them from multiple sources. She stated, “Whether it is federal, state or local, by the time you add all three of those together the teachers are overloaded.” Getting teachers to change their instructional practices so that the iPad is the primary tool, takes time. Mira stated “We are training them on safe and drug free schools, common core, digital technology, how to teach one-to-one, and it is just a constant overload of information that we are giving them.” Mira is cognizant of the burdensome feelings teachers’ experience because of the onslaught of change initiatives directed at them from multiple sources. To combat initiative overload, Mira worked to prioritize the requirements placed upon her teachers. “In order for teachers to avoid getting overloaded, we really try to make sure that they know we just expect them to be making progress and moving forward at their own pace.”

Initiation. Mira and her staff selected a change initiative to infuse the school with technology through a one-to-one iPad initiative. Speaking about the reasons they chose this initiative, Mira said, “I think it is going to better prepare them to go to college and work.” Mira feels that introducing students to technology can only help them and “the push was just always to stay ahead of the curve and that we weren’t afraid to try something new and be able to offer a lot of different access to technology for kids.” Mira,

her staff, and the community worked together to provide the students with access to technology and to prepare them for the future.

For Mira, a pivotal person in formulating the vision for technology in her school, was the technology director. She said, “I think the vision started years ago actually, I had somebody pushing me which is good and we would kind of bounce ideas back and forth.” Together they formed the vision and shared it with the faculty and community. Some resistance occurred, but “we have always just answered with just try something new, just try something new and take another step forward.” Eventually, Mira and her staff had a unified vision, and it was “to put technology in the hands of students that would not have this opportunity otherwise.” They desired to expose their students, at an early age, to technology and showed them how to use it as a learning tool.

Once Mira created and shared her vision, she worked to get the teachers to buy-in. She mentioned, “It was very important that the teachers actually buy-in first.” Additionally, “the buy-in has to be with the teachers. If I can’t sell it to the teachers, then I can’t sell it to the community.” According to Mira, it was easier to get buy-in with the community because “if you’re putting an iPad in a kids hand it is not going to affect their education adversely and it really was non-threatening.” Mira mentioned that when they tried to “implement a new change we give out a lot of information and make sure that the parents and community are on board.” Another factor in gaining the buy-in of the school board and the community was that grants, written by Mira, paid for all of the devices, and no money came out of the general fund. Mira recognized for the one-to-one iPad initiative to be successful, it was essential to acquire buy-in from all of the stakeholders.

Mira said, “The way we initiated it actually was that we really did give every teacher an iPad. We gave it to them in the spring and told them that we were working on this.” The teachers received the iPads and Mira told them “I don’t care what you do, I want you using it.” Mira intended for the teachers to spend the summer familiarizing themselves the iPad. By doing this, they started slowly and allowed teachers to progress at their pace.

Implementation. The initiation process ended by giving each teacher an iPad and implementation began with professional development on how to use the iPad for classroom instruction and student-learning. Fortunately, another elementary school nearby, began implementing a one-to-one iPad initiative two years earlier, and Mira was able to bring some of their teacher leaders in to train her staff. She mentioned, “it was teachers showing teachers what could be done.” Mira stated, “We are not quite where I want to be and we have a lot more training to do. In fact, I have one more training coming in on how to teach the common core with iPads.” Mira worked to provide her teachers with ongoing professional development on the use of the iPad for instruction and assessment. Additionally, “teachers really need time” to become familiar and eventually proficient with any new change. Mira increased the capacity of her teachers to use the iPad as an instructional tool to enhance student-learning and achievement by planning continuous targeted professional development and allowing time for teachers to collaborate and learn together and individually.

Regarding the collaborative structures at her school, Mira said, “When you only have eight certified teachers in a building, and when you are involved in any kind of

process like this it really takes everyone." Mira has eight certified teachers on her faculty, and they are all on the leadership team. However, Mira uses Thursday mornings as a late start, so teachers have time to collaborate and learn about the change initiatives in progress. Mira acknowledges, "teachers really need time" to successfully implement any change initiative.

As they worked through the implementation process, teacher leaders emerged with expertise with technology or on topics related to the change initiative. She said "It was all of the sudden somebody takes that step and says no, do it like this and it was like oh, I got a teacher leader and they picked out who the teacher leader was too." Mira recognized she needed assistance with leading implementation, so as the teacher leaders surfaced, Mira distributed leadership responsibilities to them.

Throughout the implementation process, Mira and her teachers encountered difficulties and experienced the implementation dip. Mira said, "There is always something that I think could slow down an initiative or change, this big in particular. This is absolutely the biggest change I have ever made as an educator." Mira mentioned, "there are millions of times I would've given up," but she had the support and backing of her "tech guy" and teachers. Mira and her staff worked through the implementation dip by taking "those little steps and telling teachers we are not going to push you until you are ready." Mira and her teachers addressed each issue that arose, and they put forth a determined effort to achieve sustainability of the one-to-one iPad initiative.

Sustainability. Funding is one of the greatest challenges to sustaining the one-to-one iPad initiative. Mira purchased all of the devices using funds from grants that she had

written. However, the one issue of greatest concern to her is “the financing, just the sustainability because of money.” As she looked at the sustainability, Mira felt that “before too long everyone will be doing this” and “hopefully the state gives us money for technology.” Mira has hope that the legislators recognize the direction we are heading in education and increase funding for technology.

In addition to funding being one of the major challenges to sustainability, Mira recognized the pivotal role she played in leading the one-to-one iPad initiative. She said that she plans to retire sometime in the next few years and she is already planning for the leadership succession. She mentioned, “I have so bought into what we are doing that whoever the next person is that takes over will have to feel the same way in order to maintain” what we have accomplished. She also said, “I am already training who I hope will replace me.” Mira recognized the role a leader plays in sustaining a change initiative and she is already making plans for her replacement so that the initiative continues to progress.

Mira stated that they have fully implemented the one-to-one iPad initiative and survived many dips in implementation, and now she is focused on sustaining their efforts. She mentioned, “A frustrating part is keeping people trained, up-to-date, and upbeat.” Mira attributes much of their success and its sustainability to the vision and expertise of their “tech guy.” Mira mentioned multiple times that he was a major part of their success and “if he left it would all probably go to heck” and they would be unable to sustain all they have accomplished. Ultimately, Mira recognized that it is the people within the organization that will maintain the initiative. She said, “I think that it is going to be really

important that you have people that are vested for a long time and will be around." Mira felt that building the capacity of the people in the school and getting them to completely buy-in to the change initiative are essential to its sustainability.

Principal Leadership. Mira felt several factors contributed to the success of the change initiative in their school. Mira acknowledged the essential role of the principal and said, "If you can't get teachers to follow a principal you will never have anything innovative happen in your building, because there is always just a divisive factor of it's us against them." Additionally, Mira stated, "They have to trust the principal and if that principal is not a really great teacher, a teacher leader, then you won't have anything happen that is innovative because they won't follow you." Finally, Mira never gave up on her vision for the one-to-one iPad initiative. She was patient, continually refocused the teachers and told them that if "you take it where you are at, and you take it one step at a time then that is all I expect of them and that's what we try to do with every teacher." She never wavered from her focus, was patient with her teachers and they experienced great success as they implemented the one-to-one iPad initiative.

Participant 5

Luke has been the principal of a small rural high school in southern Idaho for 17 years. During that time, he has seen many change initiatives come and go. Admittedly, Luke matured over the years by improving the way he leads change initiatives, resulting in greater success than when he was a young administrator. During the interview, he talked about three major change initiatives he worked on over the years. The interview

mostly focused on his efforts with High Schools that Work, the Common Core State Standards, and transitioning to a trimester system.

School Culture. When Luke first took over as principal he was "in the paper a lot because there was an absence of steady leadership" before he arrived, and he had to take a stand on many issues that previously went unaddressed by previous administrators. The prior principal caused a lack of trust for the administration at his high school because of the inconsistent manner in which he handled student discipline and challenging situations. Luke showed his community "that if something comes up I will deal with it even though it might be unpopular or difficult." As a result, Luke stated, "I have gotten the trust of the community." Additionally, by handling student discipline consistently Luke also gained the trust of his staff.

Though Luke gained the trust of the community and his staff, it was not without some resistance. Early on in his principalship, Luke mentioned, "I would say that we were going to do this or we were going to do that and then all of a sudden I would get pushback from the staff." Luke also experienced resistance from the community when they increased graduation requirements and added a senior project. Some of the parents said, "Well, my kid doesn't want to take that advanced class. We will take the senior year off." Although Luke experienced some resistance, he overcame this by building trust with his faculty and community and by "not doing anything different than what he said he was going to do."

Another aspect of the school's culture during his first few years as principal was that his teachers "were just flat experiencing initiative overload." He mentioned, "It was

almost as if we would go to a workshop, or one of the professional development folks would come in and do a presentation or something and we would jump to that." Luke stated that early on in his career, he "liked this particular program or that particular program" and they worked through multiple initiatives at one time. However, as time went, on Luke learned from those experiences "to the point now where I refuse, I should say, my leadership team will refuse to do too many initiatives." Luke and his leadership team learned from those first experiences with change and now they "focus on one or two initiatives per year."

When Luke took over as principal, distrust for school administration existed because of the inconsistent manner in which the prior administration handled issues and due to teachers feeling overwhelmed because of initiative overload. Luke worked hard to gain the trust of his teachers and the community through consistently enforcing school rules and district policy. It took time, but Luke gained the confidence of his teachers that positively affected the implementation of change from that point forward.

Initiation. During Luke's 17-year career as principal, they worked through many change initiatives. As Luke discussed his experiences with change, he drew upon his efforts with High Schools that Work, the establishment of the senior project and increased graduation requirements, blended learning with Moodle, transitioning to a trimester system, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and the Common Core State Standards. Getting buy-in from staff and the community on any change initiative is a priority for Luke. To get buy-in from his staff Luke listened to them and gave them many opportunities to share their input. He mentioned, "I didn't do a very

good job of listening in my early career as a principal, as I do now." Luke stated, "I get good ideas from teachers, lots of good ideas and I don't ignore them." When they were first deciding whether to implement High Schools that Work, he called each teacher into his office, to get their input and allowed them to vote. Talking about the decision adopt the PBIS program he said, "I wasn't going to implement PBIS unless we had buy-in." Luke also stated, "My leadership team will say, let's look at that, and I will run it up the flagpole and listen." Luke connected the importance of listening to his teachers, giving them a voice, and getting buy-in from them, before moving forward with any change initiative.

As Luke looked back on the change initiatives he worked on over the years, the impetus for each of them was a little bit different. When they selected to go with High Schools that Work and to add a senior project it "was to increase the engagement of the seniors." Regarding the implementation of the Common Core, Luke mentioned, "With the Common Core you can't do that (allow teachers to share input and get buy-in before implementing) because it is being forced upon us." When it came to moving from a four period a day block schedule to a regular six period day, it was due to a decrease in funding. As his leadership style changed to be more inclusive of his teachers, he mentioned, "Believe it or not, the transition from semester to trimester was actually the decision of the staff." The staff came to Luke and said they wanted to provide their students with more opportunities and could do that by moving to a trimester schedule. Luke stated, "The difference in my leadership style now is that the staff did it this time,

and I supported it." With each of the change initiatives, the impetus varied, but as his leadership style evolved, it became more inclusive of teachers and the community.

Luke recounted the importance of clear and constant communication with his staff and parents as they worked through the change process. Luke stated, "The open communication is what has made it work." Luke provided his teachers with many opportunities to share their input and he would "sit back and listen to them." Communication consists of two parts, listening and sharing. Luke has significantly improved his listening skills over the years. Moreover, regarding the second part, sharing, Luke consistently labored to clarify his vision of change for his stakeholders through ongoing communication. Additionally, Luke stated, "I try to communicate with the community. I make it a point to make sure that we get as many of the email addresses of parents, and we try to communicate with them through email frequently." Speaking about his success with implementing change, Luke said, "The open communication is what has made it work."

Implementation. When it comes to implementing change, Luke believes it is important to provide teachers with high quality professional development that is sustained over a long period to build the capacity of his teachers. Luke stated, "I have provided them time to work, given the resources and professional development. I want them to have the right tools and, of course, the professional development to be able to do it." Speaking about one of the initiatives that came from the district office Luke said, "If we are going to do that it can't be the drive-by professional development in September or August whenever we have in-service, and that is the last time you touch it. This is going

to be ongoing and sustaining. So if you're going to do it, I will buy into it but I won't buy into it if you don't provide professional development." Luke knows that to implement successful change he needs to provide his teachers with quality professional development throughout the implementation process.

Luke put structures in place to provide teachers with time to collaborate and discuss the change initiatives in progress. He stated, "We have early release Fridays, every Friday, so we kind of use that time for whatever the initiative is that we are working on at the time as part of our professional development on the early release Fridays." Luke uses the early release Fridays to keep the vision of the change initiative at the forefront of the teachers thinking, especially as the year wears on, the teachers get busy, and it is easy to go back to the status quo.

Along with providing professional development and giving the teachers time to work, Luke acknowledges the importance of distributing leadership responsibilities to his staff members. He mentioned, "They helped me because instead of somehow thinking I had to do everything, I didn't have to. I just had to rely upon the staff and my leadership team." Luke has a leadership team that he closely worked with to get their input and "run it up the flagpole with them" to see how they felt about upcoming change initiatives. Luke carefully selected his building leaders and he said, "That's one of the challenges, not only do you pick somebody that has the requisite skills but also has credibility with the staff so that when they say something they believe it." Selecting teacher leaders and distributing leadership responsibilities to them assisted with the implementation of change.

Even though Luke provided professional development, selected teacher leaders, and gave them time to work they still experienced the implementation dip. At the end of the first trimester, after they went that schedule, many issues arose that needed to be addressed. Luke gathered his faculty, and they worked through the problems together. The counselor spoke to the faculty, fielded questions, and gathered input. Luke stated, "She made some of the changes based on what the staff asked and their input." Because of the open communication and his willingness to listen to his staff, they toiled through the implementation dip together.

Sustainability. When talking about sustainability, Luke has started an early release on Fridays and "that hour to an hour and a half that we do on Friday gets everybody refocused on what we are doing." Additionally, Luke stated, "That is the sustainable piece, because when you get away from it and you're engaged in trying to make the school work then you get right back on focus again because that hour to an hour and a half that we do on Friday gets everybody refocused on what we are doing." Luke used the early release Fridays to keep everybody focused on the current change initiatives.

Luke mentioned two other things he directly attributes to the sustainability of the change initiatives within his school. First, Luke recognized the importance of communication with all stakeholders and he mentioned, "One thing about sustainable change is that I try to communicate with the community." Much as he used the Friday early release to maintain the focus of his teachers, he connected with the community and parents to "make sure that whatever is going on in the school is communicated to" them.

Additionally, Luke acknowledged that it takes effort to sustain change and that it does not just happen. Speaking about sustaining the trimester schedule Luke said, “Now I think that is a sustainable thing and I’m really going to put my efforts in supporting that and making sure that we have plenty of staff for the elective credits and offerings for kids.” It takes constant communication and an ongoing effort to sustain change.

Perhaps the most significant thing Luke did to sustain change within his building was to publish a faculty handbook that outlined the change initiatives and the expectations for implementation. He stated, “The point being is that I think that it will be sustainable because it is part of our handbook and thus part of board policy.” Luke regularly referred back to the handbook to remind his teachers to focus on the current change initiatives.

Principal Leadership. Luke attributed multiple characteristics of his leadership style to the success of change initiatives within a school. One of those is the focus on gathering input and listening to his staff. By listening to his staff and allowing them to provide input, he acquired buy-in for the change initiatives. He mentioned, “The biggest thing that I have learned over my career is that I need to sit back and listen to the teachers and my leadership team.” Another characteristic, his commitment to providing teachers with continuous professional development and allocating time for the teachers to work on and assimilate the change initiative into daily operating procedures. Finally, Luke provided his teachers with the handbook that outlined change initiatives in progress and the expectations for implementation. Additionally, Luke held his teachers accountable for following through on the expectations.

Cross Narrative Analysis

According to Creswell (2013), a cross narrative analysis analyzes the themes across each of the narratives and deals with interpretation of meaning. Additionally, the cross narrative analysis compares the themes identified for each of the participants. I used a cross narrative analysis to answer research questions two and three.

Challenges and Successes Experienced by Principals

Research question two: What are the challenges/successes that principals encounter as they initiate implement and sustain successful change initiatives within their schools?

A cross narrative analysis of the data with respect to research question number two revealed significant similarities and some variation amongst the identified themes. One of the themes was the resistance that principals experienced as they initiated change within their schools. All five of the participants experienced varying degrees of resistance from either one or multiple sources. Mark and Jenna both received resistance from a single, but powerful faculty member when they first took over as principal. Russ and Luke experienced opposition from community members. All five principals confronted faculty members that resisted the change initiatives they worked to implement. Additionally, all of the principals reported that resistance was a significant challenge encountered as they implemented change. However, all five principals stated that they overcame the resistance and eventually built trust with their communities and faculties.

All five principals mentioned they made an effort to gain the trust of staff and, parents, and community members. Mark and Russ made a conscientious effort to build

professional and personal relationships with their faculty members. They attributed their efforts to the eventual establishment of trust with their teachers. Russ, Jenna, Mira, and Luke reported that they intentionally reached out to parents to gain their trust. All five principal feel the effort expended to build trusting relationships with parents, staff, and community members helped with the success of the change initiatives they implemented.

Another theme identified among the narratives was the analysis and assessment of the culture of the principal's schools that occurred before implementation began. Mark, Russ, and Luke mentioned they assessed the culture of their schools to gauge their readiness for change, during their first year as principal. Mark made an effort to get to know his staff on a personal and professional level. He spent that first year listening and observing. Russ formed a parent advisory committee to gather input and to understand their desires and concerns. Luke quickly recognized a lack of trust existed for the administration because of inconsistently enforced policies in the past. Mark, Russ, and Luke reported the understanding they gained from assessing the culture of their schools assisted them with successfully implementing change. Jenna and Mira did not directly mention an intentional effort to understand the culture of their schools before starting the change process. However, both unintentionally evaluated certain aspects of the culture of their schools and communities. Jenna recognized that parents did not initially trust her, but they did trust her teachers. Mira studied the demographics of her school and discovered a high English language learner population. Additionally, a majority of the school was on free and reduced lunch. The time the principals took to knowingly or

unknowingly assess the culture of their schools helped them gain a better understanding and assisted them as they implemented change.

One of the challenges all five principals reported experiencing at some time during the process of implementing change was initiative overload. This occurs when the school or organization implements so many change initiatives at one time that the implementers, in this case, the teachers, feel confused and overwhelmed (Abrahamson, 2004). Jenna, Russ, Mark, Mira, and Luke each mentioned going through initiative overload with their teachers at some point as they implemented change. Additionally, they recognized the detrimental effects of initiative overload to change initiatives in progress. They learned how to manage initiative overload by being selective about the number and type of change initiatives they implemented at any one time. At the time of the interview, Jenna and her teachers were currently experiencing major initiative overload. They were in the process of trying to manage two change initiatives from the State Department of Education, five from the district office, and two that originated from Jenna and her staff. Jenna and her teachers felt frustrated and overwhelmed by the expectation to implement nine significant initiatives at one time. All five principals acknowledged that initiative overload was a challenge and hindered their ability to implement change. However, all of the participants acknowledged the need to possess the skills and ability to manage change initiatives.

All five principals emphasized the need to acquire buy-in for the change initiatives from the teachers early on in the process. All of the participants stated that they intentionally sought to get buy-in from the teachers for the change initiatives before

implementation began. They all recognized the correlation between acquiring buy-in from the teachers and the success of the change initiatives. Additionally, all of the principals formed a leadership team to provide them with input and to assist with sharing their vision for the change initiatives with the remainder of the staff. Mark said that he did not have buy-in from his teachers with one of the change initiatives he tried to implement, and it was a failure. Additionally, Russ mentioned that before becoming principal, the principal at the time tried and failed to implement the middle school model. They attributed the failures to the lack of buy-in from teachers. Russ, Mira, and Luke reached out to their communities to educate, take input on, and garner support for the initiatives. Russ formed an advisory committee that consisted of parents and community members. Mira "gave out a lot of information to make sure that the parents and community" were "on board." Luke frequently communicated with his parents through email. All of the participants directly mentioned the importance and the need to acquire buy-in for the change initiatives for them to succeed.

Four of the five principals, Mark, Jenna, Mira, and Luke all recounted they experienced the "implementation dip" as they worked through the change process. As a school embarks on the change process, actual performance often dips below previous performance and definitely below the eventually intended performance (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Considering the implementation dip, Mark struggled to incorporate the lessons associated with the anti-bullying change initiative into the school day. Mira worked to provide continual support for teachers that were struggling with integrating iPads into their daily instruction. Luke and his faculty worked through the difficulties

associated with implementing a trimester schedule. Russ did not make any mention of a dip in implementation. Jenna did not make a direct mention of a dip in implementation, but some of her comments about her experiences showed that she was indeed experiencing the "implementation dip." For Mark, Jenna, Mira, and Luke the "implementation dip" was a challenge that each met with a resolve to overcome it and see the change initiative through to its intended outcomes.

Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira all encountered success by having a clear vision for the change initiative they implemented. All four mentioned that first they constructed, focused, and solidified their vision for the change initiatives. Then they decided how to communicate it to their teachers, parents, and the community. Luke did not mention formulating his vision for the change initiatives. All five principals referred to the importance of sharing their vision often with their teachers to maintain constant focus. Mark and Russ talked about working with their leadership teams to formulate the vision. Jenna discussed creating a vision for change with her teachers. Russ and Mira reached out to their parents and shared their visions for change, and how it would positively affect their children. Finally, Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira all discussed the importance of continually sharing their vision often with all stakeholders to keep moving the initiative(s) forward. Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira partially attributed their success with the change initiatives to having a clear vision and sharing it often, while Luke only made a passing mention of sharing his vision with his teachers.

All five principals reported providing ongoing professional development for their teachers throughout the implementation process. They felt the professional development

helped the teachers understand the change initiatives they implemented which in turn garnered support. All of the participants recognized that the change initiatives they implemented could not be successful if they did not provide sustained professional development to their teachers.

All five principals reported that they identified teacher leaders, formed a leadership team, and distributed leadership responsibilities to them. Mira mentioned that because she has a small faculty, all of her teachers are on the leadership team. The principals worked closely with and relied on their leadership teams to gather input and share the vision for the change initiatives. Mark and Russ specifically mentioned that they worked to get buy-in from their leadership team before moving forward with implementation. Jenna, Mira, and Luke identified teacher leaders that emerged because of a particular area of expertise that related to the initiatives. All of the principals placed an importance on forming a leadership team, and then delegated leadership responsibilities to them and then trusted them to follow through.

All five of the principals reported setting aside time during the workday for teachers to collaborate, discuss, and learn about the change initiatives. Mark and Russ structured the schedules of their grade level teams to allow for shared preparation time every day. Jenna, Mira, and Luke all reported they altered the schedule of the day so once each week teachers would have extended time to work together as a faculty. Each of the three principals did this through different means. Jenna has a late start on Mondays, Mira's late start is on Thursdays, and Luke has an early release on Fridays with the intention of providing teachers extra time to collaborate. All of the principals recognized

the importance of putting structures in place that allowed the teachers time to learn about, discuss and problem solve with regards to the change initiatives in progress.

All five principals commented that sustaining change is difficult and takes effort. Each of the principals expressed their concern about sustaining the change initiative differently. Mark stated, “that they have a long way to go” to reach sustainability. Russ reflected back on a colleague that successfully implemented the middle school model in his school only to fade away when he left his position. Russ recognized that many of the changes might be sustained if he left, but over time, many would likely go away. Jenna, who was in the middle of experiencing initiative overload, felt like they had not reached the sustainability phase with any of the initiatives. Mira worried about sustaining the funding for the iPads and technology already acquired. She also recognized that leadership succession could be an issue to maintaining the one-to-one iPad initiative. As a result, Mira is currently grooming her successor. Luke mentioned that in order to sustain the change initiatives, it would take a focused and ongoing effort. All five of the principals recognized that sustaining the change initiatives they implemented would be their greatest challenge.

A cross narrative analysis of the data revealed the principals encountered many successes and challenges as they worked through the change process. All of the principals faced the following challenges: resistance from teachers and community members, initiative overload, and the struggle to sustain the changes implemented. Additionally, Mark, Jenna, Mira, and Luke reported experiencing the implementation dip. The cross

narrative analysis revealed the principals experienced more successes than challenges. All of the principals reported the following successes:

- Intentionally fostering trust.
- Gaining buy-in from the stakeholders.
- Sharing their vision for the change initiatives with the stakeholders.
- Increased capacity of teachers through ongoing professional development.
- Selecting a leadership team and then distributing leadership responsibilities to them.
- Creating collaborative structures so teachers could discuss and learn about the change initiatives.

Additional success not shared by all principals included: formulating a vision for the change initiatives and assessing the culture of the school. Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira mentioned formulating their vision, and Mark, Russ, and Luke intentionally assessed the culture of their schools before proceeding with implementation. All of the success principals reported, at one time could be considered challenges that required effort to turn into successes. As indicated, the analysis of the data revealed three challenges and five successes shared by all of the principals, and one challenge and two successes where the narratives among the principals slightly differed.

Actions Taken by Principals to Implement Change

Research question three: What are the specific actions principals' report aided in the success of the change initiative?

A cross narrative analysis of the data revealed actions shared by all of the participants that aided the success of the change initiatives in progress. Other themes mentioned by some of the principals, did not have as strong of a representation. A few of the principals referred to additional themes shared by some of the principals and not others. All of the principals reported one particular action, not mentioned by any other principal, which contributed to the success of the change initiatives. The following cross narrative analysis will present the identified themes in the following order: those shared by all of the principals with strong representation, shared by some with a lesser degree of importance, shared by a few of the principals, and specific actions mentioned by only one principal.

Of all the themes identified regarding actions that principals took that aided with the success of the change initiatives , four stand out as being mentioned by all five principals multiple times. First and the most often mentioned was the significance of the effort they exerted to acquire buy-in for the change initiatives from their teachers, parents, and communities. Second, the principals recounted that the collaborative structures they created for the teachers to discuss, learn, and give input on the change initiatives assisted with building their capacity to effectively implement the initiatives and garnered support. Third, they mentioned forming leadership teams and then distributing leadership responsibilities to them. Their leadership teams helped them to formulate their visions for the change initiatives, provided input, carried the vision out to the teachers, and gave feedback when needed. Finally, all of the participants felt that trust is critical to the success of their change initiatives. Additionally, the trust went both ways.

They felt it was important to gain the trust of their stakeholders and to trust the teachers and teacher leaders to follow through with the vision for change. All of the principals reported that these four actions aided in the success of the change initiatives.

Mira, Russ, Jenna, and Luke all mentioned that listening to their various stakeholders contributed to the success of the change initiatives. Mark, Jenna, and Luke specifically referred to the importance of listening to their teachers as they gave input and expressed their concerns. Luke mentioned multiple times the emphasis he placed on listening to the input shared by his leadership team before taking action. He said that learning to listen to his teachers is the most beneficial skill he developed during his career. Russ specifically mentioned listening to parents about their concerns with the middle school model. Mira was the only principle that did not mention or place an emphasis on listening to her teachers, parents, and community. This is not to say that she does not listen to them, but it was not emphasized by her during the interview and thus not included in her narrative. Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Luke each mentioned how listening to their various stakeholders contributed to the success of the change initiatives.

Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira all formulated and solidified their vision for the change initiatives and shared it with their teachers, parents, and communities. They felt the need to continually share their vision for change so that teachers kept the change initiative and its intended outcomes in the forefront of their thinking. They partially attributed the success of the change initiatives to that clear vision and ensured that all involved in the change process shared that same vision.

Other actions, mentioned by a few of the participants, aided the principals with successful implementation. Mark and Russ placed significance on establishing professional and personal relationships with their teachers. They felt it was important that teachers discerned that they genuinely cared about them. Mark and Russ both stated that the teachers needed to see, by their actions, their complete commitment to the change initiatives. Russ, Jenna, and Luke said that supporting and empathizing with their teachers played a role in the success of the change initiatives. The participants each attributed multiple actions they took to help the change initiatives become successful, although the actions differed between the participants.

During the data collection process and the co-construction of the narratives each of the principals reported one particular action, they felt was most important to the success of the change initiatives. Mark felt the time and effort he put into forming professional and personal relationships with his teachers paid the largest dividends. Early on in his career as a principal, Russ adopted the motto of always doing "what is best for kids." Russ reported that this motto guided all of his decisions and motivated him to ensure that the change initiatives they are working benefited the students. For Jenna, she supported her teachers with professional development opportunities, time to work and collaborate, and sometimes "a shoulder to cry on." Jenna felt if her teachers knew she supported them they in turn would do all they could to assist in the success of the change initiatives. Mira felt that strong principal leadership was essential for successful change. She prefaced this with the need for her teachers to trust her and in her abilities as an instructional leader. Finally, Luke stated, though it took him time, he has learned to listen

to his teacher leaders and teachers and that “has made all the difference in the success of change.” Each principal mentioned one specific action they took during the change process that aided more in the success of the change initiatives than any others did, and they were all different. Though their responses differed, each principal placed an equal emphasis on that single action to ensure success.

Discrepant Cases

I identified one discrepant case during the data analysis process. Four of the five principals experienced the implementation dip during the change process. Russ did not make any comments that related to experiencing the implementation dip. Additionally, two discrepant cases contradicted the research related to change theory. According to the research, developing a detailed plan for implementation is a recommendation (Fixsen et al., 2009). The discrepancy occurred when only one of the five participants, Mark, reported creating a detailed plan for implementation. The other discrepant case was that none of the participants reported using a systematic process to analyze the culture of their school before attempting to implement change. According to the research, Hall (2013) and Kruse and Louis (2009) suggested using a survey and a checklist of tasks to intentionally study culture of the school to plan for implementation and have an idea of how the culture of the school would help or hinder the success of the change initiative. Each of the principals informally analyzed the culture of the school but did not perform an intentional and systematic analysis of their school’s culture. The discrepant cases identified diverged from the research related to educational change theory.

Evidence of Quality

I digitally recorded the interviews for this study. I also saved the recordings of the interviews, the transcribed interviews, and any identifiable information on a personal external hard drive. I transcribed the interviews and sent them to each participant for member checking. Two of the participants requested minor changes. One principal asked to have a comment removed regarding their longevity in their position and becoming complacent and the other asked that I remove a comment about a neighboring district. I made the requested changes. After receiving confirmation from each participant regarding the accuracy of the interview transcripts, I began writing the initial narratives. I sent the narratives to the participants for them to review and provide additional input. I worked with the participants and conducted follow-up interviews to co-construct the narratives and ensure their accuracy. Eventually, after extensive communication with the participants, I received approval that the narratives accurately represented their experiences with initiating, implementing, and sustaining change within their schools. Additionally, I read all of the narratives to detect any information that might reveal the identity of the participants. I edited to protect the anonymity of the participants. A peer debriefer, who is a currently practicing principal, and is familiar with the study, reviewed the narratives. The principal provided input on the narratives and I made some changes with the assistance of the participants. On the advice of the peer reviewer, I removed the specific names of the initiatives the principals were implementing and replaced them with general descriptions. Idaho is a small enough state, that if the specific names had been included, the school and principal could have easily been identified using the

demographics provided. The interviews, follow-up interviews, member checking, and peer debriefing ensured the accuracy of the narratives and subsequent data analysis.

Summary of Findings

Section 4 presented the process of data collection using an interview guide to conduct in-depth interviews, the recording and transcription of the data, the co-construction of the narratives, and a cross narrative analysis. Five principals from rural communities in southern Idaho participated in the study. The purpose of this study was to tell the stories of principals and their experiences with implementing change in their schools, to share the challenges and successes they encountered, and the specific actions they report aided in the success of the change initiatives. I co-constructed the narratives with the participants and received approval that they accurately represented their stories before conducting a cross narrative analysis to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. This section concluded with a discussion on the discrepant cases and the methods used to assure the accuracy of the narratives and the cross narrative analysis.

Section 5 will include an interpretation of the findings from Section 4. The interpretation of findings will consist of the conclusions that address each of the research questions with references to the outcomes from section 4, and will relate the findings to the larger body of research on educational change theory found in Section 2, and the Conceptual Framework found in Section 1. Additionally, I will present the implications for how the results from this study will affect social change and recommendations for action. Section 5 will conclude with recommendations for further study, and reflections

related to the experiences of principals as they initiated, implemented, and sustained change initiatives in their schools.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to tell the stories and understand the experiences of principals as they initiated implemented and sustained change within their schools. I used an interview guide based on the Conceptual Framework and related to the research questions to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with five principals from south central and southeastern Idaho. Three research questions guided each Section of this study. The first research question related to the experiences of principals initiating, implementing, and sustaining change and the co-constructed narratives answered this question. The second and third research questions focused on the successes and challenges principals experienced as they lead change in their schools and the specific actions that principals took that aided in the success of the change initiatives. I used a cross narrative analysis (Creswell, 2013) to answer Research Questions 2 and 3.

The participants and I co-constructed the narratives to ensure accurate representation of their experiences. The analysis of the narratives revealed many similarities and some differentiation between the experiences of the five participants. An extensive review of the narratives searching for common themes found three challenges common to all of the participants and one that was shared among four of the principals. Mark, Jenna, Mira, and Luke encountered the “implementation dip” which resulted in decreased productivity before they experienced success. All of the principals recounted their teachers feeling overloaded and overwhelmed at varying times during the change process due to the many change initiatives they were working on at any given time. The principals also experienced resistance from teachers, parents, and community members to

change initiatives they were implementing. Though reported as a success in Section 4, initially the principals encountered a lack of trust towards them after assuming the principalship, and some of the participants experienced a lack of trust towards the change initiative. However, all of the principals eventually considered efforts to build trust as a success that started out as a challenge. Finally, the principals agreed that their most significant challenge consisted of sustaining their efforts to initiate and implement change. Although all five principals experienced four common and primary challenges, they reported more successes.

The principals shared six successes that they all had in common. The most salient theme that emerged from the data analysis related to principals working with teacher leaders, teachers, parents, and community members to gain buy-in for the change initiatives in progress. The principals supplied ongoing professional development opportunities to their teachers to build their capacity to understand and implement the change initiatives. Additionally, the principals provided support for their teachers by creating collaborative structures that allowed them to discuss, plan for, and learn about the change initiatives. Another common theme, the principals reported their efforts to foster and nurture trust with teachers, parents, and community members significantly affected their ability to implement successful change. The final theme shared by all of the principals related to identifying teacher leaders, creating a leadership team, and distributing leadership responsibilities to them. The leadership team played a pivotal role in creating the vision for the change initiatives and distributing it throughout the school within their area of stewardship. Finally, all of the principals reported sharing their vison

with teachers, parents, and community members to garner understanding and support for the change initiatives. All of the principals shared experiences associated with the six themes depicted above and recounted how they contributed to the success of the initiatives.

The principals reported two successes common to a majority, but not all of the participants. Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira said they formulated their vision for change before sharing it with teachers and parents. They recognized the need to have a clear vision for the change initiatives and their intended outcomes. Second, Mark, Russ, and Luke intentionally assessed the culture of their schools and communities before beginning the change process. They reported the understanding gained assisted with initiation and implementation. Moreover, Jenna and Mira did not intentionally assess the culture of their schools but did so informally. I included these two success because they frequently appeared in the data and reported by a majority of the participants.

The principals reported specific actions they took that aided in the success of the change initiatives. I categorized their actions based on the number of principals that reported the actions and the significance of it to affect implementation. The principals shared four actions in common, two actions shared by a majority of the principals, and two noteworthy actions mentioned by a minority of the participants. Four of the actions reported by all five principals were essential to the success of the change initiatives. First, they obtained buy-in for the change initiative from teachers, parents, and community members. Second, they created collaborative structures and providing teachers time to learn about and discuss the initiatives. Third, they selectively organized a leadership team

and distributed leadership to them in order to spread their influence throughout the school. Finally, they mentioned an intentional effort to build trust with teachers, parents, and community members. Some of the other specific actions they reported that assisted with the success of the change initiatives were establishing professional and personal relationships with their teachers, and giving the teachers the opportunity to provide input and then listening, formulating and sharing their vision, and supporting teachers. Additionally, each principal reported one primary action that they felt was most significant. Mark intentionally reached out to his teachers to foster professional and personal relationships. Russ adopted the motto of "always doing what is best for kids" which guides all of his decisions and actions. Jenna diligently strives to support her teachers. Mira believes strong principal leadership is key to implementing successful change. Luke felt the acquired skill of listening to his teachers and parents and then acting on their input helped more than any other action.

This study focused on the experiences of principals as they led and implemented change initiatives in their schools. The participants and I co-constructed the narratives. Eventually, the participants agreed that the narratives accurately represented their experiences. I conducted a cross narrative analysis that identified common themes related to the Conceptual Framework and the Research Questions. Section 5 will include an interpretation of the findings from Section 4 and linking them to the research presented in Section 2, how this study will affect social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, and the reflections of the researcher.

Interpretation of Findings

Three research questions guided this study. The co-construction of the narratives answered Research Question 1. I used a cross narrative analysis, as described by Creswell (2013), to answer Research Questions 2 and 3. Additionally, I compared the identified themes from Section 4 with the Conceptual Framework and the Literature Review from Section 2 to see if what the principals experienced aligns with or diverges from recent research.

The principals reported four main challenges they encountered during the change process. First, all of the principals experienced resistance from teachers, parents, or community members. Kearney, and Smith (2010) discussed that the implementers, in this case, the teachers, often resist any change initiatives that threaten the status quo. Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Luke faced resistance from teachers and parents concerning the change initiative. Additionally, Kearney, and Smith (2010) suggested that the implementers frequently resist the person leading the change initiatives. Mark and Russ encountered stiff resistance from a single, but influential, staff member. All five of the principals experienced varying degrees of resistance from staff members. Sarafidou, and Nikolaidis (2009) found that past experiences with change initiatives influenced opinions towards future initiatives. Mark and Russ' schools suffered failed attempts to implement change initiatives that resulted in resistance towards subsequent change initiatives. Harris (2011) suggested those leading change should expect resistance throughout the process. All five principals encountered resistance during each phase of the change process. The research

related to the resistance of change initiatives dates back to Berman and McLaughlin (1974 a), and is interconnected with the study of change.

The second challenge the principals faced was initiative overload (Abrahamson, 2004). All five of the principals mentioned that their teachers experienced initiative overload at some point during the change process. As mentioned by Abrahamson (2004), a result of initiative overload can be a lack of trust for the initiative or the person leading the change. Jenna recounted that her teachers, at the time of the interview, were currently experiencing severe initiative overload due multiple initiatives forced on them from ISDOE and the district office. Consequently, Jenna's teachers did not trust the district office and their mandated initiatives. Though an extensive amount of research on initiative overload did not exist, all five principals mentioned the challenges faced as a result.

The third challenge mentioned by all of the principals related to sustaining the change initiatives they implemented. Sustainability is the desired outcome when beginning the change process (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Additionally, Guhn (2009) mentioned that sustaining change is the most difficult part of the process. As the principals reflected on their experiences with implementing change, each discussed the challenges associated with sustaining change initiatives. Mark was in the early stages of the change process, but he actively worked to sustain the anti-bullying program. Russ discussed various components of the middle school model maintained over the years since initial implementation. Additionally, he mentioned other elements that faded away due to continued adjustments made by Russ and his faculty. Mira provided ongoing

professional development and support to her teachers to build their capacity and incrementally move the one-to-one iPad initiative forward. Additionally, Mira worried sustaining funding for the initiative. Luke reflected on the various change initiatives he worked to implement during his tenure as the principal. He thoughtfully examined why they maintained the elements of some of the initiatives and not others. Jenna was still in the early stages of initiating and implementing change and had not yet reached the sustainability phase. Another component affecting sustainability is leadership succession. Langran (2010) suggested that leadership succession is its biggest hurdle to attaining sustainability of a change initiative (Langran, 2010). Mark, Russ, and Mira specifically mentioned recognizing that leadership succession could negatively impact previously implemented changes. Mira thought it so important that she was in the process of grooming her replacement. Furthermore, Mendels and Mitgang (2013) suggested that strong leadership is essential to sustaining any change initiative. The experiences of Mark, Russ, Mira, and Luke show they actively worked to lead and sustain change within their schools. The principals acknowledged their most significant challenge was to sustain the initiatives they toiled to implement. Their actions exhibited their acknowledgment regarding the importance of leadership in sustaining change.

Data analysis revealed four principals encountered a significant challenge with the implementation dip (Fullan, 2010a). As mentioned by Mascal, and Leithwood (2010), when introducing change performance often drops below previous levels and certainly below the intended performance. Mark, Jenna, Mira, and Luke and their teachers experienced a dip in implementation during the change process. Mark struggled to

incorporate the lessons associated with the change initiative into the school day. Mira provided ongoing support for teachers having difficulties using the iPad as and instructional tool. Luke waded through the challenges corresponding to the implementation of a trimester schedule. Mark, Jenna, Mira, and Luke's teachers experienced frustration as mentioned by Gialamas, Pelonis, and Medeiros (2014), and confusion (Yan, 2012) as a result of the implementation dip. Russ did not make any mention of a dip in implementation. Each of the four principals experienced the implementation dip in different ways, but they all said it was a challenge.

All of the principals shared three challenges and four principals experienced an additional challenge. The discussion on the challenges principals encountered as they worked through the change process is followed by the successes experienced. The following paragraphs compare the successes reported by the principals to the research from the Literature Review.

The principals reported multiple common successes, two successes reported by a majority of the participants, and specific actions that aided with the implementation of the change initiatives. Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira discussed the need to have a clear vision for the change initiative and its intended outcomes (Morrison, 2013). However, having a vision was not enough, all of the principals continually worked to keep it at the forefront of the thinking of the implementers (Russell et al., 2011). Mark, Russ, Jenna, and Mira discussed the importance of complete commitment to the vision for the change initiative and its intended purposes (Seo et al., 2012). Additionally, the principals discussed co-creating the vision and sharing it with their leadership teams (Russell et al., 2011). Mark,

Russ, Jenna, and Mira emphasized the responsibility of a principal to clarify their vision before they could share it with staff and community members (Putnam, 2010-2011). The research suggests the need for a principal to have a vision for the change initiative and its eventual success (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

Getting buy-in from the implementers, parents and community members was the most important and highly represented theme in this study. All five principals discussed the significance of obtaining buy-in from all stakeholders and without it, the change initiatives would likely fail (Yan, 2012). Additionally, the principals worked to include teachers early on in the change process to gain buy-in and create a sense of ownership (Reeves, 2009). They intentionally sought to gain buy-in during the early stages of the initiation phase of change (Daly & Finnigan, 2010). Additionally, during the initiation phase, principals noticed that constant, clear, and coherent communication was essential to gain buy-in for the initiatives (Daly & Finnigan, 2010). Throughout the change process, principals maintained a constant effort to acquire and sustain buy-in from teachers and parents (Yan, 2012).

The principals identified teacher leaders, formed leadership teams and distributed tasks related to the initiation and implementation of the change initiatives (Finnigan, 2010). The principals worked with their leadership teams to create a vision, get buy-in, and then shared leadership responsibilities catalyze their efforts with the change initiatives (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). Additionally, distributing leadership assisted the principals with diffusing the change initiatives throughout their schools and communities (Morrison, 2013).

The principals also discussed the need to provide continuous support for their teachers (Popp, 2012) through relevant professional development (Bryk, 2010). Principals acknowledged targeted professional development about the change initiatives increased the capacity of the teachers (Spelman & Rohlwmg, 2013) and the likelihood of its success (Zepeda, 2008). Professional development was a priority for the principals (Keys, 2007) with the purpose of supporting their teachers during the change process (Popp, 2012).

Trust between the principals and their staff, parents, and communities must exist to implement and sustain change initiatives (Holmes et al., 2013). All five principals reported intentionally working to build trust with their stakeholders (Bryk, 2010). Trust needed to exist between the principals and their teachers for change that has a lasting impact to be possible (Priestley, 2011). Additionally, Guhn (2009) suggested that trust needs to be present to achieve sustainable change. All the principals reported making an intentional effort to foster and nurture trust with their teachers and parents (Holmes et al., 2013).

Mark, Russ, and Luke reported intentionally assessing the culture of their schools before beginning the implementation process (Kruse & Louis, 2009). Additionally, Kruse and Louis (2009) suggested, that a principal needs to diagnose and understand the culture of his or her school before meaningful change can occur. Mark, Russ, and Luke recognized that the culture of their school greatly influenced their ability to implement change (Clayton & Johnson, 2011). They understood the interconnected relationship

between the culture of their schools and the success of the change initiatives (Connolly, James, & Beales, 2011).

Each principal reported a single particular action, not shared by any of the other participants which they said contributed more to the successful implementation of change initiatives than any other action. Mark felt the time and effort put into establishing professional and personal relationships with his staff had the largest impact. Turan and Bektas (2013) suggested that principals should exert considerable effort to understand and form positive working relationships with the people they work with throughout the implementation process. Russ stated that the motto to "always do what is best for kids" guided all of his decisions and actions regarding change initiatives. Fullan (2011) referred to this as a "moral imperative" to ensure that all students receive the best education possible and should guide leaders as they strive to initiate reforms. Mira stated that strong principal leadership is essential to implementing successful change initiatives. Adams and Jean-Marie (2011) suggested that strong principal leadership is an important factor in the success of any change initiative. Additionally, Kearney and Smith (2010) stated that the research is abundant and clear that strong and effective principal leadership is essential to the success of any change initiative within a school. Jenna genuinely desired to make every effort to support her teachers by providing professional development specific to the change initiatives in progress. Zepeda (2008) suggested that professional development for teachers, related to change initiatives, improves professional practice and the likelihood of successful implementation. Additionally, she empathized with her teachers and worked to meet their needs. Popp (2012) suggested that a principal should

provide continual and intense support for the implementers. Finally, Luke focused on soliciting input from his teachers and "just listening" before making a decision. Zulfu and Meryem (2012) suggested that the success of a change initiative increases when there is input at the building level. Moreover, Protheroe (2011) stated that input from all of the stakeholders guides the change process. The principals acknowledged a particular action that aided with the successful implementation of change.

As data collection and analysis progressed, I noticed many of the emerging themes correlated to the Conceptual Framework and the research presented in Section 2. An extensive review of the literature in Section 2 revealed a large body of research on school culture, educational change theory, and principal leadership. This study identified many themes supported by the research. However, I did not find data related to all of the research in Section 2. As presented above, the themes identified in Section 4 correlate to the research in from Section 2.

Implications for Social Change

This study will add to the research regarding the challenges and success encountered by principals as they initiate, implement, and sustain successful change initiatives, and the specific actions principals took that aided in the successful implementation of change. Additionally, the co-constructed narratives represent the experiences of the participants with initiating, implementing, and sustaining change initiatives. As presented in Section 3, this narrative inquiry study is unique regarding its methods and purpose. The results of this study presented in Section 4 and the

Interpretation of Findings in Section 5 will help principals to understand the change process and their role in implementing successful change.

The results of this study will help principals prepare and plan for the change process, know what challenges to expect, and understand the actions they can take to aid in the successful implementation of change. The results of this study found important and significant themes between the experiences of the participants that will assist principals as they work through the change process. The study does not claim to cover every facet of the theories related to change, school culture, and principal leadership; rather, it presents specific findings that will have real world applications for practicing principals.

As a principal starts to embark on the process of change, it is essential to diagnose the culture of the school and its readiness for change (Hall, 2013). The research related to assessing school culture describes a deliberate and systematic process that often includes a survey (Kruse, & Louis, 2009). However, the participants in this study reported a more informal process to help them understand the culture of the school. The principals took the time to form professional and personal relationships with their teachers. They met with teachers, parents, and community members to get input about the changes they implemented and to just listen. Each principal assessed the culture of his or her school in a different manner. However, the principals recognized the importance of learning as much about the culture of the school as possible before introducing change.

An analysis of the narratives revealed four challenges that the principals experienced as they implemented change in their schools. The implications for positive social change include informing principals of expected challenges and knowing how to

plan for the challenges ahead. Principals can expect resistance early on and throughout the process. Resistance can come from staff members, parents, or community members. Sometimes resistance will come from a single, influential teacher or parent. Overcoming resistance requires ongoing communication, an unwavering vision, commitment to the change initiative, and validating input from the teachers by listening to and acting upon their ideas and concerns. Second, initiative overload undermines and even stops the change process. Principals need to be cognizant of all initiatives they are currently working on and if possible remove the ones that are not necessary. Third, expect a dip in implementation and have a plan for how to work through it. At the beginning of the change process, a principal would be wise to tell teachers about the implementation dip so that everyone knows what it is when it comes and not to get discouraged. Finally, the greatest challenge of implementing change is sustaining it. The principal needs to have a vision for the positive outcomes of the change initiative and continually reminds the teachers of it. These and other challenges will occur, but if principals know what to expect, they can overcome them on their path to successful implementation.

The principals encountered many successes that will have implications for positive social change. All of the principals reported the importance and necessity of obtaining buy-in for the change initiative from all of the stakeholders, especially from the teachers. The time and effort it takes to get genuine buy-in from teachers, parents and community members is essential to the success of the change initiative. Without buy-in, there will be no progress.

Principals also reported the need to formulate and solidify their vision for the change initiative before they could share it with their leadership team, teachers, and parents. Having a concrete vision helped the principals to lead their teachers through the difficulties they experienced. Additionally, that vision needs to be shared by the teacher leaders so that they can help disseminate it out to the faculty. This study identified two critical components related to vision: principals need to create their vision, and they need to share it with all stakeholders.

The principals succeeded in building trust with teachers, parents, and community members. A principal needs to identify areas of low trust and focus on repairing it. One of the principals reported that the parents did not initially trust her, but they trusted the teachers. Another principal reported a lack of trust from the teachers for the change initiative. Other principals stated it took time to build trust with the teachers. By exerting significant effort to increase trust with all stakeholders, a principal will greatly increase the likelihood of success of the change initiative he or she is striving to lead.

The most beneficial findings of this study, with real world applications, are the specific actions principals reported aided with the successful implementation of change. First, to provide ongoing professional development to build the capacity of the teachers so they have the knowledge and ability to implement the change initiatives. Second, identify teacher leaders and distribute leadership responsibilities. The teacher leaders have the credibility and influence to help spread the vision for the change initiative to the entire faculty. Third, create collaborative structures and provide time for teachers to work on the change initiative together. Other names for collaborative structures are:

professional learning communities, teaming, grade level teams, and content area departments. The collaborative structures must be structured, meet regularly, and have a definite purpose. Fourth, it is essential for the principal to get buy-in for the change initiative from all of the stakeholders. Of all the themes identified in this study, and as reported by the principals, getting buy-in was the most important. Much of the research on educational change theory did not specifically use the term "buy-in." However, a review of the research revealed actions that a principal should take to get buy-in. These actions include: gathering input from those most closely associated with implementation, creating a sense of need for the change initiative with the implementers, and educating the implementers on how the change initiative will meet the identified. The four actions that principals reported aided them with the successful implementation of change will help other principals as they embark on the change process.

The results of this study are currently affecting positive social change in my district. I am the Director of Secondary Schools and currently leading a large-scale literacy initiative. The school board has a goal that the average subject test SAT score reaches the college and career ready level of 500 by the end of the 2018-2019 school year. The two lowest averages for the district are in critical reading and writing. I spent the past year working with principals and district department leaders ton selecting a program (change initiative) to meet the literacy needs of the district, getting buy-in for the program, co-creating a vision and a plan for implementation, and communicating the vision to all of the teachers in grades six through twelve. The principals, district department leaders and I worked through the initiation phase during the 2014-2015

school year. Implementation will begin in August of 2015 with two full days of professional development. To avoid initiative overload, the principals, department leaders, and I have decided to make the literacy initiative our singular focus for the next three years. Additionally, we removed initiatives that might confuse or overwhelm teachers. I formed and implementation team and we are in the process of planning implementation and ongoing professional development. Professional development is planned, during three in-service days and at monthly faculty meetings. The regular professional development will help keep the initiative at the forefront of thinking of the teachers and provide support. I was able to use the themes that emerged from the narratives and the cross narrative analysis to immediately affect positive social change in my district.

The study will bring about positive social change for principals preparing to or currently leading change initiatives. Additionally, many of the identified themes are relevant to a superintendent or a district level administrator embarking on the change process. This study will help principals to know what challenges to expect, actions they can take to assist with the successful implementation, and the essential role of the principal throughout the entire process. Additionally, this study will help principals implement change that affects student learning and achievement.

Recommendations for Action

This study focused on the experiences of principals as they initiated, implemented, and sustained change initiatives within their schools. A change initiative requires strong principal leadership to achieve intended outcomes. Therefore, the

recommendations are for principals and the actions they can take to successfully lead the change process.

A principal, before he or she initiates the change process, assesses the culture of their school and its readiness for change. The culture of a school encompasses many things from how a faculty dresses, conversations in the faculty room, their willingness to change, instruction, assessment and grading practices, and how they believe in the ability of every student to learn. The greatest asset and likewise possible deterrent to change are the people that make up the culture of the school. Therefore, it is important to gain a deep understanding of the social structures within a school. A principal should make a conscious effort to learn as much about the culture of his or her school as possible before endeavoring to implement change.

Initiation of change is the first step in the process and includes multiple actions. A principal needs to acquire a clear vision for the change initiative and its desired outcomes. After a principal solidifies his or her vision, he or she should begin sharing it with teacher leaders, teachers, and parents. An unwavering vision guides a principal and his or her school throughout the change process. Principals should communicate their vision early and often to all stakeholders to garner support and buy-in for the change initiative. The buy-in for the initiative, especially from the implementers, the teachers, is the most important component of initiation. Without buy-in, the initiative will likely fail. Therefore, a principal needs to take as much time as necessary to gain buy-in. Identifying teacher leaders, sharing the vision with them, and having them carry the vision out to the remainder of the faculty also helps to acquire buy-in. A principal should include teacher

leaders as early on in the process as possible. They are instrumental in the success of the change initiatives. A principal prepares for implementation by systematically planning the initiation process.

"Implementation is defined as a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions" (Fixsen, et al., 2005, p. 5). Implementation is a complex, challenging, and lengthy process. To combat the challenges, a principal needs to enlist the help his or her stakeholders. One of the first actions a principal should take is to form a leadership team. Generally, and leadership team consists of teacher leaders that are well respected by the faculty. Furthermore, the principal should confer with them often, seek their input, and co-construct the plan for implementation with them. Next, a principal distributes leadership responsibilities to the team to spread the influence of the principal and the vision for the change initiative. Instituting collaborative structures such as faculty meetings, professional learning communities (PLCs), grade level teams, and content area departments provides a venue for teachers to learn about and discuss the change initiatives. Additionally, professional development occurs within the collaborative structures and allows the teachers to learn together in a comfortable environment. During the implementation phase, a principal should distribute leadership to teacher leaders who in turn share the vision for the change initiative within the collaborative structures. Teachers need a clear vision for the change initiatives, to receive continuous support in the form of professional development, and given time at regularly scheduled intervals to collaborate. It is the responsibility of a

principal to lead his or her teachers and the other stakeholders through the implementation process.

Sustaining the implemented initiatives is the most difficult phase of the change process. Sustainability requires a principal and his or her leadership team to have a clear vision for the change initiatives and to keep that vision at the forefront of the minds of the implementers. As the school year wears on, it is easy to lose focus and the principal, and their leadership teams are responsible to maintain that focus. Additionally, new initiatives come from the district and state levels, and the principal needs to be selective about which ones to adopt and how to manage them. If a principal and leadership team believes an initiative is important enough to initiate and implement, then they need to have a plan and work to sustain the initiative, so it fulfills the intended outcomes.

Recommendations for Further Study

A large body of research exists related to educational change theory and how to successfully implement change initiatives within school settings. However, the amount of research can be overwhelming for principals that are trying to assimilate the research, prepare, and plan for change. This study identified themes related to the successes and challenges that principal's face and specific actions he or she can take to increase the likelihood of success. However, more research needs to be conducted on the most important actions that a principal can take, and that will have the highest impact on the successful implementation of change initiatives. Can the process be distilled down to a few crucial actions that principals can follow in a particular order? Hall and Hord (1984) and Nehring and O'Brien (2012) both mention that the change process does not happen in

a series of sequential steps, rather it is a complex process. However, I contend that principals are extremely busy and have other responsibilities that continually draw their focus away from the change initiatives in progress. Principals need a list of the most important, high impact actions to incorporate during each phase of the change process. Principals could refer to the list as they initiate, implement, and sustain change initiatives. More research is needed concerning distilling the process down to the essential actions that will have the most significant effect on the successful implementation of change.

The review of the literature and the data collected for this study made little mention of holding the implementers accountable for fidelity of implementation and monitoring and evaluating progress. An adage regarding accountability states, “inspect what you expect.” What needs to be inspected and how often should it occur? Research on how to evaluate progress of the implementers, their efforts to support the initiatives, and their commitment to the initiative is needed. Additionally, does holding the implementers accountable positively or negatively affect implementation?

Abrahamson (2004) referred to initiative overload is the tendency of an educational institution to implement and focus on too many initiatives at one time. A result of initiative overload is change related chaos (Abrahamson, 2004). All of the principals in this study mentioned experiencing initiative overload. The research referred to this as an issue that significantly affected the success of change initiatives. However, I did not find any research relating to how principals manage initiative overload. Principals regularly are inundated by teachers, vendors, district level administration, and state education authorities with new initiatives and programs. More research needs to occur on

how a principal identifies all of the change initiatives within his or her school, manages existing and new initiatives, selectively adopts new initiatives, and removes unnecessary ones. Additionally, more research needs to be done on how many major change initiatives a school can successfully manage at one time without experiencing initiative overload.

The research related to the field of educational change theory is broad and complex. The purpose of these recommendations for further study is to streamline the process for principals down to high impact actions to be taken during each phase of the change process. Additionally, I feel that understanding how to identify, manage, adopt, and terminate change initiatives is essential to implementing sustainable change. Finally, what role, if any, does holding implementers accountable for carrying out expectations related to implementation have in the change process? I based these recommendations on a review of the literature and the collection and analysis of data from this study.

Reflections of the Researcher

My interest in change theory unknowingly began during my first year as a teacher. I observed as the principal presented a program that we would be working on during the year. As the year progressed, the program enthusiastically presented at the beginning of the year, faded away by the end of the year. The following year a new initiative had taken its place. This cycle repeated itself many times during my career. As I experienced this repetitive change syndrome (Abrahamson, 2004), I wondered why the initiatives continually failed.

My experiences with failed change initiatives led me to conduct this study. My personal biases related to this study stem from my experiences. If there was a need for the change initiatives, and my previous principals expended the effort to initiate and implement them, then why were they not sustained? My questions steered me to a study of the literature directly related to and peripherally associated with educational change theory. As I studied the literature, I began to formulate opinions and conclusions about how to successfully implement and sustain change initiatives. During the data collection process, I carefully avoided injecting my personal biases and opinions into the interviews. I was constantly aware of my opinions and biases and made a concerted effort not to influence the participants in any way. I earnestly tried to ensure not to interject my biases, so the narratives accurately represented the principal's experiences with implementing change.

Conducting interviews is a skill and an art that takes practice. I was fortunate that before I began data collection I interviewed principals in my district related to a project instituted by my superintendent. The practice interviewing assisted me as I planned for and began data collection. I conducted semi-structured interviews using an Interview Guide based on the Conceptual Framework. I was careful to follow the interview guide and ask relevant follow-up questions. The follow-up questions varied based on the responses of the principals. I found by asking the right questions the participants did most of the talking.

The data collection process was rewarding for me and the participants. Many of the participants commented that they had never taken the time to think about their

experiences with implementing change, and the reflection would help them with future change initiatives. As the interviews progressed, I witnessed as the as the themes evolved and how they related to the research from Section 2. However, my study of the research and preconceived ideas about implementing change evolved during the interview process. I realized that principals are so busy with the myriad of tasks required of them on a daily basis that they need a streamlined process for implementing change.

Conclusion

This narrative inquiry study told the stories of principals as they lead change initiatives within their schools, revealed the successes and challenges they experienced, and the actions that they took to aid in the successful implementation of change. The purpose of this study was to identify common themes that emerged during the data analysis process. Additionally, it was to present the findings so currently practicing principals could affect social change within their schools by initiating, implementing, and sustaining change initiatives. The principals worked through the challenges of resistance from the faculty (Kearney & Smith, 2010) and community members, the implementation dip (Fullan, 2010 a), initiative overload (Abrahamson, 2004), and sustainability (Guhn, 2009). They encountered success by working to get buy-in from the implementers with the change initiatives (Yan, 2012), providing support for staff through ongoing professional development, identifying teacher leaders and distributing leadership responsibilities (Mendels, & Mitgang, 2013), creating a vision for the change initiatives (Morrison, 2013), and providing time for teachers to work within collaborative structures. Additionally, the principals reported that getting buy-in, listening to all stakeholders,

having a clear vision for the change initiative, and providing relevant professional development (Bryk, 2010) aided in the success of the change initiatives. This study identified challenges that principals can expect and plan to address as they lead change. Additionally, this study presented actions that principals can take to aid with initiation, implementation, and sustainability. Principals can use the findings from this study to affect positive social change within their schools by implanting change that survives inevitable challenges.

The managerial demands for a principal's time range from dealing with upset parents, attending athletic events and activities, chaperoning dances, busing issues, and meetings (Morrison, 2013). All of these divert the focus of a principal from the important work of implementing change. Principals need a simplified process for implementing change that consists of high impact activities and actions that result in the greatest likelihood of success. This study will add to the research related to principals leading change by drawing on the experiences of the principals and presenting the successes and challenges they encountered and specific actions that aided in the success of change. Principals have many tasks vying for their time, this study found specific actions that principals can employ to aid their endeavors to lead change.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

This interview guide was based on the findings from literature review. Each of the questions is based on research related to the conceptual framework: educational change theory, principal leadership, and school culture. The literature review also contained ancillary topics related to the implementation of change. Such as resistance to change, trust, repetitive change syndrome, and the impetus for deciding to undergo the change process.

Possible Questions to Guide the Interview Process

- Tell me about a recent change initiative that you are implementing within your school.
- What were the factors that were the impetus for you to undertake the implementation of this change initiative within your school?
- Was the impetus to begin the change process from the top down? For example from the Idaho Department of Education, the district level, and your decision?
- Was the impetus to begin the change process from the bottom up? For example from the building leadership team, from parents, from teachers, etc.?
- Repetitive change syndrome refers to three factors: initiative overload, change related chaos, and distrust. Initiative overload is the tendency of an educational institution to implement too many initiatives as to confuse those within the organization during the implementation. Change related chaos refers to the confusion that results from trying to focus on too many reforms at one time. And the distrust that is a result of initiative overload and change related chaos.

- Was your school in implementing more than one major change initiative at one time?
    - If so, do you feel that there was a sense of chaos amongst the key implementers as to what they should be focusing on?
    - Was there any distrust?

The initiation of change includes the selection of a reform initiative that will meet identified needs and the planning that leads up to the next phase of implementation. Implementation is the management of all the factors that go into carrying out the plans for the change initiative. Sustainability refers to the actions taken to make sure that the benefits of the change initiative last. I will be asking questions that relate to each of the three phase of the change process: initiation, implementation, and sustainability.

School Culture

School culture: "A school's culture is characterized by deeply rooted traditions, values, and beliefs, some of which are common across schools and some of which are unique and embedded in a particular school's history and location" (Kruse & Seashore, 2009, p. 3).

- Did you evaluate the culture of the school to assess its readiness to embrace the change initiative?
- What aspects of the school culture led you to believe that it was ready for change?

- What aspects of the school culture did you feel might be a hindrance to the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of the change initiative?
- What aspects of the school culture did you identify might be a challenge to the change process?
- Were there any issues of trust on the part of teachers, parents, students, and district office administration that had to be addressed?

Initiation

- How did you select the change initiative?
- Who was involved in the selection of the change initiative?
- Did the accountability measures related to No Child Left Behind factor into your decision to begin the change process and selected change initiative?
- Was your decision based on data?
- Did you do it needs assessment to identify areas of needed improvement before selecting a change initiative? Please explain.
- Who were the key stakeholders that were involved in the planning process for the implementation of the change initiative? Names are not required just there role (i.e. district level administrators, building level administrators, teachers, parents, and or students)?
- Did you formulate and communicate a vision of how the change initiative was going to impact or improve the school? Please explain.

- How did you go about communicating to the teachers, parents, students, and district office administration that you were beginning this change process? Please explain this process.
- Were you able to take the time to ensure that each of the stakeholders understood the change initiative, why it was being implemented, and what the intended outcomes were?
- Was there any resistance from any of the stakeholders when you announced you were beginning the change process?
- How did you communicate the specifics of the selected change initiative to the stakeholders?
- Did you formulate and communicate a plan of how the change initiative was going to be implemented and sustained?
- Did the plan include a timeline?
- What actions did you take during the initiation phase of the change process that you felt help to ensure its success?
- In retrospect, what might have been done differently?

Implementation

The following statement will be read to the participant to help them understand the following questions. "Implementation is defined as a specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions" (Fixsen, et al., 2005, p. 5).

- As you began to implement the change initiative, what actions did you take to ensure its success?
- Were there any policies and procedures that needed to be changed in order for you to be able to implement the change initiative?
- Did you create a written plan of how the change initiative would be implemented? Please explain.
- As you begin to implement the change initiative, how did you increase the skill level of the implementers through professional development related to the initiative?
- Does your school have a structure in place such as professional learning communities that helped with the implementation of the change initiative? Please explain.
- Were you able to identify any new habits or operating procedures that needed to be addressed as you implemented the change initiative?
- An implementation dip is when things seem to get worse rather than better when a new change is imposed on the culture of the school. The implementation dip, which refers to the paradigm shift, new skills, and aligning old beliefs with new ones and the struggles associated with beginning the implementation process (Fullan, 2010 b.). Did your school experience an implementation dip? Please explain.
- The human element of implementing any change initiative has the greatest impact on the success or failure of the initiative. How did your key

stakeholders/implementers (i.e. teachers, parents, students, and administrators) respond to the implementation?

- Please explain any resistance to the change initiative that you experienced.
- Were you able to identify a group of resistors? What were the characteristics of the resistors? How or did the resistors slow the progress of the change initiative?
- Did you have any stakeholders that refused to be a part of the implementation of the change initiative?
- Were you able to identify a group of early adopters? How did this group of early adopters help with the implementation?
- Do you feel that you were able to formulate a clear vision for the implementation of the change initiative?
- Were you able to keep that vision at the forefront of the thinking of those implementing the initiative? Please explain.
- What system of support and professional development were put in place to aid with the implementation process?

Sustainability

- What have you done or do you plan to do to ensure that the change initiative is sustained over a long period of time?
- Research suggests that it takes 3 to 5 years for any change initiative to be sustained and become a part of the culture of the school. How far along are you in the process?

- At what point during the process, did you recognize that the change initiative had become a part of the culture of the school and or daily operating procedures?
- What were some of the key factors that led you to believe that the change initiative was going to be sustained within your school?
- What were some of the challenges you encountered in sustaining the initiative from one school year to the next?
- As you work to sustain the initiative, were you able to distribute leadership throughout the organization so that everyone felt the responsibility for the success of the initiative?
- Do you feel that the change initiative has been or will be sustained over time?
- What factors lead you to believe that it will be sustained over time?
- If there were a change in leadership, do you feel that the change initiative is deeply rooted in the culture of the school and would be sustained?
- Second order change is defined as change that alters the current culture of the system (state, district, or school) and the currently held beliefs to accept, alter, and integrate the reform into the system. Has your school experienced second order change in relation to the change initiative implemented?

Principal Leadership

- Research related to the implementation of change suggests that it is important to involve as many of the key stakeholders in the process as possible. By doing this the key stakeholders by into the change initiative being implemented. However,

the research is very clear that strong and focused principal leadership is the greatest factor influencing the likelihood of success of the change initiative.

- How has your leadership influenced the implementation and sustainability of the change initiative?
- Do you feel that the key implementers/stakeholders recognize your full commitment to the change initiative? Please explain.
- What actions did you take to assert your leadership in implementing the change initiative?
- Do you feel you had a good understanding of the change process and how to initiate, implement, and sustain the change initiative?
- In your opinion, how important is your role as principal and leader of the school in implementing change?
- What actions did you take as the leader of your school to ensure the key implementers that you are committed to this process?
- Which of your leadership characteristics led to the success of the change initiative?
- As the principal, what might you have done differently?

Summary

- Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- Was there anything that I did not ask you wish I would have asked?

Appendix B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER: Lennart (L.T.) T. Erickson III

UNIVERSITY: Walden University

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Principal Experiences' Initiating, Implementing, and Sustaining Change within their School

You are invited to take part in a research study that will present the experiences of principals, in narrative form, as they initiate, implement, and sustain change initiatives within their school. Throughout the study the researcher will give you the opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy and give you multiple opportunities to review the narrative, relating to your experiences, that will be written based on the interview. The goal of the researcher is to accurately represent your experiences with implementing change in your school. The researcher is inviting principals that are currently in the process of implementing change in their schools and have been in their current position for five or more years to participate in this study. You have been selected to be invited to participate in this study because you meet the aforementioned criteria. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand the study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Lennart (L.T.) T. Erickson III, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. The researcher works as the Director of Secondary Programs in the Twin Falls School District. This study is not related to my professional role as the Director of Secondary Programs in the Twin Falls School District.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to interview principals and tell their stories regarding experiences they have had with initiating, implementing, and sustaining change within their school. The researcher will compare each of the participants' experiences to find common themes relating to the implementation of successful/unsuccessful change initiatives. This study will provide the researcher, practicing principals, and others closely associated with the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of change initiatives in schools a better understanding of how the change process works and how to successfully implement change.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- be interviewed for 1 – 3 hours relating to your experiences with implementing change within your school
- review the interview transcript for accuracy
- review the narrative that is written from the first interview and check it for accuracy
- possibly be asked follow up questions and review the narrative a second time before it is included in the final research study
- be contacted by email and phone during the duration of your participation in the research study
- participation in this study will last about 3 – 4 weeks

Here are some sample questions:

- Tell me about a recent change initiative that you are implementing within your school.
- What were the factors that were the impetus for you to undertake the implementation of this change initiative within your school?
- How did you select the change initiative?
- How did you go about communicating to the teachers, parents, students, and district office that you were beginning this change process?
- As you began to implement the change initiative, what actions did you take to ensure its success?
- What have you done or do you plan to do to ensure that the change initiative is sustained over a long period of time?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. The researcher will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. No one from your school district will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. You may stop your participation at any time without any penalty.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, and possibly relieving difficult events related to implementing change within your school. Being in the study would not pose risk to your safety or well-being.

The benefits of participating in this study are that it will give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences with implementing change within your building. Your participation in the study and receiving the results from the study will possibly help you in the future as you implement future change initiatives in your building.

Payment:

There will not be any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Vulnerable Groups:

The following populations are considered vulnerable groups: mentally disabled individuals, emotionally disabled individuals, pregnant women, individuals that might be less than fluent in English, individuals that are in crisis, and elderly individuals (65+). If you fit into any of these groups you are protected from pressure to participate in this study and if you choose to participate you are eligible for special protections from safety and privacy risks. However, you are not required to disclose this information to the researcher to participate in this study. Should you choose to disclose this information to the researcher, you will be protected from pressure to participate and will be protected from safety and privacy risks. You may also choose to stop you participation at any time without fear of any repercussions. You will be asked once by the researcher if you would like to disclose this information, however, you can disclose this information to the researcher at any time during your participation in the study. If you choose to disclose this information, the researcher will follow up with you periodically during your participation.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and the researcher will make every effort to ensure that your participation in the study is anonymous. The researcher will review the narrative that is written based on your interview for any identifying information and will remove anything that might identify you personally or your school. All data will be securely maintained on the researcher's personal computer and will be kept private. The researcher will not share any raw data or identifiable information with anyone.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email: lterickson3@me.com, cell phone: 208-731-2445, home phone: 208-969-9750 and/or mail: 1632 Bel Air Circle, Twin Falls, Idaho 83301. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1 – 800 – 925 – 3368, extension 3121210. Walden Universities approval number for this study is **11-03-14-0136590** and it expires on **November 2, 2015**.

The researcher has attached a PDF of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this email with the words "I consent" I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above. I also agree to print and keep a copy of the consent form for my records.

Appendix C: Sample Pages of the Interview Transcript with Mark

Interview with Mark

November 14, 2014

L.T. - Okay, the interview will focus on your experiences and that's kind of why I have chosen to interview principals that have been in their position at least five years. It gives you a chance that you have been there long enough to experience change. As we go through this kind of thinking about some of the changes change initiatives you have worked on in your building over the years. And your experiences and how they were successful what you would have done different and just kind of think about them as we go through this. So is there a change initiative that you're currently working on implementing in your building? (0:40)

Mark - Yes so um, we are really focusing on um bullying, harassment, and just the overall um being better citizens having great character you know. When I got here six years ago. You um know one thing that intrigued me was as you walk through our building we have the six pillars of character and they range from you know truthfulness and respect, and responsibility, citizenship um and a over the course of my first several years it seemed like we kind the got away from that and I don't know if it was the a the transition of the principals before me cause there was some turnover here. The longest tenure for principal before I got here was two years and so they had some turnover and um and just seemed like that wasn't a in the forefront of the school. So I wanted to get back to that, you know I did see some, you know you can call it bullying you can call at harassment but really it was, um I don't know if I would categorize it as bullying quite to

that extent but it certainly was not the character that we wanted here you know. So I researched and looked for programs that we could implement. One program that I really liked was project wisdom. So that is something that we are working on this year. And I knew that in order for it to be effective, I needed to provide something for the teachers. I couldn't say hey this is what we're going with and not give them materials or a game plan for them to follow. And this this a program had that. So um, that's kind of what were focusing on. Do you want me to talk more about that? (3:00)

L.T. - I did have one follow-up question. You mentioned that there was a lot of turn over. How did you think the turnover impacted the implementation of the six pillars of character how did that a?

Mark - Yeah, well I would like to think that, or in my opinion I think you know a principal will come in and that first year they'll just kind feel it out to see what the school is really about, what the culture is like and then start um modifying from there. You know I mean you read the research and you know you don't want to come in and just overhaul everything if you don't know what is needed, so I think as principals came in they just kind of sat back and it wasn't a priority. And then another principle would come in and it wasn't a priority cause they were just kind of hanging back um. (4:00)

L.T. - Did you have any teacher leaders that were kind of trying to lead…that? (4:12)

Mark – Yeah, you know we have some teacher leaders that are trying to, that, that, that, took that on but it was only localized within their grade. It wasn't a schoolwide type you know initiative so to speak. (4:26)

L.T. - So when you came in the impetus for change is something that you recognized in the building? That a, I mean it was a need that you recognized as principal. Did you have a leadership team that you worked with on that? I mean you said you sat back and kind of observed for a year. (4:43)

Mark- Yup, so I sat back and observed and just noticed um the school that I'm at we have a smaller population, you know we have a total of 420 kids in three grades. And a, so I dealt, there is no vice principal, I dealt with the discipline and I saw that grow, those issues little um problems would creep up. So I knew that we needed something. I do have a leadership team and we meet once a month and so that was something we were really were working on as a team to implement and how best to do that. (5:29)

L.T. – Um, as you look at this a, you've been focusing on, on the bullying and one of the themes in the research with change and implementing change has to deal with something called repetitive change syndrome so you're implementing the bullying and then something else comes along. Um, have you noticed you know that you or the teachers have been over loaded by change initiatives that either you started in the building, and just we start this one and the next one? Is that something that you've experienced in your building? (6:09)

Mark - Oh yeah, yeah um that's a tough one because you know I think the change and then the needing to continue to change and keep up. That's compounded by outside influence of the State Department providing change and keeping up with change. And so I think it all kind of goes together and it's overwhelming – it can be. And that's the trick and that is the, that's the difficult thing as an administrator, it's like how much do you

push how much do you, you know. And, the last few years have been tough. And, so you've to really look at morale. You've got a, so when you implement change at your school as an administrator you've got really look at morale. You've really got to look at your teacher leaders and, and get buy-in that's the biggest thing. You, get the buy-in then that, that change that repetitiveness having to keep up and keep changing is a little bit easier to implement. (7:21)