

12-2018

K–12 Campus Communication: An Insiders' View From the Southwest

Melissa Gonzales

University of the Incarnate Word, megonza7@student.uiwtx.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw_etds

Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gonzales, Melissa, "K–12 Campus Communication: An Insiders' View From the Southwest" (2018). *Theses & Dissertations*. 346.
https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw_etds/346

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by The Athenaeum. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The Athenaeum. For more information, please contact athenaeum@uiwtx.edu.

K-12 CAMPUS COMMUNICATION: AN INSIDERS' VIEW
FROM THE SOUTHWEST

by

MELISSA GONZALES

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 2018

Copyright by
Melissa Gonzales
2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my dissertation committee, Dr. Sandra Guzman – Foster, Dr. Danielle J. Alsandor, and Dr. Diane Fisher. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this process. I have come to recognize how critical advisors are to the success of a PhD student.

To my son, Ty. Your love and support during this arduous journey will always remain in my heart. I pray you have been inspired.

To my great friends, Kelly, Debby, and Speedy. Thank you for your unending encouragement.

To my husband, Louis. I am blessed to have you and I look forward to our forever.

To the participants in the study. I hope my presentation of your contributions has honored your intent on improving education.

To every child born into a less than advantageous situation. Adelante, si se puede!

Melissa Gonzales

DEDICATION

To my late father and kindred spirit, George, and to my mother, Mary Lou. Thank you for opening the doors of opportunity to our family. Your sacrifices continue to motivate me.

To my one and only child, Ty.

K–12 CAMPUS COMMUNICATION: AN INSIDERS' VIEW FROM THE SOUTHWEST

Melissa Gonzales, PhD

University of the Incarnate Word, 2018

Public school districts continue to emphasize that school transformation and student success begin with internal communication practices. This emphasis on communication echoes research literature, which demonstrates that communication practices within organizations influence employee satisfaction, productivity, relationships and the overall organizational climate and organizational success (Ahghar, 2008; Buchholz, 2001; Osborne-Lampkin, 2008). This dissertation explored the perspectives of elementary school principals to determine their perspectives about, and experiences with, communication and the development of open communication environments. This dissertation also explored how school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture.

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore school leaders' views and actions relating to open communication, its impact on schools' work environments and relationships among staff. The research protocol consisted of interviews with 10 elementary school principals. The interviews were conducted in 45 minute sessions and the data were analyzed using NVIVO.

Analysis revealed five key findings related to the following themes: (a) challenges related to the scope of the role; (b) having mentors; (c) principals' leadership style impact on campus

communication culture; (d) methods of communication; and (e) one-on-one communication topics.

As a result of this research, I recommend the following approaches to enhance the academic and professional development of public school elementary school principals: (1) collaboration among school districts and university administrator program faculty; (2) evaluation of university administrator program content and revision; (3) school district formal mentoring programs; and (4) professional development related to communication component of school principals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
CHAPTER 1: K-12 CAMPUS COMMUNICATION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Background of the Study	3
Standards for Texas school principals	4
Principal Training Programs.....	5
School leadership impact on campus culture.....	7
Communication impact on employee engagement and teacher retention	8
Breakdown in communication and formal communication processes	9
Purpose of the Study.....	11
Research Question	12
Summary of Methodology	12
Theoretical Framework.....	14
Significance of the Study	16
Definition of Terms	17
Communication Barriers.....	17
Communication climate.....	17

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER 1: K-12 CAMPUS COMMUNICATION	
Campus culture	18
Open communication	18
Closed communication.....	18
Limitations of the Study.....	18
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Role of Principal	20
Performance evaluations	21
Administrator training programs.....	24
Role of Principal in Leading Campus Communication	26
Campus culture	28
Open communication, employee engagement, and teacher retention.....	30
Consequences of Communication Barriers.....	32
Public School Formal Communication Process.....	33
Summary	35
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	
Characteristics of Qualitative Research	37
Interpretive Design.....	38
Site and Participant Selection	39
Participant Identification and Criteria.....	40
Institutional Review Board	40

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Data Collection	41
Interviews.....	41
Direction of interviews	41
Field notes.....	42
Analysis.....	42
Ensuring Trustworthiness	43
Role of the Researcher	44
Intrinsic motivation.....	44
Forming years	44
Education and career.....	45
Protection of Human Subjects	45
Ensuring confidentiality.....	45
Protection of data and disposition of records.....	45
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	47
Themes.....	48
Theme one: Challenges related to the role of principal	48
Theme two: Having mentors.....	57
Theme three: Principals' leadership style impact on campus communication culture.....	61
Theme four: Methods of communication	70
Theme five: One-on-one communication topics.....	75

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Summary	78
---------------	----

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS80

Research Summary	80
------------------------	----

Findings and Interpretations	81
------------------------------------	----

Communication.....	82
--------------------	----

Finding #1: Challenges	83
------------------------------	----

Finding #2: Having Mentors.....	85
---------------------------------	----

Finding #3: Participant leadership styles established the foundation for campus communication cultures.....	86
--	----

Finding #4: Methods of communication.....	87
---	----

Finding #5: One-on-one communication topics	87
---	----

Answering the Research Questions	88
--	----

Research question 1: What are elementary school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments?	88
--	----

Research question 2: How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture?	89
---	----

Recommendations.....	90
----------------------	----

Recommendation 1:	90
-------------------------	----

Recommendation 2:	90
-------------------------	----

Recommendation 3:	91
-------------------------	----

Recommendation 4:	91
-------------------------	----

Future Studies	91
----------------------	----

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Higher education administration preparation programs	91
T-TESS	92
Communication expectations based on community	92
Summary and Conclusions	92
REFERENCES	95
APPENDICES	108
Appendix A Participant Invitation Letter	109
Appendix B Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study Form.....	110
Appendix C Participant Interview Guide.....	112

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Challenges Related to the Role of the Principal Theme.....	46
2. Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Having Mentors Theme	55
3. Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Principals Leadership Style Impact on Campus Communication Culture Theme.....	60
4. Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Method of Communication Theme.....	69
5. Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the One-on-one Communication Topics Theme	74

Chapter 1: K-12 Campus Communication

In school systems, educational achievements of students and success of schools is often dependent on teachers and administrators charged with educating students, communicating with parents, and translating and implementing a multitude of local, district, state, and federal policies (Halawah, 2005). However, recent decades have seen the highest turnover and lowest teacher satisfaction rates. According to the 2011 MetLife, Inc. Survey of the American Teacher, teacher satisfaction has declined to its lowest point in 25 years, marking a continual decline since 2008. The survey also mentions that, in some schools and districts, the teacher dropout rate is higher than the student dropout rate (MetLife, Inc., 2011). As a result of teacher turnover and decline in teacher satisfaction, the National Association of State Boards of Education (2012) recommends that states address conditions that cause teachers to leave the profession.

One of the ways of enhancing teacher (and other employee) satisfaction within their work places is to create open communication climates that value the contributions of all employees, promote open exchange of ideas, and create positive work environments (Gonzales, 2014). School administrators, such as principals and assistant principals, are key in creating an environment of open communication and participation (Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004). Researchers argue that teacher and administrator interactions impact and predict teacher commitment, motivation, and success (Fugate, Prussia, & Kinicki, 2012). Therefore, school and district leadership play a crucial role in fostering a climate of open communication, necessary for employee satisfaction and organizational success.

The stakes are high for educators transitioning into administration roles. Policy makers have made it clear that in considering educational improvements the role of school administrator deserves even more attention (Gibboney, 1987). Schools reliant on federal funds are faced with

high measures of accountability implemented since the passing of the 2001 federal law, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Gruenert, 2005). This law called particular attention to the skills and abilities of individuals in the role of campus principal. Considering stakeholders place high expectations on principals for student and campus success (Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001), schools are now challenged to improve their principal preparation programs.

Local, state and national governing bodies encourage the enhancement of campus communication efforts as a way to increase teacher engagement, perception of school culture and teacher rights to have open and honest communication. Therefore, expectations regarding the role of the principal, along with formal and informal communication practices about healthy campus culture, continue to be written and included in the literature (Barnett & McCormick, 2004).

As is true in most organizations, leaders in public schools play an important role in the overall success of the organization, and change in customary practices is necessary to improve public schools (Fullan, 2002). It would be beneficial for district leaders to gain insight into primary communication barriers in schools that may negatively impact employee engagement and satisfaction, student success, and campus culture. This information is also important in the development and implementation of administration training programs designed to train aspiring school administrators with the skills needed to manage the day to day operations of an entire campus, while noticing and resolving employee concerns through open communication (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008). Ideas that principals maintain regarding open communication environments and their impact on communication culture should be revealed as campuses strive to create teamwork leading to student success (Mitchell & Tucker, 1992).

Statement of the Problem

While there is an abundance of literature on teacher dropout, retention, and the negative impact of closed communication climates (Ahghar, 2008), there is little written on ways in which school leaders create open communication and engage with employees in sharing information and accomplishing organizational goals (Carr, 2007). Understanding school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication can provide a basis for developing open communication environments which enable all members of the organization to take responsibility, feel pride, and actively contribute to the school's and its students' success. The goal of this study is to develop an understanding of how school administrators perceive and experience communication. By making an effort to understand communication from the perspectives of administrators working in schools, we can showcase the school district as a learning organization that cares for its people and their well-being. Stories shared by administrators provide a better understanding of meanings attached to open communication and how these meanings are translated into campus communication culture. Lessons learned from participants can lead to new considerations for formal administrator training programs.

Background of the Study

Meetings with school administrators revealed that superintendents and executive staff emphasize the importance of communication in a large, public school district focused on academic rigor, excellence, integrity, security, and success. This emphasis on communication echoes research in the literature, which demonstrates that communication practices within organizations influence employee satisfaction, productivity, and relationships, and the overall organizational climate and success (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008). Longo (2012) emphasized the importance of open communication, which he defined as a working environment in which

employees feel safe and confident about being open and honest, are encouraged to contribute ideas at every level in the organization, and receive the information they need to excel at their jobs. Buchholtz (2001) and Hirschman (2008) similarly described open communication climate as an environment in which employees receive information from a trusted source and have a voice in what is important to them. Organizations in which employees engage in open communication empower employees to achieve their best by contributing to the organization's goals and culture (D'Aprix, 2006), maintaining their own and others' well-being, thus reducing turnover and organizational spending on resolving various complaints, grievances, and arbitration cases (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). This suggests that the manner in which an administrator perceives and engages in communication with staff and the school community impacts the overall success of a campus (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008).

A summary of current standards and expectations imposed on administrator training programs and the role of principals in Texas public schools will be provided. The first subsection details the influence of leadership on communication and campus culture. The following subsection provides descriptions of open communication as it pertains to employee engagement and teacher retention. The impacts of a breakdown in communication will be described, followed by a description of formal communication processes available to public school employees when they no longer see value in communicating with campus administration.

Standards for Texas school principals. In collaboration with state governing bodies and the U.S. Department of Education, the Texas Commissioner's Rules Concerning Educator Standards (2016) outlines updated standards for school principals. Of the five principal Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2016) standards, three are relevant to this study:

Standard 1 – Instructional leadership. The leader is responsible for ensuring every student receives high quality instruction.

Standard 2 – Human capital. The leader is responsible for ensuring there are high-quality teachers and staff in every classroom and throughout the school.

Standard 4 – School culture. The leader is responsible for establishing and implementing a shared vision and culture of high expectations for all students.

The most recent legislation identified a new evaluation system to be used by principals, beginning the 2016–2017 school year. The Advancing Educational Leadership program was established to help any school leader become a great leader. The process is focused on continuous improvement, which calls for strong dialogue between teacher and appraiser. As appraisers of record, principals underwent training on the new system, which dramatically increased the amount of face-to-face time a principal must have during pre-evaluation and post-evaluation meetings with teachers. Standards also include high-quality conference skills for coaching and mentoring staff, engaging in reflective questioning, and providing feedback to staff members. The design focuses on administrator's ability to effectively resolve conflict and build strong teams while creating campus improvement and student success.

Principal training programs. Education accountability is a hot topic among regulating authorities like TEA and other accrediting bodies. It appears that everyone involved in the education system undergoes evaluations on a regular basis. Students are rated based on test scores, teachers are held accountable by evaluations, and principals have to answer to overall campus scores. In many cases, district test scores are reported to the media, state agencies and openly compared to other districts. This level of accountability has brought attention to principal preparation programs. Preparation programs are challenged with preparing aspiring administrators for the realities of being a campus administrator. Those involved in the public school system suggest that school leaders in our current society require a unique set of set of skills, understanding, and qualities to manage campuses and large groups of staff (Halawah,

2005). There is concern that, after meeting educational and certification requirements, novice administrators do not feel well prepared and are overwhelmed by the pace of the work and the expectations placed on them (Williams & Szal, 2011). Researchers are challenged to identify proven elements that should be included as part of principal preparation programs (Hallinger, 1992).

Halawah (2005) suggests that a component of administrator training should identify noted deficiencies and identify effective practices to be utilized by principals when addressing or resolving concerns of staff members, parents, or community members. Strengthening aspiring principals' conflict resolution and face-to-face communication skills, as well as helping to meet the emotional demands of the principalship, are key issues in creating effective and successful school principals (Day, 2000). Principals need strong interpersonal skills and should be good listeners and effective communicators who can speak the truth (Bernstein, 1997).

Improving communication performance will not be accomplished with the facilitation of one transformational initiative. Sustainable improvements will only be made over long term planning and execution of goals, targets, and interventions (Pandey & Garnett, 2006). Community members and employees' perceptions about how safe it is to be open and honest with campus administration also plays a part in shaping campus communication culture (Osborne – Lampkin, 2000). Longo (2012) suggests that the ultimate scope of organizational culture has to promote high performance levels, rather than obstructing productivity. Communication plays an important role in employee alignment with organizational mission and goals. Koballa & Bradbury (2009) agree that an engaging campus culture is an important component in districts retaining good teachers.

A school campus is its own organization, and communication materializes and leads to the cultural environment of any particular school. Communication is the fundamental mechanism through which employees develop working relationships and understanding of the essence of organizational culture (Harris & Nelson, 2008). The vitality of a campus depends on capable and harmonious relationships among groups of people. Profound social conversational processes among teams has been imperative in the transformation of successful campuses (Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2006).

While communication may be helpful in inspiring, building confidence, and creating the character of a group, some scholars suggest teachers and administrators are relatively autonomous and communicate on an infrequent basis (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). The culture of a campus influences the principal's effectiveness and hinders outcomes and achievement results of teachers and students. If employees do not understand or are not in alignment with the culture of an organization, problems with employee relations are likely to arise (Schneider, 1990).

School leadership impact on campus culture. The debate continues regarding what type of leadership and communication styles are best suited to bring about campus success and student achievement (Barnett & McCormick, 2004). The supervisory style of a campus administration affects transparent communication and collaboration (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005), and it may be necessary for school administrators to transform the objectives of the existing authority structure of a campus. Ebmeier (2003) proposes that principals and educators become collegial partners rather than maintaining the current superior-subordinate relationship that exists between principals and faculty members. This shift in authority allows the principal to be a team member in the pursuit of school goals and to find methods of supporting others in their leadership of educational activities (Uhl & Perez-Selles, 1995). Bolman & Deal (2008) agree that

leaders in a complex organization must be open to reframing their way of thinking in order to improve interpersonal and collegial group dynamics.

According to Mitchell and Tucker (1992), successful principals function similar to corporate executives and use management skills and social science research to run the school like a business organization, with the goal of operating effectively and efficiently. Villa (1992) concluded that effective principals promote a communication climate that strongly values and reinforces learning and achievement. Transparent leaders are accessible to employees, parents, students, community members, and the press. They listen and are willing to change course based on input they receive (Carr, 2007). This leadership style aligns more so with transparent leadership, which allows for greater trust and clarity between employee and supervisor (Wallis, Yammarino, & Feyerherm, 2011).

Literature pertaining to school effectiveness points to a long list of standards and expectations set for effective principals, including establishing a secure learning environment in a nurturing setting (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Past research found a correlation between the personality and leadership style of a principal and the comprehensive feel of an open or closed campus environment (Andrews, 1965). According to Carr (2007), administrators should be open to conversation with employees, parents, students, and anyone else interested in the management and well-being of a campus.

Communication impact on employee engagement and teacher retention. Having employees perform at their best, while keeping them interested and engaged in their work, is one of the most important concerns faced by organizations (D'Aprix, 2006). According to the 2011 MetLife, Inc. Survey of the American Teacher, teacher satisfaction has continually declined since 2008, making this the greatest decline in 25 years. The National Commission on Teaching

and America's Future's report, *Who Will Teach? Experience Matters* (2010) found that America's teacher attrition has doubled in the past 15 years. The National Association of State Boards of Education (2012) recommends that school districts identify and address reasons why teachers leave the profession. Increased teacher turnover rates impact the learning environment and student achievement. School districts are faced with the challenge of retaining the most effective teachers in order for students to meet and exceed standards being imposed at the national level.

Districts struggle with constantly trying to replace teachers who leave. The price of turnover is high in terms of money, productivity, and morale (Vail, 2005). Employees who feel valued and engaged will have a more positive experience, thereby reducing turnover (Julia & Rog, 2008). Researchers have attempted to identify predictors that keep individuals in the education profession and found that strong ties between teacher and administrator are imperative to teacher commitment to the profession. New teachers who reported poor communication relationships with administrators were less motivated to remain in the profession. Gonzales (2014) maintains that teachers leave the profession due to lack of support from administration and colleagues.

Employee empowerment is frequently cited in the literature as a goal and an outcome of leadership communication efforts. In turn, empowered employees exhibit enhanced commitment and avoid resistance. Conversely, employees who believe they are not empowered may become discontent and angry (Pardo-del-Val, Martinez-Fuentes, & Salvador, 2012).

Breakdown in communication and formal communication processes. When communication breaks down in an organization, the impact can be far-reaching. These factors are often explained as a series of barriers. Lunenburg & Irby (2006) defined four major types of

communications barriers that provide a foundation for analysis: physical, semantic, process, and psychosocial. Communication barriers, including failing to listen to or inform others, keeping others updated, and asking for input, can result in a closed communication climate.

A break-down of communication in an organization can frustrate employee groups and hinder campus objectives. Particular behaviors have been identified as hampering the interchange of communication and confusing the flow of information (Buchholz, 2001). Failure to listen or failure to keep others updated and informed can result in closed communication, which may lead to high turnover (Julia & Rog, 2008). Juggling the numerous teaching responsibilities of an effective teacher is especially challenging for novice teachers, and those who reported poor communication relationships with administrators were less motivated to remain in the profession (Vail, 2005).

The research emphasizes that employees seek out avenues in order to be heard, particularly if the employee perceives the environment as unjust. It is essential that teachers perceive their working environment as a just workplace, where they are able to communicate about everything, including working conditions (Brewer, 1996). Employees' sense of workplace justice is influenced by their perception of procedural fairness of their current communication system (Haraway, 2005).

At some school campuses, employees feel forced to turn to formal processes for fairness and equity (Haraway, 2005). Some scholars suggest that formal resolution procedures inhibit administrators' discretion over school management operations, particularly in the dismissal of ineffective staff (Johnson & Donaldson, 2006). While some see the resolution processes as onerous (Hess & Kelly, 2006), public sector employees have the right to present complaints to the school board. Shipley (1974) asserts that resolution procedures are effective tools that

encourage careful decision making by school administrative staff in handling personnel decisions. The goal is for employees to feel comfortable about communicating with administrators in order to resolve concerns at the campus level, although they also have the right to initiate a formal communication approach if desired.

Formal communication processes aimed at resolving employee concerns are expensive, time consuming, and legalistic (Allen & Keaveny, 1988). If the difficulty cannot be resolved quickly, positions harden and information is exchanged in an increasingly competitive manner. In the midst of traditional grievance operations, communication is compromised. Defensiveness may become the main focus, leading to adversarial and guarded communication. Communication becomes strategic and opponents use communication skills as tools for persuasion and protection, which deteriorates open communication and resolution (Carnevale, 1993). Thus, a deeper understanding of communication approaches taken by campus principals may assist school districts in determining training components useful in resolving conflict and increasing positive interaction among principals and campus staff.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore principals' views and actions relating to open communication on K-12 campus environments of a large Texas public school district. This study seeks to examine meanings attached to open communication and how these meanings are translated into campus communication culture. By understanding communication from the principal's perspective and by engaging in dialogue about the role of communication, the researcher seeks to provide principal viewpoints that district leaders can utilize as they continue working toward school transformation and student achievement. By studying the perspectives

and experiences of these school principals, the research has the potential to impact principal training programs, school district leaders, and campus management initiatives.

Research Question

This qualitative study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What are elementary school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments?
- How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture?

Summary of Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative interpretive research design. The focus of this study was to understand communication from the perspective of school administrators, whose communication choices impact other school employees and campus environments (Halawah, 2005). This methodology was selected because a qualitative research approach is effective in capturing the perspectives of individuals, as shared through their personal accounts (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

A purposeful sampling approach was used to identify participants who fit the criteria for this study. As the principal investigator, I was the primary instrument for data collection. The data collection protocol for this interpretive qualitative study consisted of in-depth, face-to-face interviews, each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. In-depth interviews describe the deep meaning of experiences in the participants' own words (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The interviews were open ended and followed a semi-structured interview guide (Brenner, 2006) to gain a "grand tour" view of how participants talk about communication within their schools and how they view the need for talking and training about campus communication (Spradley, 1979a). Open-ended interview questions were used during the interviews to (a) allow flexibility in

participant responses; (b) avoid “yes and no” replies; and (c) ensure a continuous flow of dialogue. Additionally, a 10 question survey requesting basic, demographic participant data were completed via Qualtrics and Survey Monkey.

Once the data were collected, NVIVO 11 Pro was used to organize and store data. NVIVO 11 allows for complex analysis and provides the tools needed to provide valid evidence based conclusions. The software allowed the researcher to conduct an audit of the entire analysis process, which is a component that is generally missing in qualitative research. The decision to utilize software was based on the volume of data and convenience in terms of importing word documents for coding that could easily be viewed on a computer screen (Welsh, 2002). The software assisted in conducting an accurate and transparent analysis, while providing simple and reliable coding (Morison & Moir, 1998). This type of data analysis has been said to add rigor to qualitative research, due to one of the software’s main assets in facilitating interrogation of data, which validated some of the researcher’s impressions of the data (Richards & Richards, 1991). The 10-question online surveys and transcripts were analyzed for relationship coding.

Selection of participants. The study focused solely on the perspectives of elementary school principals. This group was selected because elementary school principals are the majority of among elementary, middle and high school administrators. Participant selection started with convenience sampling, based on the researchers’ knowledge of school district leadership and collaboration with the Associate Superintendent of School Administration and Human Resources, and Executive Directors of School Administration and Academic Staff Development. The leaders were asked to provide names of school administrators who might be interested in participating in interviews. Snowball sampling was used to help in the search for participants. This approach is useful when seeking participants that are not easily accessible (Lichtman,

2013). Through the snowball and convenience sampling, the researcher selected 10 elementary campus principals to participate in the interviews. Criteria for participation included employment in the campus leadership role for at least 3 years in the district and currently serving as principal at the elementary school level.

Theoretical Framework

There are many theories, models and approaches to consider when assessing the phenomenon of employee/organization internal communication. The theoretical consideration this researcher recognizes is that of communication apprehension. Communication apprehension (CA) refers to a level of real or anticipated panic or anxiety that a person experiences when communicating with another person (McCroskey, 1977). Communication apprehension is specifically related to apprehension in situations where oral communication with another person or a group of people takes place. In some situations, a particular person or group may increase symptoms of apprehension, while conversation with a different person or group may decrease or neutralize the apprehension (McCroskey, 1970). For example, a teacher may be apprehensive about communicating with a principal, but have no apprehension about communicating with other teachers. Situational CA refers to anxiety or apprehension a person experiences when communicating with a particular individual in a particular situation based on environmental constraints (McCroskey, 1976). Given the fact that administrators have the powerful role of observing and issuing evaluations for teachers, some teachers may experience communication apprehension imposed by these circumstances.

Communication models have evolved over time. The manner in which individuals communicate in the workplace today could be a reflection of the model they were exposed to during their educational and professional development. Despite its current complexity, early

models of internal communications focused on one-way communication. The Shannon-Weaver (1949) model was a sender-focused model and suggested that all meaning contained within a message would be understood if received. Berlo's (1960) model focused on relationships between the sender and receiver and suggested that the more highly developed the communication knowledge and skills of participants, the more effectively the message would be interpreted. Current models are more elaborate, with the addition of media, high-speed media and sharing of large amounts of information. Formal communications planning is involved with current models and the focus is now aimed on the needs and concerns of the individual receiving the message (Fraser & Schalley, 2009).

As early as 1938, Barnard pointed to the role of communication in coordinating an organization's differing levels and components. Since that time, hundreds of organizational communication studies have been published that attempted to describe how communication systems function within organizations. Goldhaber (1993) defined organizational communication as "the process of creating and exchanging messages within a network of interdependent relationships to cope with environmental uncertainty" (p. 17). Porter and Roberts (1976) suggested that message transmissions between a source and receiver is an attempt to share meaning. Evidence exists that suggests that as much as 70% of school administrators' time is spent in communication (Martin & Willower, 1980).

The interdependent nature of communication should also be considered. Although different individuals on a campus have their own goals and objectives, they are ultimately dependent on one another for the overall success of the campus. According to Goldhaber (1993), organizations are composed of people who occupy various organizational positions and maintain various organizational roles. For purposes of certain goal or task accomplishments, people

depend upon each other for information. Thus, organizational outcomes are contingent upon the interdependency of organizational members (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Put in a school context, principal-teacher communication associated with supervision and evaluation (Firestone & Wilson, 1985) control staff relations through verbal communication, and remove uncertainty (Gronm, 1983).

Significance of the Study

In meetings with school administrators of a large school district in Texas, superintendent and executive staff emphasize the importance of communication in a public school district focused on academic rigor, excellence, integrity, security, and success. This emphasis on communication echoes research literature, which demonstrates that communication practices within organizations influence employee satisfaction, productivity, relationships, and the overall organizational climate and organizational success (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008). Ahghar, (2008) emphasized the importance of open communication, which they defined as a working environment in which employees feel safe and confident about being open and honest, are encouraged to contribute ideas at every level in the organization, and receive the information they need to excel at their jobs. Buchholtz (2001) and Hirschman (2008) similarly described open communication climate as an environment in which employees receive information from a trusted source and have voice in what is important to them. Organizations in which employees engage in open communication empower employees to achieve their best by contributing to the organizational goals and culture (D'Aprix, 2006; Halawah, 2005) and maintain their own and others' well-being, thus reducing turnover and organizational spending on resolving various complaints, grievances, and arbitration cases (Hess & Kelly, 2006).

While there is abundant literature on teacher dropout, retention, and the negative impact of a closed communication climate (Ahghar, 2008; Vail, 2005), there is little written on ways in which school leaders create open communication and engage with their employees in sharing information and accomplishing organizational goals (Carr, 2007). Understanding school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication can provide a basis for developing open communication environments which enable all members of the organization to take responsibility, feel pride, and actively contribute to the school's and its students' success. The goal of this study is to develop this understanding of how school administrators perceive and experience communication. Lessons learned from participants can lead to new considerations for formal administrator training programs and internal district leadership training programs.

Definition of Terms

One of the important aspects of this research is the idea of communication barriers. I also use the terms open and closed communication. Therefore, I included definitions to clarify the context of my use of these words.

Communication barriers. A break-down of communication in an organization. Some behaviors hamper the interchange of communication and confuse the flow of information (Buchholz, 2001). Failing to listen or failure to keep others updated and informed can become communication barriers leading to lack of satisfaction, psychological stress, and job alienation (Ahghar, 2008).

Communication climate. A healthy communication climate empowers employees and gives voice to what is important to them (Hirschman, 2008). The definition of a healthy communication climate describes the extent to which workers are motivated to meet

organizational goals while being engaged with the philosophy and mission of the organization (Clampitt & Downs, 1993.)

Campus culture. The guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations evident in the way a school operates (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

Open communication. A phenomenon that occurs in organizations as a way of describing internal communications (Deetz, 2001). Based on this viewpoint, the process involves people, messages, meaning, practices, and purpose in developing working relationships, and gaining understanding of the organizational culture (Shockley-Zalabak, 2002).

Closed communication. Closed communication does not allow any kind of participation. It does not establish an atmosphere for the flow of information, energy, and creativity (Rogers, 1987).

Limitations of the Study

The primary risk from this study was the potential for the school district and its employees to be identified. The district may have feared the risk of any potentially damaging information from this study becoming public, while employees may have feared sharing their perspectives for fear of retaliation. To minimize these risks, all participants were informed of the study's purpose and research design. This study focused on learning from the participants from their points of view and prevented the researcher from evaluating or sharing potentially damaging information. Research reporting was based on the participant points of view and to learn from them about what is or needs to be done to improve communication within their schools. The researcher underwent ethics training through Collaborative IRB Training Initiative to ensure research ethics and compliance.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

When it comes to workplace communications, there is no shortage of theories and ideas of how to develop and implement internal communication strategies. The definition of a healthy communication climate describes the extent to which workers are motivated to meet organizational goals while being engaged with the philosophy and mission of the organization (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). A deprived organizational communication climate can lead employees to silence and withdrawal, or to become unhappy, stressed, and disaffected (Tamuz, 2001). Although school success is influenced by many people, school principals remain one of the most important factors in school success (Daresh & Barnett, 1993). Therefore, gaining a better understanding of school administrators' views about campus communication and ways in which they develop campus communication environments deserves attention.

Despite abundant research related to the promotion of communication, organizations continue to struggle with successful internal communication with employees. Gaining insight into effective communication between principals and staff can create discussion and development of policies and practices that directly influence and improve the school environment and preparation programs (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008). In the process of assessing changes in testing, achievement, and evaluation standards, one has to consider the effectiveness of principal preparation programs (Smith, 1989). Educational practitioners and scholars question whether principal preparation programs focused on theory lack the substance and skills necessary to prepare a novice administrator to lead a competitive school (Notar, 1988).

The literature selected for this research addressed the general themes of organizational communication. Gaining a better understanding of human factors related to school campus administrators and the development of campus communication environments and cultures was

the focus of this review. In an effort to understand communication barriers and the impact they have on the establishment of communication campus environments, the specific theory of communication apprehension was considered. Additionally, a theoretical framework that helped explain behaviors that may create challenges for communication exchange between leadership and employees was sought. As a result, communication apprehension was selected because it provided a structure for understanding how employee roles and behaviors may create apprehension that may impact open communication among individuals in different positions within an organization, therefore impacting organizational communication culture (Richmond, Wrench, & McCroskey, 2013).

The review of literature explored four broad areas to provide a better understanding of circumstances that enhance or dampen the development of healthy campus communication cultures. The main subject areas selected were (a) Texas standards pertaining to campus principals, (b) principals as lead campus communicator; (c) barriers in organizational communication; and (d) formal communication processes for public school employees. Topics of review under the main subject areas included evaluations of teachers and principals, administrator training programs and professional development, influence of principal on campus communication culture, and impact of communication on employee engagement and retention.

Role of Principal

In a review of the role of the principal, Beck and Murphy (1993) reveal how the characteristics and priorities of the role evolved throughout the twentieth century. During the 1970s, the focus was on the human resource model, emphasizing positive interpersonal relationships and community alliances. In the 1980s, the emphasis of the principal shifted to classroom instruction and instructional leadership. By the end of the twentieth century, principals

were expected to possess transformational leadership skills in order to create organizational change and development (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

The principal's role as a school leader "has been viewed much more of an art, a belief, a condition of the heart, than a set of things to do. The visible signs of artful leadership are expressed ultimately in its practice" (Depree, 1989, p. 11). Principals have adjusted artful leadership styles in an effort to meet expectations imposed by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed by the federal government in response to public pressure to improve the educational system in the United States (Gruenert, 2005). Since that time, years of transformational initiatives and educational reform efforts have changed the elements and complexity of the principal's role (Protheroe, (2006).

The principal's role will continue to change with the continued growth and development of international politics and economics. With the fluctuation of priorities in education, the teaching, learning, and governance areas of the principalship continue to evolve. Along with formal reform, the added development of human resources and the importance of communities within school systems have made communication and collaboration skills necessary for any school leader (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

In the new millennium, in addition to the organizational leadership qualities essential to school administration, principals must exhibit collective leadership while implementing practices that encourage the creation of caring and nurturing learning environments for staff, students, and community members. Being a visionary with strong communication and interpersonal skills has been identified as a key component of this role.

Performance evaluations. The principal's role and responsibilities are challenging due to accountability requirements, serious safety issues, and unending demands on time (National

Policy Board for Educational Administration, n.d.). Education accountability has been a hot topic among regulating bodies of authorities. It appears that everyone involved in the education system undergoes evaluations on a regular basis. Students are evaluated based on test scores, teachers are held accountable by evaluations, and principals have to answer to overall campus performance, evident in principal evaluations. Literature pertaining to school effectiveness points to a long list of standards and expectations set for effective principals, including establishing a safe and secure learning environment in a positive and nurturing setting (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Since communication goes hand in hand with employment relationship formation, it is logical that performance and performance evaluations are impacted by the supervisors' perception of employee communication and employees' perception of manager communication (Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996).

The field of organizational communication remains open to shifts in research based on the rapid changes in organizations, communication problems, and feedback concerning practical and theoretical limitations of communication trends (Mumby & Stohl, 1996). Research related to school campus communication, roles, and possible barriers is timely, considering that updated TEA evaluation systems now require increased face-to-face dialogue between principal and teacher. After collaboration with state legislature and the U.S. Department of Education, TEA provides leadership information and training to Texas school leaders. The new evaluation systems took effect in the 2016–2017 school year. As appraisers of record, principals underwent training regarding the new evaluation tool in the summer of 2016.

The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) is the new evaluation system designed to support teachers in their professional growth. The main components of this evaluation process include goal-setting, professional development planning, evaluations, and

teacher-evaluator pre and post conferences. The communication components and developmental approach of this evaluation tool calls for more feedback and collaboration between administrators and teachers than had been expected before. The process is focused on continuous improvement, which calls for strong dialogue between the teacher and appraiser.

A new evaluation tool for principals has also taken effect beginning the 2016–2017 school year. The Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System is the new recommended principal evaluation system utilized to evaluate principals of Texas schools. Principal performance is evaluated in relation to the Texas Principal Standards. As with the new teacher evaluation, this evaluation also requires pre and post conferences between principal and supervisor. Self-assessment and reflection also play important roles in this new principal evaluation process.

The Advancing Educational Leadership program focuses on training for Texas school leaders. In alignment with TEA principal standards and the Texas Administrative Code, AEL identified standards to be met by successful school leaders. These standards include high-quality conference skills for coaching and mentoring staff, engaging in reflective questioning, and providing appropriate feedback to staff members. The design also focuses on an administrator's ability to effectively resolve conflict and building strong teams, while creating campus improvement and student success.

The level of accountability imposed on principals has brought attention to principal preparation programs. Preparation programs aim to prepare aspiring administrators for the realities of campus administration. The pressures require principals to specialize in instruction, curriculum and pedagogy, while also leading schools in meeting campus and district goals and objectives (Greifner, 2006a). There is concern that after meeting educational and certification

requirements, novice administrators do not feel well prepared and are overwhelmed by the pace and expectations placed on them by individuals with an interest in their campus. Principals must provide effective leadership for safe schools while aiming for high student achievement in order to gain confidence from local and state authorities and meeting national regulations (Williams & Szal, 2011). Some principals described their inability to keep up with expectations, never having enough time to meet the demands of staff, and being overwhelmed by the number of problems needing their attention on a daily basis (Protheroe, 2006).

Administrator training programs. Although the most important factor for an effective learning environment is educational leadership, it has been noted that over the last several years, schools throughout the country are facing a shortage of qualified school leaders (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). Many national studies have addressed the issue of skills required for quality principals (Greifner, 2006b). At a time when communication is rated as one of the top skills needed for employment, these findings lead to an awareness and understanding of the importance of communication skills among school leaders. In order to achieve goals set by districts and campuses, it is important that school leaders develop leadership skills that include collaboration, participative decision-making, and listening (Kim, 2002).

Principals are accountable for all aspects of the school and many principals and principal candidates feel that they lack the authority and skills needed to be successful in the transformation of a school (Harris, Arnold, Lowery, & Crocker, 2000). The literature notes that school leaders in our current society require a unique set of set of skills, understandings and qualities to manage campuses and large groups of staff (Halawah, 2005). For this reason, researchers continue to work toward identifying proven elements that should be included as part of principal preparation programs (Cordeiro, 1994). There is debate over what specific form of

leadership skills, traits, and characteristics are best suited to bring about positive change in the educational environment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals is concerned about the principal shortage. Many state affiliates of NAESP consider the lack of qualified principal candidates to be a serious problem in their respective states (Sava & Koemer, 1998). Some research points to the existence of an adequate number of persons certified to fill current and future positions. However, the problem is a lack of quality applicants, not quantity of applicants (Dituri, 2004).

In an effort to assist principals with the new evaluation tool, TEA developed an Advancing Educational Leadership program for school leaders. The AEL program curriculum was developed by educational stakeholders from across Texas, representing universities, education service centers, educator preparation programs, and school districts. This group identified necessary training content and design to help any school leader become a great leader. The conceptual themes of the training include creating positive school culture; establishing and sustaining vision, mission, and goals; developing self and others; improving instruction; and managing data and processes.

Halawah (2005) suggests that a focal point of administrator training should be aimed at strengthening principals' communication skills pertaining to interpersonal communication and conflict resolution. Strengthening aspiring principals' conflict resolution skills and face-to-face communication skills, as well as helping deal with the emotional demands of the principalship are key issues in effective and successful school principals (Anderson, 1991). Dukess (2000) reiterates that principals should be good listeners and effective communicators who can speak the truth.

Good oral and written communication skills are considered vital for successful job performance. The 2010 American Management Association's survey identified communication as one of the four most important skills people needed for successful employment in the 21st century. Halawah (2005) suggests that a component of administrator training should identify noted deficiencies and healthy practices to be utilized by principals when addressing or resolving concerns of staff members, parents, or community members. Improving communication performance will not be accomplished with the facilitation of one transformational initiative or training (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011). Sustainable improvements will only be made over long term planning and execution of goals, targets, and interventions (Pandey & Garnett, 2006).

Traditional didactic instruction of academia remains the most prevalent means of gaining entry into the field of K-12 administration (Smith, 1989). Because training programs are gaining attention, graduate programs in educational administration continue to restructure their training programs for principals (Gibboney, 1987). Principal preparation programs are assessed and enhanced as trends regarding management of schools, school choice, and accountability continue to change to evolve and shape the role of principal (Daresh & Barnett, 1993); yet, training programs continue to fall short (McHatton, Boyer, Shaunessy, Terry, & Farmer, 2010).

Role of Principal in Leading Campus Communication

A broad definition of a principal describes an individual who has mastered skills related to the purpose of education, teaching, personnel, time management, public relations, and campus evaluation (Fullan, 2002). Dubin (2006) evaluated the principal as the critical person orchestrating the movements of all the players in the school. Furthermore, Dubin stated the principal makes the decisions that affect people's lives, creates a climate that impacts the community, and projects the appropriate philosophy that propels a school forward. In this role,

principals, like others in leadership positions, need to be able to integrate time, people and things effectively to address the demands of the human and technical aspects of the organization (Jacobsen, Logsdon, & Wiegman, 1973). This is because school administrators must be able to build human capital in order to be effective (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

In focusing on the influence of school leadership on communication, Beck and Murphy (1993) suggest that successful principals function similar to corporate executives, using management skills and social science research to run a school like an effective and efficient business organization. In a healthy environment, where leaders make themselves available to listen and employees feel like their opinion is valued, employees and leaders are motivated and stimulated to meet the goals of the district or campus (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). When leaders encourage communication, employees trust and loyalty deepens, creating a cohesive campus, which in turn (Bednarz, 2012) formulates the culture and communication climate of a school.

Many scholars and practitioners argue that the job requirements of a principal exceed the reasonable capacities of any one person, mainly due to the pressure of serving conflicting needs and interest of various stakeholders. The expectation is that administrators be open to conversations with employees, parents, students, and anyone else interested in the management and well-being of a campus (Carr, 2007). Some leaders make themselves available and are open to input from others, while others do not. Open communication cultures have the ability to inspire, encourage collaboration, and ease tensions caused by suspicion (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005).

Campus culture. Bennis (2003) expressed that natural leaders are able to engage others, empathize with them, and make them feel indispensable to the organization. A complex part of the principal's role is in the individual's ability to provide leadership for the development of a

collaborative school culture. Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson (1999), in their book *Shaping School Culture*, suggest that school culture affects every characteristic of the organization, including the instructional strategies used by teachers, professional development programs, and the overall emphasis placed on learning.

Crowson and Morris (1985), affirm that the principal's job is different from other managerial positions because it is essentially an oral occupation, a job of talking. The principal governs the school mostly by talking with other people, usually one at a time, throughout the day. According to Deal and Peterson (1999), principals require a communication style that fosters relationships within the school, as well as between the school and its community. Principals need to be sensitive enough to get the job done with dignity and grace (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Community members and employees' perceptions about how safe it is to be open and honest with campus administration also plays a part in shaping campus culture (Osborne – Lampkin, 2008). An accumulation of research supports the proposition that effective school reform and lasting systemic improvements are best achieved in schools with positive school culture (Goldring, 2002). Barnett and McCormick (2004) concur with Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), that leaders influence the culture of a school. Basic assumptions make up the highest level of culture within an organization (Schein, 1992). If this highest level of the culture is changed, anxiety may occur among members and should be addressed (Schein, 1992). Bolman and Deal (2008) define culture as a process because it is being renewed and recreated as new members enter and go through the culture acclimation process. Fullan (2002) describes the culture of a school as the guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations evident in the way a

school operates. No matter how culture is defined, it has been linked with overall school success (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

There are 12 norms of school culture identified by Saphier and King (1985) that need to be present if there is going to be a healthy school culture. These are (a) collegiality, (b) experimentation, (c) high expectations, (d) trust and confidence, (e) tangible support, (f) reaching out to the knowledge base, (g) appreciation and recognition, (h) caring, celebration, and humor, (i) involvement in decision making, (j) protection of what's important, (k) traditions, and (l) honest, open communication. Schools with positive school culture, where teachers and administrators share a common vision for improvement efforts to implement educational innovation in schools with toxic or unhealthy school cultures have remained largely ineffective or have yielded marginal or inconsequential results (Barth, 2002).

A school campus is its own organization, and communication materializes and leads to the cultural description of a particular school. The personalities of principal and teachers, along with the unique social and psychological dynamics of a particular campus, create the cultural framework of a school (Rafferty, 2003). The culture sets the tone for the school's approach to resolving problems, trust and mutual respect, attitudes, and the generation of new ideas (Dubin, 2006). In his landmark research, Andrews (1965) noted a positive correlation between principal personality and leadership style and the overall openness or "closedness" of a school. The school culture has been recognized as a powerful influence on the perceptions and behaviors of individuals.

Open communication, employee engagement, and teacher retention. Having employees perform at their best while keeping them interested and engaged in their work is one of the most important concerns faced by organizations (D'Aprix, 2006). According to the 2011

MetLife, Inc. Survey of the American Teacher, teacher satisfaction has continually declined since 2008, making this the greatest decline in 25 years. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future's report, *Who Will Teach? Experience Matters* (2010), found that America's teacher attrition has doubled in the past 15 years. The National Association of State Boards of Education (2012) recommends that school districts identify and address reasons why teachers leave the profession. Koballa and Bradbury (2009) found that school districts are challenged to retain the most effective teachers and suggest that employee engagement should be considered as a method to preserve great teachers.

In a healthy communication environment, employees are motivated and stimulated to meet organizational goals and identify with the organization (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). This type of communication has an impact on how employees feel, what they share, and what they value (Robbins & Alvy, 2004). The literature on organizational development cites employee empowerment and engagement as outcomes of strategic communication efforts. When engaged, employees are more committed and move from being amenable employees to becoming campus proponents (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). An increase in engagement may occur when employees believe their efforts and ideas play an important part in the success of a school (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008). Glover (2007) encourages the capitalization of strategies to engage teachers through active listening, respect, and relating personal truths.

On the other hand, poor organizational communication can lead to unhappy, stressed and disaffected employees by creating a climate that breeds silence and withdrawal (Tamuz, 2001). This silence can lead to lowered engagement and commitment to employee roles, which in turn may lead to employee relations challenges, workplace issues and employee grievances (Vakola & Bourdaras, 2005). Further, employees who lack engagement and are not in alignment with the

goals of the organization may become discontent, leading to retention issues. A school leader who does not value collaboration among employees is problematic, and negatively influences teacher success and retention (Bernstein, 1997). According to Ahghar (2008), working in an unhealthy environment results in negative feelings on the part of teachers and students. Feelings that may be experienced include dissatisfaction, stress, inattention, and carelessness (Ahghar, 2008).

Districts struggle with replacing teachers, and the price of high turnover is enormous in terms of money, productivity, and morale (Vail, 2005). Employees who feel valued and engaged are more likely to stay with the organization, thereby minimizing turnover (Julia & Rog, 2008). Researchers have attempted to identify predictors that keep individuals in the education profession, and found that strong ties between teacher and administrator are imperative to teacher commitment to the profession. New teachers who reported poor communication relationships with administrators were less motivated to remain in the profession. Gonzales (2014) maintains that one of the reasons teachers leave is lack of support from administration and colleagues. Consequently, communication is the fundamental mechanism through which employees connect with and embrace the spirit of organizational culture (Harris & Nelson, 2008).

Theorists reasoned that improving relational communication would increase job satisfaction and worker involvement (Euske & Roberts, 1987). Research that reflects the link between superior-subordinate communication and employee productivity (O'Reilly & Anderson, 1980) and the importance of perceived openness in superior-subordinate communication is undeniable. A healthy communications environment helps foster employee empowerment and gives voice to employees' concerns and interests (Hirschman, 2008).

Consequences of Communication Barriers

When communication breaks down in an organization, the impact can be far-reaching. These factors are often explained as a series of barriers (Keyton, 2011). Lunenburg & Irby (2006) defined four major types of communications barriers: physical, semantic, process, and psychosocial. Communication barriers, including failing to listen to or inform others, keeping others updated, and asking for input, can result in a closed communication culture. Particular behaviors, such as failing to listen and failure to keep others informed, have been identified as hampering the interchange of communication and confusing the flow of information (Buchholz, 2001).

Concealed throughout the observable and measurable barriers to educational effectiveness may be the presence of fear or distrust in working relationships. Fear and distrust negatively affect the motivation, confidence, and perceptions of teachers at work. A common indication of fear or distrust leads to a hesitancy of employees to express their opinions about problems, needed improvements, or other work related issues (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991). In some working environments, employees do not trust the systems of communication put in place in order to resolve employee concerns (McCabe, 1997). Research indicates employees may avoid necessary conversations based on fear of harassment or retaliation, which leads to lack of dispute resolution and employee productivity (Vakola & Bouradas, 2005). Conversely, trust in relationships, particularly in the teacher-principal dyad, positively affects teachers' willingness to speak out about important work-related issues (Rafferty, 2003). Buchholz (2001) suggests that teachers perceive a communication culture as credible if they consistently receive true information from a trusted source, and for these reasons, the working relationship between administrator and staff should be preserved (McCabe, 1997).

A breakdown of communication in an organization can have a lasting impact on employee groups and on campus objectives. Teaching is challenging for educators, especially in the first three years of teaching, and those who reported poor communication relationships with administrators were less motivated to remain in the profession altogether (Vail, 2005). Teacher job satisfaction is definitely an indicator of teacher commitment to the profession (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). If employees are not in alignment with the culture of an organization, employee relation problems are likely to arise (Schneider, 1990). The unresolved tension experienced by employees and their lack of trust in their supervisor may lead to grievances and charges regarding employee evaluations, questioning of contract, bullying, or accusations of misconduct involving discrimination and retaliation (McCabe, 1997).

Public School Formal Communication Process

Employees' sense of workplace justice is influenced by their perception of procedural fairness in their environment (Carnevale, 1993). It is essential that teachers perceive their working environment as a just workplace, where they are able to communicate about everything (Lerner, 1980). The literature reviewed for this research not only recognizes that teachers want to be heard and valued, but that they have the right and responsibility to keep administration informed of any concerns or objections regarding campus decisions and the impact those decisions have on the well-being of students and employees (Glover, 2007).

This literature review has found that employees seek out other avenues when they do not feel heard. There is no shortage of theories regarding the role leadership plays in resolving employee grievances and conflict. When people come together to work in any type of work environment, there will eventually be some conflict, especially in a sensitive environment with many moving pieces and numerous players. Researchers found that effective and supportive

working relationships between school leaders and employees play an integral role in grievance practices and formal grievance rates (Barnet & McCormick, 2004).

In some cases, employees assume the only alternative is turning to a formal process in order for them to share their concerns with an impartial and objective individual (Carnevale, 1993). Some scholars suggest that formal employee resolution procedures hinder administrators' discretion over school management operations, particularly in the dismissal of ineffective staff (Hess & Kelly, 2006). While some see the resolution processes as distressing (Hess & Kelly, 2006), public sector employees have the right to present complaints to the school board. Shipley (1974) asserts that resolution procedures are effective tools that encourage careful decision making by school administrative staff in handling personnel decisions. The goal is to resolve conflict effectively and quickly in an effort to save time and money, but most importantly, in order to remain focused on student learning. The implication of low-stage resolution means cost saving for unions and districts alike. In addition to reducing costs, the low-stage resolution norm likely helps to preserve principal autonomy, reduce bureaucracy and paperwork, encourage a positive school climate, and maintain a focus on instruction (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008).

Formal communication processes have become increasingly expensive, time consuming, and legalistic. In some cases, it can take up to one year before an employee exhausts the grievance process (Allen & Keaveny, 1988). If the difficulty cannot be resolved quickly, positions harden and information is exchanged in an adversarial manner. Considering the traditional grievance process is viewed as confrontational, information is guarded and communication becomes a game of strategy. The objective of communication goes from compromise and collaboration to defensiveness, causing trust, relationships, and productivity to suffer (Carnevale, 1993).

In the Texas Public School System, grievance processes are regulated by Texas Government Code: Section 617.005, which prohibits collective bargaining and strikes by public employees but protects the right of employees to file grievances. A district cannot attempt to eliminate these rights through its employment contracts. At the local level, Texas school districts are governed by Texas Association of School Boards policies, DGBA (Legal) and DGBA (Local). DGBA (Legal) Title IX states that a district that receives federal financial assistance, directly or indirectly, shall adopt and publish grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of employee complaints alleging any action prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Grievance clauses have become the norm in the educational system and are usually an important part of teacher contracts (Kerchner & Douglas, 1986).

Summary

The literature reviewed demonstrates that leadership perceptions and communication skills are crucial in the development of organizational communication climates. The literature reflected substantial research regarding organizational communication, but studies specific to the perceptions and experiences of principals in developing campus communication cultures were minimal. To address this gap in literature, the following research questions will guide the study: What are school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments? How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture?

Experiences of elementary school principals were examined to gain insight into their perspectives and provide a point of reference for other aspiring school administrators who wish to lead their own schools in the role of principal. An interpretive qualitative research design was utilized to conduct the study. A qualitative approach was selected because it enabled the

researcher to capture participant viewpoints as shared through their personal experiences (Lichtman, 2013).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore principals' views and actions relating to the development of campus communication environments and cultures of a large Texas public school district. This study seeks to examine meanings attached to campus communication and how these meanings are translated into communication environments and culture. By understanding communication from the principal's perspective and by engaging in dialogue about the role of communication, the researcher seeks to provide insight that district leaders can utilize as they continue working toward school transformation and student achievement. By studying the perspectives and experiences of these school principals, the research has the potential to impact principal training programs, school district leaders, and campus management initiatives.

This study was conducted using a qualitative interpretive approach with qualitative methods for analysis. Walsham (1993) asserts that the purpose of the interpretive approach in information science is to produce an understanding of the context and the process whereby information science influences and is influenced by the context. This approach seeks to understand the meaning people assign to specific problems or social phenomena (Creswell, 2011). Holloway and Wheeler (2010) define qualitative research as a way of studying how people "interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live" (p. 3). I selected a qualitative interpretive methodology for this study because I wanted to capture the perspectives of campus principals as shared through their personal accounts.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research includes a variety of approaches, but its primary objective is to provide in-depth understanding of the world by studying people's experiences, perspectives, and

pasts (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative research is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting; it is particularly useful in studying educational settings and processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Another premise of qualitative research is that meaning and understanding of events is constructed when individuals interact with their world and share their stories with others (Linde, 1993; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (2011) consider qualitative research as best suited for research that uses the context, setting, and participant frames of reference as main aspects of the study.

By selecting this approach, I aimed to capture detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences, and perspectives, followed by the process of constructing meaning and understanding based on participant accounts. In qualitative inquiry, the challenge is to make sense of vast amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify patterns, and communicate the essence of the findings. Although there are guidelines and procedural suggestions, the quality of the study depends on the capabilities and insights of the researcher (Patton, 1990). Yin (2011) maintains that qualitative methodology offers flexibility to conduct a wide-range of in-depth studies and opens up topics of genuine interest to the researcher. The flexibility in this type of methodology allowed this researcher to examine a topic that, as a public school central office administrator, I find relevant to many aspects of the public school systems.

Interpretive Design

Interpretive researchers believe that reality is socially constructed. According to Willis (2007), interpretivists believe there is no single correct method to knowledge. Merriam and Associates (2002) describe characteristics of qualitative interpretative research, saying that "the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation, meaning

is mediated through the researcher as the primary instrument, the process is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (p. 6). Walsham (1993) argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no “correct” or “incorrect” theories and that constructs are developed based on the researchers objective perception and in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest. Myers (2009) argues that interpretive researchers access reality through social construction such as language, consciousness and shared meaning.

The interpretive approach is best for this study because the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore meanings attached to campus communication and how these meanings are translated into communication environments and culture. I have elected to utilize a qualitative interpretive approach because I want to become more familiar with the phenomenon of interest, achieve a deep understanding of how principals think about this particular topic, and describe in great detail the perspectives of the research participants and how they interpret and construct meaning from their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In utilizing the interpretive qualitative approach, this researcher took on the role of a participant observer (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). As the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, this researcher engaged in interviews and discerned meanings of actions expressed within specific social contexts. Considering the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, Guba and Lincoln (1994) caution that qualitative research, which is an approach that acknowledges the researcher’s subjectivity, requires that the “biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer are identified and made explicit throughout the study” (p. 290).

Site and Participant Selection

I initially utilized Walford’s (2008) strategy of convincing decision-making individuals of the benefits of this research. Valuable aspects of this timely research were shared with

administration leadership. As an employee of this district, in a leadership position, I had the opportunity to collaborate with gatekeepers (Creswell, 2013) regarding access. The study took place in a large school district in south Texas. The district has over 50 school campuses and approximately 10,000 employees, of whom about 250 are school principals and assistant principals.

Participant identification and criteria

The primary participants in the research were elementary school principals. Elementary school principals were selected as primary participants because they provide a large participant pool, in comparison to middle school and high school principals. Participant selection started with convenience sampling, based on the researcher's knowledge of school district leadership. School administration campus support personnel helped identify campuses and elementary principles of interest based on insider perspective. These leaders were asked to provide names of school administrators who might be interested in participating in the study. Through the snowball and convenience sampling, I selected 10 elementary school administrators to participate in the interviews. This particular number of in-depth interviews is appropriate for this type of research. Criteria for participation included employment in a leadership role for at least 3 years in the district. Based on the relationships developed with principals interviewed, I continued identifying other participants who could contribute to the study.

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) safeguards study participants' privacy, confidentiality, rights, and privileges, as well as protecting them from possible physical or psychological harm. The rights and welfare of participants involved with the research were

protected by the IRB. I obtained permission from the school district's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to any data collection.

Data Collection

Face-to-face interviewing was the primary tool used for data collection. Marshall and Rossman's (2011) interview strategies were followed. Through the facilitation of in-depth interviews I gained information needed to describe the meanings of the participants' experiences in their own words.

Interviews. Interviews with school administrators were open ended and followed a semi-structured interview guide (Brenner, 2006) to gain a "grand tour" view (Spradley, 1979a) of the language of how participants talk about communication and the development of communication cultures within their schools. There was an emphasis on the principals' own perspectives and point of view. According to (Shneiderman & Plaisant, 2005), interviews can be productive, since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern. Obtaining constructive suggestions and detailed information from a few participants were some of the advantages to utilizing interviews in qualitative data collection (Shneiderman & Plaisant, 2005).

Depending on particular research objectives, interviews may be structured or unstructured. Structured interviews are formal, while unstructured interviews tend to create the feel of a brainstorming conversation and do not include a predetermined structure, allowing both parties to create the flow of the interview (Preece, Rogers, & Sharp, 2002). The interviews were semi-structured, and probing questions were asked to encourage participants to elaborate on responses (Brenner, 2006).

Direction of interviews. Participants had a strong influence on the direction interviews took. The flow of interviews was dependent on the depth of participant responses. The interviews

provided details pertaining to the thoughts and experiences of the participants. These details were valuable in capturing overall participant perspectives (Hammersley, 2003).

Field notes. As suggested by Lichtman (2013), I maintained brief field notes during each interview to capture unique aspects or points made by the participant. Writing minor field notes during the interview served as reminders to gain further clarification from participants, as needed. Field notes included a summary of each interview and detailed observations about the surroundings and people involved in each interview.

Analysis

As described by Yin (2011), the analysis of qualitative data takes place in five phases, which include: compiling the data, disassembling the data, reassembling the data, interpreting the data, and concluding the study. Data analysis methods were influenced by what participants marked as significant (Bloome, et al., 2009) for understanding their views about campus communication and the development of communication environments and cultures. The goal of data collection was to develop a complex and multifaceted understanding of the ways school administrators create patterns of communication within their schools and across the school district. Data analysis methods were consistent with the overall interpretive design. Data were obtained through recorded and transcribed interviews. The transcribed documents were imported into the NVIVO software system, where it was disassembled and reassembled. The thematic analysis occurred after the data had been organized and managed using NVIVO.

The thematic analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) approach enabled the researcher to focus on the macro level and identify the overarching themes about patterns of communication. By using NVIVO, the data were coded and organized by theme or case descriptions. The data were divided by participant responses from interviews, and when themes

began to emerge, NVIVO recommended container folders to hold data in categories of interest. NVIVO has the ability to run queries to recognize word and text frequencies, then calculates the data and provides summary links to list the content by nodes (Looney, 2016). The thematic analysis enabled the focus on the main themes, or the “what” of research (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012). The software compares to the manual process of exploring a list of topics and identifying ways the topics intersect and connect. When done manually, the topics are developed into larger categories, which can then interconnect to form the primary themes. After the NVIVO coding process identified a range of topics participants made visible, the coding was manually checked. This analysis is like Spradley’s (1980) developmental research sequence, which was the underlying logic for the thematic analysis conducted in this study. I chose to use thematic analysis rather than the developmental research sequence and its terminology (domain, taxonomic, componential analyses) to make analysis more accessible to participants.

In analyzing participant interviews I gained a better understanding of participant perspectives. This insight allowed me to describe views and actions of principals relating to communication in campus environments. I used participants’ own words to construct meaning from their experiences. Personal views and biases were contained by taking measures to examine participant experiences from their perspectives.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

According to American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2006) standards, the researcher must show readers that research findings are legitimate and trustworthy. Credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are elements to be considered in the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Guba, 1981). I followed the lead of many qualitative

researchers who agree with Guba's principles as a good way of showing trustworthiness of data collected, even when various data collection methods are utilized (Suter, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

In my role as a researcher, potential conflicts of interest or biases that may influence my research were identified (AERA Standards, 2006). Considering that, as the researcher, I perceived the reality of this research (Lichtman, 2013), I paid careful attention to my perspectives and understanding of the topic being discussed in an effort to prevent my personal experiences and knowledge from impacting the research.

Intrinsic motivation. From a very young age, I realized that I thought "differently." I was interested in the manner in which people think, communicated and behaved. I always wondered why children and adults in my environment reacted as they did to particular circumstances, especially those that were uncomfortable and challenging. In a conflict filled environment, I paid careful attention to personalities, communication styles and ways in which people went about influencing others, making decisions, and resolving or escalating conflict. My interest in psychology and conflict resolution as an adult is no coincidence.

Forming years. I grew up in a full household where I had to be prepared to prove and defend myself. I developed in a small, low-socioeconomic, rural community, where the worst is expected and only the strong survive. It was clear to me that the manner in which people behaved and communicated seemed to make all the difference. I quickly learned how others responded to my words, actions and behavior. At a young age, I made a conscious effort to speak my mind and be a voice for those with less insight or courage. In the public school setting, I found it easy to represent and influence other students. I was elected into leadership positions by my peers

throughout junior high, high school, college, and even graduate school. I had a natural way with people and a sincere passion for the well-being of others.

Education and career. I have a Master of Science degree in Psychology. I was most interested in clinical and abnormal psychology at the beginning of my career. I developed mental health programs for youth with psychological issues who were incarcerated for committing crimes. I am a professional counselor licensed with the state of Texas and have spent the second portion of my career focused on industrial psychology, personnel issues, ethics, and employee grievances. I currently serve in a leadership role of a large, urban public school district.

Protection of Human Subjects

In striving to protect human subjects from potential harmful consequences, I ensured protection through confidentiality, protection of data, and proper disposition of records. Ethical considerations that were applied include: informing participants and gatekeepers of the potential impact of the research, treating participants with dignity and respect, and making participants aware that all information shared during the interview would be kept confidential and protected (Creswell, 2011).

Ensuring confidentiality. In addition to confidentiality agreements, other steps were taken to provide participants with the confidence to share information. Participants were informed of measures that would be taken in order to protect their confidentiality and identities, including the use of pseudonyms, and physical protection of all records and computer files. Any identifying information was not included in transcribed documents and participants were not identified in any public discussions or correspondence (Lichtman, 2013).

Protection of data and disposition of records. In compliance with Responsible Conduct of Research procedures, all research data were kept and organized in a safe and secure manner.

After extensive data analysis, transcribed data were transferred and stored on an external hard drive which was kept until research was completed, at which time, any data and research records were permanently erased from the hard drive and NVIVO system. Subsequent disposition of remaining data coincided with the university, IRB, and public law requirements.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I present the findings from the data analyses of in-depth interviews conducted with 10 elementary school principals. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore principals' views and actions relating to open communication in K-12 campus environments of a large Southwest public school district. The findings of the study were determined by what participants marked as significant (Bloome et al., 2005) for understanding their views about campus communication and the development of communication environments and cultures. The use of the NVIVO software system provided a systematic method of organizing the data by themes. The findings of the study were determined by applying Spradley's (1979b) Development Research Sequence (DRS) to the interview transcript data. The use of this analysis method provided a systematic method to construct meanings from participant experiences as described in their own words, which were transcribed from face-to-face interviews. The remainder of this chapter describes analyses and findings constructed through thematic analyses that contributed to the overall study results.

As described in Chapter 3, once all the interviews were transcribed, I used NVIVO to code and organize the data by themes. The thematic analysis enables the focus on the main themes, or the "what" of research (Gubrium et al., 2012). The thematic analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) approach enabled me to focus on the macro level and identify the five following overarching themes: (1) encountering challenges related to the role of principal; (2) having mentors; (3) principal leadership style impact on campus communication culture; (4) methods of communication; and (5) one-on-one communication topics. These themes reflect the essence of principals' views and actions related to open communication and constitute the main substance of my findings.

Themes

This section presents an overview of the five themes identified during the thematic analysis process, and participant comments supporting selection of those themes.

Theme one: Challenges related to the role of principal. One of the first themes that developed, and one that is a major component of my overall research questions, is the challenges related to the role of the principal. According to Fullan (2002), public school authorities continue to struggle to define the role and necessary qualities of a successful principal. The convoluted role of school principal has continued to heighten over time (Hauseman, Pollock & Wang, 2017). During the interviews, participants discussed challenges related to their roles. There is no question in the literature pertaining to the multitasking and shifting roles necessary for the “daily survival” of a campus principal (Habegger, 2008). I identified the following challenges related to the role of principal theme through thematic analysis: (a) scope of the role of principal; (b) audiences and multi-stakeholders; and (c) preparation and training. Most of the participants required little encouragement to talk about the many challenges that come along with the many tasks they are responsible for, that either directly or indirectly influence the school as a whole (Fineman, 2012). Terms and semantic relationship that makes up the challenges related to the role of the principal theme are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Challenges Related to the Role of the Principal Theme

Included Terms	Relationship	Theme
Scope of role of principal Audiences and multi-stakeholders Preparation and training	is a kind of	Challenge

Challenge one: Scope of the role of principal. The first challenge I discovered among the participant interviews was that 10 of the 10 individuals described their complicated and sometimes overwhelming responsibilities of their principal roles. As suggested by Halawah (2005), a campus principal in our current society requires a unique set of skills and understanding in order to manage expectations, complex campuses, and large groups of staff. Various roles of a principal include: meeting state academic standards, continuous campus improvement, instructional design, partnerships with parents and community, and nurturing a campus culture (Dufour & Eaker, 2006).

Sue has worked in the field of education for 23 years. She received her education and training in Texas. She was a teacher for 10 years and an assistant principal for seven years prior to leading a campus in the role of principal. She is currently in year six of the principalship. As supported by Yu (2014), she mentioned the physical and emotional impact her role as a campus leader who wears many hats has on her. It is commonplace to hear that principals are expected to move mountains every day with very little praise and acknowledgment (Karns, 2005). Craig, a fourth year principal, agreed with Sue as he described the multifaceted role of campus principal. In addition, Craig, with four years' experience as an assistant principal and five years as a school teacher, shared what he believes are his primary roles as a principal:

I am in the business of giving kids their first start in school, and being an advocate for students is really my job. I feel, in addition to academics, I have a big role in the social and emotional development of a child and in the leadership development of a child.

Beck and Murphy (1993), revealed how characteristics and priorities of the role of principal have evolved throughout the twentieth century. In the 1970s, the focus of the principal was on building interpersonal relationships; in the 1980s, the emphasis was on classroom instruction; and by the end of the twentieth century, principals were expected to be

transformational leaders. Craig identified the challenge he faced when contemplating the main objective of his job, considering his role is so broad. He described the delicate balance between focusing on providing students with practical life skills to prepare them for the future, while also making academics a top priority. In agreement with Willis (2007), he discussed the seriousness of having to create a safe learning environment, regardless of the academic responsibilities of his role. He added that on his campus, every day begins with the foundational elements of respect, responsibility, and safety. He stated his daily objectives may need to be adjusted at any moment based on a sudden event that takes him away or abruptly changes the energy of the campus environment.

Davis, Darling-Hammong, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) assert that a principal is responsible for shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a hospitable climate, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best, and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. For example, in keeping with Klocko and Wells (2015), Alex, a principal in year 12, reported that an aspiring principal may be bewildered by his explanation of his job. Alex has a total of 23 years' experience in education. He was an assistant principal for seven years and a teacher for four years. The following depicts Alex's entangled role of a principal described by The Wallace Foundation:

Oh gosh! Describing my role could be an hour long interview: facilitator, leader, instructionally, obviously a role model, sometimes who is working with teachers, with kids, with parents, and with the community, keeping kids safe, and making sure they are learning.

As noted by Beck and Murphy (1993), Lisa, who has worked in education for 19 years, also described the stress related with being the connector between stakeholders of an entire school community. Lisa also received her education and training in Texas. She was an assistant

principal for five years and an assistant principal for six years prior to entering the role of principal. As described by Protheroe (2006), in addition to instruction, a principal must focus on the element of open and honest communication in establishing a positive school culture. Lisa described the elements and complexity of her role and focused on the communication component, which she labeled as the most complicated part of her role:

I have to be able to listen to different perspectives and create a fair decision from all the perspectives. I have to be able to problem solve, take in a lot of information and condense it, because there is information coming at all different times of the day on all different subjects.

Like Lisa, Alex also focused on the challenging communication aspect of his role and described the need for the principal to consider all stakeholders when communicating. He characterized his role as an hourglass, with central office, the community, and TEA in the upper part of the hourglass and the teachers in the bottom part. He viewed his position of principal as the small point in which all stakeholders must pass through in order to be considered. According to Gruenert (2005), the artful leadership styles of principals will continue to adjust in response to public pressure to improve the educational system in the United States.

Challenge two: Audiences and multi-stakeholders. A second facet of the challenges related to the scope of the role of principal theme relates to the number of audiences they must constantly consider on a daily basis, which according to the (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, n.d.) requires a level of communication necessary in meeting accountability requirements, maintaining safety, and meeting the unending demands of interested constituents.

For example, stakeholders are interested in the welfare and success of a school and its students. This group may include administrators, teachers, staff, parents, community members, school board members, city councilors, and state representatives (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Negotiating with numerous audiences was labeled as laborious and even ineffective. Of those interviewed, 8 of the 10 participants described similar concerns pertaining to this topic. Straka (2017), revealed that multi-stakeholder organizations should analyze when a large scale collaborative approach is or is not appropriate, since extensive collaboration may be useful for implementation of a process but may not be reasonable for negotiating decisions the leader is ultimately responsible for on their own.

Amy, now in her fourth year as principal, pointed out her responsibility of building school community and creating a warm and welcoming school campus, in addition to leading student achievement efforts (Rafferty, 2003). Amy spent seven years as a teacher and four years as an assistant principal. She states the days of focusing on students and teachers are over because she is under immense pressure to attend to the needs of parents, grandparents, and community members, which aligns with Cunningham and Cordeiro's (2006) description of the complexity of educational administration in the United States and key factors of communication, planning, organization, and coordination in effective administration. Amy described her concern with building effective working relationships in the midst of so many stakeholders:

I feel if I can't build relationships with my staff then I'm not going to be able to get through to my kids. It trickles down from me, to my staff, and then to my parents.

In consonance with Straka (2017), all participants mentioned extensive levels of collaboration they must facilitate among numerous audiences on campus. On some campuses audiences and stakeholders also included various campus committees. The number of audiences that principals feel responsible for communicating with can become daunting, as illustrated by this quote from Ann, a seventh year principal with a total of 24 years' experience in education:

The challenging part is that there is one of me to a lot of them. I gain input from PTA members, teachers, grade level chairs, leadership team, and other communication

members, and then every Friday I send out a newsletter to staff of all activities that are happening and every Sunday I send parents a newsletter with similar information.

As mentioned by Fullan and Hargreaves (1996), Jane, in her fourth year as principal, identified challenges that arise when she does not necessarily have a need for input from others. She mentioned the different perspectives and various levels of understanding held by various people groups regarding campus involvement and engagement. According to Kim (2002), in order to achieve goals set by districts, it is important for school leaders to include all stakeholders in collaboration, participative decision-making, and active listening. In her 13th year in education, Jane articulated a subtle aspect of collaboration that creates its own set of difficulties:

Sometimes the challenge is there are things that I need input on, and there are things that I want more advice on, and then there are just some things that I know a decision has to be made, and you just have to make that decision and it is not going to be with a lot of input. Open communication isn't always the best avenue for every situation and for every problem.

While other participants also described the dilemmas associated with collaboration and communication among several audiences, Halawah (2005) suggests effective school leaders must have the ability to facilitate communication among large groups of campus staff and community members. In line with Straka (2017), Mary, a ninth year principal with eight years' experience as an assistant principal and six years as a teacher, admitted to repercussions that take place when errors are made and one fails to come together with interested parties:

There is just a massive amount that goes into it! And I think it has to be very calculated, otherwise you get so busy that you can forget and leave out some of the stakeholders. I have done that before, accidentally.

These comments reflect how the role of principal is responsible for many audiences and stakeholders. Although there is enthusiasm in the idea of collaboration among numerous

audiences, Longo (2012), comments on the overwhelming task of seeking input from various interested parties with different levels of understanding of campus initiatives.

Challenge three: Preparation and Training. A third challenge associated with the scope of principal theme had to do with academic, instruction, and practice opportunities in preparation for the role of principal. Greifner (2006b) mentioned how the pressures of accountability imposed on principals to specialize in instruction, curriculum, and pedagogy, while also leading schools in meeting campus and district goals and objectives, has brought attention to principal preparation programs. The lack of formal academic components in school administration graduate programs were mentioned by 8 of the 10 participants interviewed. In agreement with Gumus (2015), participants also suggested the need for training to allow a pre-service principal to build practical readiness for the job. Traditional principal training programs have become disconnected from the realities of the role and scope of a public school principal working against the dilemmas in today's society (Mana, 2015). Participants expressed difficulties they have faced stemming from lack of formal education, training, and reflection about the importance of communication in their academic administrator training programs.

For example, Sue and Luis both stated they finally reflected on their communication styles after they were already on the job. They had not had any classes or formal training at the university level about communication related to the role of principal. As stated by Afshari, Bakar & Luan (2012), they had not had specific training related to this aspect of their role and did not realize how much time they would focus on communication during their leadership of a school. Their remarks support Greifner's (2006a) concern that after meeting educational and certification requirements, novice administrators are not well-prepared and are overwhelmed by the pace and expectations of their role.

In keeping with Kouali (2017), Jackie, in year seven as principal, agrees with the notion of gaining the best experience once an individual is on the job. In year 17 of her career in education, Jackie also remarked on the lack of exposure she received during graduate school. She believes principals have the best opportunity to learn about creating communication environments once they are on the job:

I think it comes with time and experience. There is no training in communication in university preparation programs. You know, they go over strategies and research, but I think you don't learn a lot of the pieces until you are on the job. It is kind of on-the-job training and it is not easy, it is definitely not easy.

From the analysis of the interviews, individuals felt they did not possess adequate skills needed to be successful in the transformation of a school campus, which aligns with Harris et al., (2000) research, which states that individuals aspiring to be principals must possess an internal yearning for challenges and possess self-confidence in their abilities, and considering formal education may not fully prepare one to be an administrator. For example, Ann, who attended undergrad in New Jersey and obtained her master's degree in school administration in Texas, also discussed weaknesses in her graduate program. She felt strongly about the responsibility of universities to create strong principal training, to include topics of communication and campus culture:

If there is a principal that is in an academic setting in a university, whether it is a four-year university or they are doing their post, I just feel that it needs to be research-based practices that they are learning about. So I would hope that part of the hours, in order to create a principal program, has those sort of classes that allow them to be able to learn about communication. Back when I learned it, it was more based on instructional practices to insure that the teachers were completing the tasks they need to do in order to comply with whatever state law. I don't recall getting classes about open lines of communication.

Although their particular administrative programs were not designed to cover subjects such as open communication, two interviewees recall reflecting on communication skills at some

point in their programs. Jane and Amy completed their studies and received their administration licensures in Texas. Both felt they had received enough general training to apply for the position of principal, while both agreed their preparation programs were not intentional about including coursework or practical training in respect to communication. As established by Cordeiro (1994), researchers continue to work toward identifying proven elements that should be included as part of principal preparation programs, such as communication.

As supported by Leo (2015), Alex contends that explicitly adding open communication and campus culture to administrative programs would be valuable. Alex also completed his studies in Texas. He recalled a particular professor facilitating discussion about the principals' role of communicator in a problem-based learning class he had taken in his preparation program. Although the academic program did not have a comprehensive plan for academic and practical training, he was grateful to have a professor who focused on communication. He gives credit to the professor of that particular class:

His focus even though the situations weren't based on communication he wove it into everything. So I think I got a lot from that class, but I think that was that professor's niche, that was his aim for us. I think part of it, in defense of the universities, is it is hard to put communication into words! You have to see it.

The literature lacks content related to best ways to prepare candidates for a role as principal. The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute reported the need to identify the essential elements of good leadership, features of effective programs, and the types of policy needed to encourage better preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007). Participants discussed the quality of training they received before assuming their positions and the professional development they received once they became a principal. Objections to university programs and internal district training methods were consistent; yet, participants willingly discussed the valuable experiences they had through informal mentoring.

Theme Two: Having mentors. An area of interest that arose from the encountering challenges theme was that of having mentors. All but two of the participants agreed with Smith & Shoho (2007) regarding the importance of having mentors in the work place. They discussed the usefulness of observing and receiving guidance from their mentor. A study by Davis et al. (2005) suggested school districts add support in the form of mentoring, principal networks, and peer coaching to instructional and leadership learning opportunities. Participants explained how mentors shaped their perceptions linked to communication styles, open communication, and the development of campus communication cultures. In each case, the identified mentors were not executive directors, professors, or professional development trainers. Instead, participants named the principal they worked with during their time as an assistant principal as their most influential professional mentors. The included terms and semantic relationships that establish the theme of mentors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Having Mentors Theme

Included Terms	Relationship	Theme
Paired with a seasoned principal Had experienced principal to call on as a novice administrator	is a kind of	Mentoring Relationship

In consonance with Service, Gulay, and Kate (2016), interviewees detailed the advantageous opportunities they had when informally paired with a good mentor. Similar to other principals, Jane mentioned how lucky she felt to have been paired with particular individuals who provided her with counsel, guidance, instruction, and modeling, which correlates with research by Golian and Galbraith (1996), who found that mentoring may take place in a variety of approaches.

I learned from other good role models. I think I was very lucky. I came into this district under a fantastic principal, who was very much about the heart of the school, and very much about relationships. I got good modeling from her. I worked with another principal in a community that almost demanded communication, and even felt entitled to that communication, and I think she was great at how to navigate and do that.

As mentioned by Ahghar (2008), Jane, in her fourth year as a principal, discussed the communication demands of working in upper middle class neighborhood schools. This coincides with Carney-Hall (2008), who found that it is a complex necessity to maximize the influence of parents while minimizing interference to maintain focus on student success. Jane explained that parents were insistent and felt deserving of information. She presumed the demands for communication from other school communities may not be as demanding. She felt lucky to have learned strategic ways to develop lines of communication in these particular communities.

Alex also attributes his skills in dealing with parents to beneficial observations of his mentor at work. Alex, a principal in his 12th year, discussed the value of informal mentoring relationships that emerged when he worked for experienced principals. He shared how lucky he felt to have been paired with particular administrators that assisted him in developing competencies useful in his role as a campus administrator, which aligns with Kellam (2003), who found that, unlike monitored formal mentoring programs, informal mentors are usually focused on helping the novice professional achieve long-term career goals.

I was an assistant principal and the principal that I worked for used to say, “Oh, this is going to be a very awkward conversation with the parent! This is going to be delicate.” And she was, I think, a master at communication and had done the job a long time. She would say, “Why don’t you come sit in and just be a fly on the wall?” So that was my own dumb luck that is who I worked for!

Alex emphasized that his best training had been opportunities he happened to have in witnessing exceptional role models. He agreed with the complexities identified by Leo (2015) related to the complexities of communication and how difficult it is to learn communication

strategies through traditional training. He discussed how, unfortunately, time restraints of a campus do not allow assistant principals or novice principals to spend time with mentors or observing seasoned principals throughout the district.

Although Jackie did not view her mentor as an expert campus administrator, observing her mentor was a valuable experience. Jackie, in her seventh year of being a principal, explained that observing a model principal when she was an assistant principal helped her to establish what she would do differently as a principal in terms of developing an open communication culture on campus. She was in an informal mentoring relationship where the experienced party's inability to relate, empathize, and offer support prompted her to reflect on her own leadership style. This strongly correlates with Brown and Trevino (2006), who disclose how unfortunately, some mentors may be less internally motivated to be part of mentoring relationships and be less invested in the development of the mentee. Jackie said:

As an AP, I had a principal who never left her office, and so that was a really good experience for me because, as an AP, I was always visible, walking around, and I knew I didn't want to be that kind of principal. People were afraid to come into her office because she was not always approachable. So you kind of learn from that too, working with different people; your leadership style and how you would want to be once you have your own school.

Unlike the other interviewees, Jackie's experience with her role model helped her to identify the type of principal she did not want to be and caused her to reflect on her leadership and communication style and the impact she would make on campus culture and the development of an open communication environment. According to Ganser (2002), effective mentoring requires the individual serving as mentor to be proficient in the skills being taught, although in some cases, the "mentor" is self-taught and did not learn such skills in a formal preparation program.

Lisa and Craig had positive mentoring experiences with individuals interested in their professional success. Both mentioned having mentors as assistant principals who imparted knowledge and proficiency that assisted them in working toward achieving their personal professional objectives. This aligns with Cohen and Galbraith (1995), whose research on learning through relationships identifies career and psychosocial development that occurs through dialogue with a mentor. Lisa details that, although the district she works for does not have a formal mentorship program in place for administrators, establishing a mentoring working relationship was critical in her development:

Did I learn things through the mentoring process? Yes. Did I always use him as a mentor? No, and I had to learn some things the hard way. I personally learned a lot from my mentor's experiences on how and when I need to communicate and what that should look like.

In agreement with Lynch (2012), Alex reflected on how limited principals are as mentors in sharing practices, views and expectations. He commented on the great opportunities he had for mentoring as a novice principal. Now, as an experienced principal, he would like to have more opportunities to mentor novice administrators. He is an advocate of observation as a form of training and believes it would be useful for new administrators to observe different leadership styles in action:

You could tell me again and again and put it in a really cool presentation. Academically, I am intelligent enough to understand it, but you don't have the nuances you have when you see it in action! Maybe the new principal goes over and watches an experienced mentor in a difficult parent conference just to pick up some of those skills.

Although Alex felt strongly about the powerful learning experiences gained through observation, he recognized that principals' schedules do not allow for this type of training. On the other hand, Sue focused on voicing her belief in the importance of a mentor, especially because she attended

an administrator preparation program without a focus on the communication component of being a principal:

I didn't have formal training in college, so it was on the job training. I had good role models. I think often it is who you are around and are you taking the example they are setting, either a negative or positive. When you are a new principal you have to have a mentor and that is another format in which to build skills of communication.

In alignment with Daresh & Barnett (1993), the discussions about mentors revealed the value of positive and negative mentoring experiences. Participants understood the power and influence of a mentor-mentee relationship, which aligns with Kanter (1993) who stated that even well-educated novice professionals need a mentor's practical knowledge and wisdom. Additionally, the participants spoke of the influence mentors had on their development as leaders and communicators. They also acknowledged that mentors they had as novice principals served as important guides in establishing campus cultures and communication environments at their own schools, which leads to the identification of the next theme.

Theme three: Principals' leadership style impact on campus communication culture.

One of the key tasks of an effective school leader is to establish a positive school culture and, although the campus culture is developed by all stakeholders, the principal is the one who guides the direction of the culture (Mendels, 2012). By their own testimony, most participants did not go through a principal preparation program that included formal education or training about the creation of campus communication cultures. Participants acknowledged having role models who were influential in the development of their personal leadership styles and how, in turn, their leadership styles now impact campus culture and the development of open communication campus environments. The culture of a school impacts every aspect of a campus, the way people talk, how they act, if people prefer to work alone or in teams, and generally speaking, how staff feel about working on a particular campus (Deal & Peterson, 2016). When discussing the impact

of their leadership and communication styles on their particular campuses, participants identified characteristics of a principal that consequently shape the overall culture of a campus: (a) willing to share, listen, and seek to understand; (b) be trusting, caring, and fair; and (c) be open to feedback and willing to make changes. The included terms and semantic relationships that make up the theme of principals' leadership style impact on campus communication are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Principals Leadership Style Impact on Campus Communication Culture Theme

Included Terms	Relationship	Theme
Willing to share, listen and seek to understand Be trusting, caring and fair Open to feedback and willing to make changes	is a kind of	Principals' leadership style impact on campus communication culture

As described by Deal and Peterson (1999), the principal's ability to provide leadership for the development of a collaborative school culture affects every characteristic of the organization, including the instructional strategies used by teachers, professional development programs, and the overall emphasis placed on learning. In discussing the impact of his leadership style on campus culture, Luis agreed with Donaldson (2013), stating that being a good listener is a great characteristic of a leader and a characteristic he tries to practice. Thus, Luis believes a principals' leadership style sets the tone for the entire campus, therefore establishing the foundation for the culture of a school:

I've always said that I don't have the answers to everything. Most of the teachers here have their Master's degree, so we have the same level of education. So you have to be a good listener to be able to hear their ideas, see where they are coming from, and how they may be looking at things from a different perspective.

Luis explained how important it is to listen to different perspectives. On many occasions, he has felt humbled and admitted to staff when he made a mistake or when his idea proved not to be the best suggestion for a particular situation. As supported by Afshari, Abu Bakar, Luan, and Siraj (2012), taking this approach has suggested to staff he is willing to put his thoughts aside and remain open to the interpretations and suggestions of others.

In a similar focus, and in terms of the impact of his leadership style on the entire campus culture, Alex described that if he withheld information, avoided parents, ignored emails, and behaved in an irritated manner toward parents on campus, staff would follow his lead and behave in a similar manner:

I just think as principals we are the mirror for the school and how we communicate.... I have learned that if we don't communicate the parents make it up on their own. If we don't give them the facts they try to fill in the blanks that they have and sometimes they fill them in incorrectly.

As part of his leadership style, Alex tries to be as transparent as possible and offers staff and community members explanations as to why certain decisions and actions take place. He agrees with Dubin (2006) that offering factual information up front has deterred the campus community from communicating false statements, thus creating less tension on campus. Staff, parents and community members know he will tell them the truth, regardless of whether or not they agree with the decision made.

In a different sphere and as part of her leadership style, Ann states she is responsible for insuring parents, community, students, and teachers feel she is approachable, willing to listen, and share information, when appropriate:

I think if you give all stakeholders the reason why you do the things that you do you have a lot of respect and a lot of buy in. I think it's the key to having a successful school climate, because people understand what is going on, when it's going on and most importantly, why it is going on.

Ann acknowledges how her leadership style influences the culture of the school, which aligns with Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), who believe leadership behaviors have direct and indirect results on the mentality and behavior of followers, therefore impacting overall organizational culture and performance. Her style entails making an effort to listen to all stakeholders while taking each communication opportunity to reiterate the overall goals for the school. She mentioned the struggle with allowing individuals to express themselves, while maintaining order and focus on the main objectives of the campus. She is open to listening to the ideas of others, but stands firm on doing what is best for the students.

Similarly, Mary spoke of how important it is to be viewed as approachable and someone willing to listen during comfortable or difficult conversations. This correlates with Schein (1992), who established how the basic assumptions made by individuals make up the highest level of culture within an organization. For example, Mary expects that parents assume they are welcome to communicate any concerns with her or the leadership team:

Throughout the year I send reminders to parents that we are here to help and if you have concerns please reach out to us so we can address your concerns. The same with teachers, again listening and taking sincere interest in them so they come in and share whatever it is.

Mary explained the comprehensive efforts made to allow each person an opportunity to share their opinion and feel empowered to speak up. She knows it is impossible to please everyone. Although she may not be able to act on a shared idea or make the requested changes, she feels that taking the time to listen keeps lines of communication open.

In the same vein, Lisa felt a principals' leadership style can have a positive or negative impact on the campus as a whole. She mentioned how difficult it can be for a leader with a particular type of leadership and communication style to have valuable conversation with a great number of personalities and different styles of expression. As established by Aldhaheri (2017), a

principal's leadership style may work for some of the group but may not be appreciated by others. She also mentioned that besides listening, sharing of information is also very important:

I think being as transparent as you can without obviously interfering with any kind of confidentiality with a staff member, with a student, or with parents goes a long way. So being as transparent as possible, and making sure you answer the question "why," if somebody is asking.

She commented on how it is necessary for a principal to adjust, based on the level of communication that presents itself. She agreed with Baron, Rouleau, Gregoire, and Baron (2018), that in some cases, her usual strategies are effective and in other cases she has to quickly change her style based on the individual or group she is communicating with. She holds herself responsible for the flexibility it takes to create win-win situations.

In the midst of various interview discussions, participants consistently mentioned creating a sense of trust, openness, and fairness as campus cultural factors impacted by the principals' leadership style. For example, Amy touched on the leadership trait of trust in her role as principal:

It is not easy, but sometimes just being human and showing your staff that you make mistakes too and being a servant leader, that is what it comes down to. Just being someone staff can trust and come to whenever they need something or if they are going through something.

As described by Dubin (2006), the culture of a school sets the tone for the perception of trust and staff's approach to resolving problems and creating respectful working relationships. Amy reinforces this ideology when she discussed the effect of building personal relationships with staff. In accordance with Ozmen (2018), she described how getting to know employees on a more personal level builds trust and the openness to discuss any professional and personal concerns. She indicated that staff members build personal working relationships with her because she is perceived as fair and trustworthy. She stated that, as mentioned by Baron,

Rouleau, & Gregoire (2018), being fair means not picking favorites, being consistent, and having a true interest in the development of all staff members.

A similar focus was shared by Craig, who recalled the leadership philosophies experienced administrators shared with him when he was a novice principal. He admits not fully understanding some of those philosophies early in his career, but at this point of his career, he has a deep appreciation for the philosophies shared with him:

The campus takes on the personality of the leader and the more I'm in this, I see that. If we model kindness we get kindness from everybody. Actions speak louder than words. If your actions are not in alignment with what you say is important then your communication will fail.

Craig disclosed that as he leaves campus at the end of each day, he reflects on whether or not his actions supported his philosophy of creating a campus culture founded on trust, respect, and kindness. He echoes what has been established by Koopmans and Cunningham (2007), that the pressure he is under to create and maintain the established campus culture is immense. He added, "Academic results matter, but they are secondary. Creating a culture of trust, kindness and respect is first."

Mary is in agreement with Craig. She adds the personalities of principals and teachers, along with unique social dynamics of a particular campus, create the cultural framework of a school that will either enhance or hinder the learning environment, which aligns with Rafferty (2003), who argues that campus improvement and success is related to what teachers do and think. The way in which the principal creates dialogue with teachers will shape the communication culture of a campus. She mentions the effects of her leadership style and responsibility on establishing a campus culture founded on fairness and respect:

We're going to treat everybody with fairness and respect and I want everyone to feel like they are on the same team and they are part of the family.

As mentioned by Walker and Qian (2006), Mary states how important it is for her to set the example that all parents, even difficult parents, must be treated with kindness and respect. She feels that principals are obligated to be fair and objective, while protecting campus staff from any disrespectful behavior aimed at them.

On the other hand, Jane focused on trust established among staff being dependent on leadership characteristics. She further explained how the leadership trait of trust has a strong influence on campus culture, and this is supported by O'Reilly & Anderson (1980). She recognized the importance of being trusted by employees in moments of celebration and moments when she must deliver constructive criticism:

Over time you develop and teachers learn to trust you and how you are going to respond. I hold people accountable. I'm not personally attacking them, and I think people can trust that.

Jane mentions that although she has high expectations and holds staff accountable, "a lot of times employees come to me with personal stuff because of that trust." She feels that holding staff accountable can be accomplished in a fair and trusting manner, as identified by Hirschman (2008).

In confirmation with Jane, Lisa sees the value of a trusting leadership style in learning about employee concerns. She explained how a leadership style that creates trust impacts the culture of recognizing and resolving employee concerns efficiently and effectively. She understands her leadership style has an impact on the confidence staff has in approaching her with concerns:

I would expect, and I feel like I have built a campus where if my team leaders and their grade levels have a concern I feel like I have built a fairly trusting environment with team leaders and my staff, where if there is a concern in the grade level that the team leader will come to me.

Lisa discussed the time and energy saved by establishing a campus culture focused on trust and immediate resolution of staff concerns. In addition to the impact the leadership traits of trust and fairness have on campus culture, participants identified the important influence a leadership style of being open to feedback and open to making changes may have on a campus. In his landmark research, Andrews (1965) noted a positive correlation between positive learning environments and the overall openness or “closedness” of a school.

Being open to feedback and willing to make changes are other leadership qualities principals consistently viewed as attributes that had a direct impact on campus communication culture. A study conducted by The National Association of Elementary School Principals found that most of the feedback principals receive comes from central office personnel, “although respondents [principals] reported a growing trend to involve parents, teachers, and principals themselves” (Goldring, Cravens, & Murphy, 2009, p. 22) in evaluation and feedback practices.

For example, Jane describes the importance of honest feedback for the development of her professional growth. She wants to know how her leadership style is perceived by others:

It’s really important to me that everybody feels like they have some stake in some aspect of the school. I want honest feedback. I don’t want “yes” people. I want feedback about what worked, didn’t work and what could have been done better. You have to be willing to take the constructive criticism with the accolades.

Additionally, Craig spoke of the vulnerability involved in requesting honest feedback:

If you can’t be vulnerable as a principal you can’t grow, because it’s a humbling job. Parents may say, “You stink as a principal.” You can’t get angry and tell them they can’t come back to your campus, or you take the feedback and say, “Okay, how can I reflect on that and grow?”

Craig acknowledged that getting past the fear of feedback and using it as a tool for growth and development comes with time. A novice principal spends so much time focused on the daily management of constant change and, as identified by Day (2000), may be too

uncomfortable to request feedback. He stated that feedback may not be a top priority for a new principal. On the other hand, Mary, a more seasoned principal, is also at a point in her career where she views feedback as an opportunity for development:

I'm focused on growth, so I guess when someone comes to me I am always thinking, "What could I have done differently?" Even if it is not about me, I think, "What should I have done differently?"

Mary also mentioned her mentality regarding feedback is very different now than it was when she was a first year principal. She stated, "It was survival then, not that I don't try to survive now, but then survival was the focus." The request for feedback seems to be a sensitive topic among principals. For example, Luis recognizes not all principals are comfortable with his practices:

I have encouraged my staff to push back, and some people outside our campus have seen that and think it is wrong, "How dare teachers question you!" or "How dare teachers push back on an idea you have!"

Therefore, Luis continues to encourage feedback and opinions from his staff, as encouraged by Bednarz (2012). He views these leadership practices as tools that constantly help enhance the way the entire campus functions.

However, based on Jane's perception, becoming too comfortable with "good" causes stagnation. She saw the benefit of functioning in a state of "struggle" in order to develop a campus culture of continuous improvement:

Recognizing that good intentions are good starts does not mean that things can't derail and we will have to go another way. I mean at some point you have to slow the train down and change tracks.

Feedback and change seemed to be a constant way of functioning for Jane's campus. As suggested by Keyton (2011), she took advantage of surveys as a way to request feedback

regarding campus plans and initiatives. Surveys were initially used as a form of communication and later developed into a tool used for continuous campus improvement.

The participants agreed that a principals' leadership style has a great impact on campus communication culture. The main influential leadership characteristics uncovered through this thematic analysis were: (a) willing to share, listen, and seek to understand; (b) be trusting, caring and fair; and (c) be open to feedback and willing to make changes. The communication tools selected by each principal differed based on individual leadership and communication styles. Communication tools used at each campus supported the vision of campus communication culture established by the principal. While all participants recognized the need to communicate with campus stakeholders, they each selected particular methods of communication best suited for their unique campuses and communities.

Theme four: Methods of communication. All participants used several tools to communicate effectively with their audiences. As outlined by Cheowsuwan (2016), leaders must be selective in their use of communication strategies in order to meet external and internal communication goals. Participants confirmed that the district did not impose specific rules or practices to be utilized when communicating with stakeholders, but agreed with Euske and Roberts (1987) theory that relational communication increases job satisfaction and worker involvement. Each participant described specific methods of communication and strategies regularly used to communicate with students, parents, teachers, staff, and members of their particular communities. Through thematic analysis, the following methods of communication used by participants emerged from the analysis: (a) electronic communication; (b) social media; (c) phone blasts; and (d) one-on-one conferences. The included terms and semantic relationships that make up the theme of method of communication are shown in Table 4.

According to Hirschman (2008), communication is now multi-sensory where communicating in every manner is possible and interaction and sharing of ideas has become an essential part of human existence. This aligns with Jane's response who discussed how methods of communication she utilizes have changed with modern communication and with her effort to give voice to concerns and interests of staff members. She explained the extents she goes to in order to communicate with stakeholders by whatever method of communication they may be most comfortable with:

I do, of course, your standard emails, newsletters, and faculty meetings. I like to communicate by doing Google surveys and forms; and then you can't underestimate the importance of one-on-one communication.

Table 4

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Method of Communication Theme

Included Terms	Relationship	Domain
Electronic communication	is a kind of	Method of Communication
Social media		
Phone blasts		
One-on-one meetings		

Additionally, Jane commented on the importance of getting to know campus stakeholders and creating a plan to communicate in a manner most useful to them. She realizes some of the people groups she communicated with would prefer to communicate via electronic communication. As Lear, Hodge, and Schulz (2015) suggest, she is attempting to cater to the electronic communication population, while reaching audiences that may not be reliant on electronic communication.

Keyton (2011) describes how specific factors and practices may contribute to communication breakdown in an organization. This is evident when Craig stressed his frustration with emails: "The worst part of my job is emails. I hate it!" He discussed the consumption of

time that goes into reading and responding to emails. He has a set a personal expectation for himself to respond to emails within 24 hours of receipt and keeping up with his own expectation is overwhelming at times. The constant challenge of keeping up with emails motivates him to continuously be on the look-out for other efficient methods of communication. Like most of the participants, he seems most comfortable communicating by newsletter:

I send out a weekly and monthly newsletter to my parents and my staff. I have become big on Twitter. I didn't think I would like it. I just opened a campus Facebook account last year. I have always been hesitant on social media, but there is a lot of power in that because a lot of my parents are millennials and I can connect with them much faster that way.

Similar to all other participants, Craig agreed that daily campus work schedules are not conducive to one-on-one meetings. As described by Harris & Nelson (2008), not all work settings and not all employees are agreeable with one-on-one meetings. Craig explained that one-on-one meetings are saved for topics such as teacher evaluations:

Through T-TESS everybody that is on the full evaluation cycle will get a pre-conference and a post-conference. If they are on a waiver year they will get an end of year conference. We may meet one on one based on my 3 to 5 minute walk-throughs. I typically try to put a time limit on it of 5 minutes.

Particular behaviors, such as failing to make time to listen and keep others informed, have been identified as hampering the interchange of communication and confusing the flow of information (Buchholz, 2001). Relying on his three to five minute classroom walk-throughs, influenced by academic accountability systems for one-on-one interaction with teachers, Craig states he ends up neglecting teachers of grade levels not held to the same standards: "I'm usually in third through fifth and that's probably because that is where the accountability is at, and I, unfortunately, neglect some of the younger grade levels."

Parallel to Craig, Alex also utilizes weekly bulletins and emails to share basic information with staff. He shared how unpredictable schedules make it difficult to schedule one-

on-one meeting time with employees. He makes it a point to meet communication compliance standards as necessary:

Everybody has at least two one-on-one meetings with me per year. I mean most of that is driven by the evaluation system, so some of that is very formal. By nature of that, if teachers are thinking “evaluation” or if it is linked to their evaluation they are not going to be as open with you.

Furthermore, Alex utilizes the face to face method of communication to share important information with staff. He was yet another participant concerned with the lack of one-on-one time he has with teachers and stated, “There are teachers I see in the hall and I think, I haven’t spoken to you other than a surface ‘Hi, good morning,’ or ‘How are you and how is it going?’ kind of thing in a month!” He shared that “red flags” go off when he recognizes he has not had enough one-on-one time with teachers.

Similarly, Jackie is doing twice the work to communicate the same message to staff and parents. She makes every effort to communicate the same information to teachers that she has somehow communicated to parents. As stated by Zhang (2015), she believes over communication is acceptable in this communication era. She doesn’t want teachers to be caught off guard and expects them to have the information necessary to answer any questions parents may have:

Teachers need to know the why behind everything we’re doing. Communication, as far as a weekly bulletin that is very detailed, emails that remind them of things that are happening, and they get my phone blasts that go to parents so if a parent asks them they know because they have that information.

Jackie is one of the few participants who follows up weekly bulletins and emails with “phone blasts” to parents and teachers. As outlined by Hirschman, (2008), Jackie states staff and campus parents are reliant on text messaging, but she tries to add a personal twist to the use of smart phones. She believes it is valuable for parents and staff to hear her voice from time to time

and for Spanish speaking parents to realize they have a fair chance of communicating with administration. She hopes sending messages in English and Spanish creates a connection between administration and Spanish speaking parents and influences their perception of procedural fairness on campus, which is supported by Carnevale's (1993) research that, if individuals perceive a situation as fair, dissatisfaction, even under unfavorable circumstances, may be reduced.

On the other hand, Amy utilizes social media to communicate with different groups of people. She recognizes the advantages of the use of social media, but remains concerned that sharing of knowledge and information does not occur in "real time" because she has to pause and reflect before posting most information. She said, "We have Twitter and Facebook accounts, but then I want to post things on there and then think, "Wait no, I haven't talked to my staff about this, don't post it yet!" Amy's most consistent method of communication is her newsletter. She only uses email and text messages when it is necessary to update any information shared in the weekly newsletter. She concludes by stating that a principal can never over communicate and that it is best to use several methods of communication and see what "sticks."

Similar to other participants, Amy's main reasoning for meeting one on one with teachers is evaluations:

With T-TESS it has been three times a year. So it is the beginning of the year when we do goal setting, the middle of the year to do a check in and then at the end of the year when we have summative evaluation. And then sparingly, as needed.

Amy also meets one on one with half of her staff to complete a pre and post conference with those employees scheduled for evaluations. She worries one-on-one meetings are not held with members of her staff not being observed and evaluated. She admits to the inability to maintain a schedule for one-on-one meetings with staff members not scheduled for evaluation.

Research literature not only recognizes the value of administrator-teacher communication, but also focuses on the responsibility to maintain open lines of communication regarding campus decisions and the impact they may have on the well-being of students and employees (Glover, 2007). For example, Mary was the only participant that, in addition to eblasts, Facebook, and phone calls, still sends hard copies of information home with students. She still uses paper copies because she is afraid some parents may not obtain necessary information if they do not have an updated email address in the system. As with other participants, the evaluation process drives her one-on-one time with teachers.

I think the new T-TESS program, one, it lends itself to lots of conference. So a goal setting conference, a pre-conference, a post-conference, and an end of year summative. So, not necessarily scheduled one on one, outside of that, unless I really need to.

Participants noted one-on-one meetings are a key factor in successful coaching and resolution of concerns. Participants also agreed formal or informal one-on-one communication with staff is paramount yet, due to time constraints, principals utilized all other methods of communication and saved one-on-one meeting times for very specific circumstances, such as teacher evaluations. In agreement with Cope-Kasten (2013), they acknowledged that the benefit of face to face meetings cannot be matched with any other communication method. This consistent message of meeting one on one primarily for evaluation purposes led me to further analyze other reasons why principals have one-on-one communication with teachers. Considering that one-on-one meeting time is a high commodity, I wondered what other topics or circumstances call for one-on-one meetings between administrator and staff.

Theme five: One-on-one communication topics. Another communication characteristic identified by participants in this study was the use of one-on-one communication with teachers in discussing particular topics. DuFour and Eaker (2006) characterize intentional communication

with teachers as holding advantages such as increased efficacy, higher morale, greater job satisfaction, and greater retention rates for school districts. In most cases, the issue at hand is the driver for the utilization of the one-on-one communication method. From an analysis of transcripts, specific topics and particular circumstances that called for one-on-one communication with teachers were discovered. As a result, one-on-one communication topic emerged as a theme. Through the thematic analysis, the following examples of topics addressed one-on-one communication: (a) parent concerns; (b) instruction; and (c) coaching and mentoring. The included terms and semantic relationships that make up the theme of one-on-one communication topics are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the One-on-one Communication Topics Theme

Included Terms	Relationship	Theme
Parent concerns Instruction Coaching and mentoring	are kinds of	One-on-one Topics

The first example of a topic resolved through one-on-one communication came from Ann's account of immediate attention given to parent concerns. Apart from meeting one on one for evaluations and facilitating face-to-face meetings with groups of teachers, Ann spoke of the need to make time for one-on-one communication to address any safety or parent concerns. The objective of this responsive one-on-one interaction was for the administrator to gather all the facts pertaining to a parental concern, rather than merely having an open dialogue conversation.

Similarly, Sue shared that the main reason, apart from evaluations, she uses one-on-one communication is for instruction purposes:

It will be to address something I've seen in the classroom. Like today, I need to visit a couple of teachers because I have concerns with their preparedness for the lesson.

In describing the need to discuss instructional practices, Sue mentioned she restates her expectations during these meetings and hopes this type of one-on-one communication is not viewed as punitive by teachers. She hopes the one-on-one conversation causes the staff member to reflect without feeling “picked on” or singled out, as mentioned by Robbins & Alvy (2004).

In the same vein, Luis described mentoring as his main purpose for one-on-one communication outside of the evaluation process:

We tend to have a very young staff so a lot of times it is coaching. It is, “Hey, I noticed this interaction. Is that the right approach?” or, “Here is a better way of handling it,” or when we have a parent conference, “You know, you made this comment and here is how that parent may have taken it.”

He discussed the numerous opportunities for face-to-face communication during group meetings. He felt coaching and mentoring conversations were not appropriate for group conversation and were better had during one-on-one communication with teachers. He concluded by stating he wished he had more time for one-on-one communication with staff, admitting this type of communication has an impact on how employees feel, what they share, and what they value. According to Robbins and Alvy (2004), principals must become visionary leaders with the ability to help students and teachers feel like they are a true priority to those in school leadership roles. Like Luis, Jane offers personal support and mentoring through one-on-one communication. On her campus, one-on-one communication is saved for more personal and sensitive topics:

It seems like my one-on-one meetings are how can I support them regarding their family or personal life, or a need beyond school. Otherwise, I feel like a lot of times I meet with teachers one on one, more often than not, because they are struggling with something or want help, or want support, or advice with a difficult student or difficult parent.

Throughout her interview, Jane commented on her comfort level with engaging in personal conversations with staff. She believes personal connections have strengthened the professional relationships she has developed with teachers.

Having one-on-one discussions regarding parent concerns seemed to be a priority. Parent concerns involved outside family factors or campus processes. Outside of discussing evaluations, Amy focuses on mentoring and parent concerns in her one-on-one communication with teachers:

With new teachers, since I had so many, it is to share what I observed and try to give them some positive feedback. If there is a parent concern, I get a parent email. I always like to, as much as possible, bring in the teacher first and get their side like, “Hey this parent called. Can you just kind of give me a background on it? Do you know why,” kind of thing.

From the topics of one-on-one communication theme, topics outside of the evaluation process principals discuss during one-on-one communication time with teachers were identified. Principals place a high value on one-on-one communication, even if it has to occur in five-minute conversations. In line with Kouali and Pashiardis’ (2015) research, the participants in this study all felt that time constraints and campus schedules were not conducive to one-on-one communication with staff. This theme reflected the personal connections principals feel obligated to have with teachers while acknowledging leadership, academic, and instructional responsibilities imposed by district expectations and state regulations remain the primary reason for communication with staff.

Summary

This chapter revealed the results of the study’s data analysis performed through the use of a qualitative interpretive approach with qualitative methods for analysis. Participants’ own words were used to identify semantic relationships, including terms and themes. As a result, five main themes were identified that provided insights into participants and captured their perspectives and experiences with communication. The findings also helped answer the following research questions that guided this study: (a) What are elementary school leaders’ perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments;

and (b) How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture? The study summary, recommendations, and conclusions are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine meanings attached to open communication and how these meanings are translated into campus communication culture. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are elementary school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments?
2. How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture?

I sought to acquire a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives by having them describe the details of their experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments, and how their perspectives may have an impact on campus communication culture. Data analysis indicated the principals interviewed for this study experienced many of the challenges identified in the research literature. This chapter first contains a summary of the research. The second section is an explication of the findings, which are organized thematically, followed by a discussion of the research questions. The chapter ends with recommendations for education agencies, universities and school districts and a set of conclusions.

Research Summary

The participants included 10 elementary school principals. I examined the perspectives of these principals so that future and novice principals might benefit from those who have experience with creating campus communication environments. This research provided a better understanding of academic and professional development components of public school administration leadership initiatives. Furthermore, the participants' perspectives enabled me to

identify specific leadership characteristics and practices that principals said were needed in the development of campus communication cultures.

Existing research has indicated that school principals encounter challenges based on the scope of their role that prevent them from focusing on communication with teachers and other stakeholders (Carr, 2007). These challenges originate from sources such as inadequate support and mentoring, insufficient skill preparation, and the overall scope of the role (Halawah, 2005). However, scholarly literature on ways school leaders can create open communication and engage employees in sharing information and accomplishing organizational goals is limited (Ahghar, 2008). Therefore, to address the gap in the research, I focused on exploring the experiences of current school principals to gain their perspectives and provide a point of reference for aspiring and novice school principals.

I used participant interviews to capture the information needed to develop insights into the perspectives of school principals. An interpretive, qualitative analysis of the data allowed me to describe the meaning of participant perspectives in their own words. I discovered that participant discussions about their experiences provided me with information to help identify challenges to communication and reveal insights into how principals may overcome those challenges. I used the knowledge gained from the interviews to develop suggestions for potential changes that can be made by education agencies, university administrator academic programs, and school district practices. These suggestions are included in the study recommendations section of this chapter.

Findings and Interpretations

I begin this section with a discussion of school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and how findings generated by this research align with the

literature. I then discuss the five key findings related to the following themes: (a) challenges related to the scope of the role; (b) having mentors; (c) principals leadership style impact on campus communication culture; (d) methods of communication; and (e) one-on-one communication topics.

Communication. The individuals in this study had different ways of defining and facilitating open communication. Hirschman (2008) described the open communication climate as an environment in which employees receive information from a trusted source and have voice in what is important to them. Although every participant agreed open communication was an essential part of their role, their descriptions of open communication differed. For example, remarks such as, “open communication means that you can walk into my office at any time and ask questions without having to make an appointment”; “it means there aren’t any secrets and you are as transparent as possible”; “symbolically it means that it’s a give and take. I will listen to you, and you will listen to me then we meet in the middle”; and “open communication to me, when I hear that term I think, Scary” indicated the participants’ different views pertaining to the meaning of open communication.

Three of the participants described open communication as literally having an “open door.” Responses of three other participants were in alignment with literature describing open communication as trusting and transparent (Harris & Nelson, 2008). Smith (1989) emphasizes the importance of open communication among work groups. He defines it as a working environment in which employees feel safe and confident about being open and honest and are encouraged to contribute ideas at every level of the organization.

Two of the participants described open communication as two-way communication. One participant viewed being open to feedback as open communication while another viewed open

communication as scary, and commented: “You never know what you are going to get with open communication.” Perception has an impact on communication and how different people construe the same message, how individuals develop stereotypes, and what happens when people develop their own understanding of events (DeVito, 2009). The data suggests that the difficulty in identifying and understanding open communication may contribute to challenges faced by principals in the development of open communication environments.

By analyzing the interview data and creating themes, I developed five major findings: First, the participants consistently described challenges experienced, based on the scope of their role as principal. Second, the participants spoke about the importance of having mentors, followed by their understanding of how a principals’ leadership style may impact campus communication culture, and their identification of methods of communication, and concluding with identification of topics constituting the need for one-on-one communication with teachers.

Finding #1: Challenges. The individuals in this study experienced challenges related to the scope of their role, the number of audiences they were charged to communicate with, and the lack of focus pertaining to this part of their role in academic preparation programs and professional development opportunities. According to Williams and Szal (2011), there is a concern that after meeting educational and certification requirements, novice administrators do not feel well-prepared and are overwhelmed by the pace and expectations of the job. Padilla & Perez (2003) described challenges faced by principals and the unrealistic expectations of the role. The participants were aware of the challenges that existed for principals, as is evidenced with comments such as: “Your to-do list can get very long”; “There is a massive amount of work that goes into this role”; “It’s hard to focus on all the pieces and the communication piece when you

are just trying to keep your head above water”; and “Principals don’t know what they are walking in to or what the climate of the school is and that can be very challenging.”

The mindset of doing whatever it takes to lead a successful campus can also have an impact on the personal lives of these individuals. For example, one participant stated, “You can burn out quickly, and figuring out a balance got me when I didn’t feel like I was being a good father or husband because I was married to my work.” Another participant added, “My teachers know that I will even make time to talk with them in the evenings and on weekends because it takes that kind of commitment.” These participant’s viewpoints are supported by Protheroe (2006), who notes that years of transformational initiatives and educational reform efforts have changed the elements and complexity of the principal’s role.

Every participant mentioned the challenge associated with the number of stakeholders that must be considered in their communication strategies. For example, participants stated: “I have to be very careful about how and when I get input from my stakeholders, whether it is a parent, staff, or student”; “You have to know everything that is happening on your campus at all times, even though that sounds crazy”; and “I have to meet with and consider input from my curriculum team, leadership team, grade-level chairpersons, my CIC, and PTA members.” Participant responses were in alignment with Griefner (2006b), who stated that the pressures require principals to specialize in instruction, curriculum, and pedagogy, while also leading collaboration with all stakeholders with an interest in the campus goals and objectives.

Participants all mentioned errors made and the learning curve associated with learning how to maintain communication responsibilities. They acknowledged the general lack of formal training related to this topic. Seven participants made it a point to mention that academic preparation programs and internal professional development training do not spend time focused

on this part of the role of principal. Except for a few participants who were part of the same principal preparation program, other participants indicated their programs did not include formal academic studies or training pertaining to communication skills that would be helpful to any new principal. Eight of the 10 also mentioned that until very recently and probably due to the new teacher evaluation system, internal district training and development focused on instructional leadership and did not give much attention to interpersonal communication or the development of campus communication cultures. Participants stated: “Most of this you learn on the job and you don’t realize how big the task is until after you are already in it”; “I can’t pinpoint anything in my graduate program where we spent a lot of time talking about communication in the way you need to communicate in this world”; and “In professional development they keep the training very formal and this communication thing is personal and we don’t train on the very personal part of our job.” There continues to be debate over what specific form of leadership skills, traits and characteristics are best suited to bring about positive change in the educational environment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Finding #2: Having mentors. The theme of the need for mentors was repeated across all participants’ shared experiences, as is indicated in comments such as: “By spending time working with a principal as an assistant principal, you learn about your leadership style and how you would want to be once you have a school”; “A mentor helps you gain skills and practice”; “I was lucky to have some of the best role models who not only were good role models, but supported my growth as a principal”; and “Find that person that has more practice, and eventually, when you are no longer a novice, then your goal is to mentor someone else.” Although participants were dedicated in confronting obstacles involved with their role, they commented on how informal or chance working relationships with mentors served as the most

important and valuable training tool in their initial stages as administrators. This is also highlighted by Davis et al. (2005), who assert that classroom and traditional graduate programs do not provide the necessary training for an individual to be a highly skilled leader. The Wallace Foundation also encourages deliberate and well-planned mentoring programs that provide novice principals with real-world leadership experiences where they are challenged to become high performing, effective principals.

The participants in this study indicated that mentoring opportunities gained in the initial stages of their development shaped their leadership styles and communication characteristics. They acknowledged that the foundational elements of leadership gained in the beginning stages of their careers have probably had a direct impact on the communication culture of their respective campuses.

Finding #3: Participant leadership styles established the foundation for campus communication cultures. Participants recognized how much influence they had on communication that took place on their campus, stating: “How I communicate impacts the campus tremendously, whether it be the staff or the community”; “Principals are a kind of mirror for the school”; and “The principal sets the tone for the entire campus.” There is extensive research documenting principals’ effects on the operations of a school. Flourishing campus communities and collaboration among teachers are built upon the commitment and actions of leaders (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

As another participant stated: “How I go, my campus goes.” Leaders and particular leadership qualities have a strong influence on the future of campus culture and the possibility of enhanced learning (Bertrand & Schoar, 2003). Along with efforts to work alongside teachers and students, principals must articulate the vision of a campus, develop high expectations, create

communication environments, be good stewards of resources, and always remain focused on supporting instruction and learning (Knapp, Copland, Plecki, & Portin, 2006).

Finding #4: Methods of communication. Different primary and secondary communication tools were utilized to accomplish communication initiatives created by the different leaders. Participants highlighted the importance of “utilizing specific tools and methods to meet campus communication objectives.” They stated: “I have come up with the best ways to communicate with teachers, staff, students and community members”; “Sometimes electronic is the best tool, but some people still like to communicate by phone or prayer messages”; “I’ve had to accept that the only way to reach some of my parents is through social media”; and “Nothing beats sitting and having a conversation with someone.” Community members’ and employees’ perceptions about how safe it is to be open and honest with campus administration also plays a part in shaping campus culture. Even the selection of various methods of communication used by leaders of different campuses impacts the way people interact and the importance imposed on communication between administration and staff (Deal & Peterson, 2016).

Finding #5: One-on-one communication topics. I identified the final theme based on how scarce it was for face-to-face conversations to take place between administrators and teachers. Most face-to-face conversation took place in group meetings, and one-on-one conversation outside of evaluation process was reserved for very particular topics, as shared by participants: “I immediately pull a teacher in if there is an issue related to student safety”; “I will have one-on-one conversations with teachers when I receive any type of complaint from a parent”; “We meet one on one if there is a concern with a student that a parent is upset about”; and “Of course we have to meet one on one if we learn that there will be any type of complaint made against a teacher to central office.” As suggested by Vail (2005), retaining teachers after

their first three years of providing instruction is a serious challenge, and those who reported poor communication relationships with administrators were less motivated to remain in the profession. Strengthening aspiring principals' conflict resolution skills and interpersonal communication skills, as well as assisting with the emotional demands of the job, are key issues in creating effective and successful school principals (Day, 2000). Outside of discussing one-on-one meetings that take place due to the evaluation system, it appeared to be difficult for participants to come up with the number of times per year they had one-on-one conversations with teachers. Two participants admitted that having one-on-one face-to-face conversations with teachers and staff was definitely something they needed to be more thoughtful about.

Answering the Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions: What are elementary school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments and how may school leaders perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture? From the first question, I sought to understand the detailed accounts of the participants' perceptions and experiences; with the second question, I wanted to understand how the perspectives of the participants may impact campus communication culture. To answer each research question, I examined the results of the thematic analysis and key ideas from the participants' perspectives of their experiences. In this section, I discuss how the participants described their perspectives and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments.

Research question 1: What are elementary school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments? Of the 10 participants, all of them described the importance of the

communication aspect part of their role. Participants did not agree on a definition or method of achieving open communication. A description of their experiences included the type of formal and practical training they received about communication, including positive and negative learning experiences. Participants described unique challenges faced by principals in developing open communication environments. The scope of the job, lack of time, and the necessity to communicate with numerous stakeholders were described as main challenges.

Every participant exhibited a strong work ethic, developed creative ways of seeking feedback from all individuals interested in their campus, and implemented unique strategies to meet particular communication needs of their campus. A description of their experiences included formal and practical training they received pertaining to communication. For all participants, mentors served as the main source of preparation and training for this part of their job.

Research question 2: How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture? The participants in this study took strong positions related to their responsibility of developing and maintaining campus communication cultures. Their perspectives about communication shaped their leadership and communication styles, in turn, having an impact on campus culture. Participants recognized their method of communication set the tone and example for all communication that took place on campus, whether it was communication with staff, students, parents, or community members. Participants work long hours in order to meet expectations they set for themselves to serve as the “mirror” or “figurehead” of all their campus stands for. It was apparent that, although participants' perspectives and leadership style served as foundational elements of communication culture,

campus cultures are also heavily influenced by formal regulations and the needs of parents and community members.

Recommendations

As a result of this research I recommend the following approaches to enhance the academic and professional development of public school elementary school principals: (1) collaboration among school districts and university administrator program faculty; (2) evaluation of university administrator program content and revision; (3) school district formal mentoring programs; and (4) professional development related to communication component of school principal.

Recommendation 1: School district leaders and university administrator preparation programs must collaborate and have transparent communication about content included in academic programs. School leaders must advocate for communication style, open communication environments, and campus communication cultures to become part of the content covered in academic programs. School leaders must also request academic programs include the type of coursework needed to prepare administrators to effectively facilitate communication components of the new evaluation tool.

Recommendation 2: University administrator programs must include content that reflects the current role and responsibilities of campus principals. Program developers must take the communication skills required by the new teacher evaluation tool into account. Coursework and training should provide program participants with a deep understanding and the skills necessary for administrators to establish communication cultures vital to retention, team building, and resolution of employee and parent concerns and complaints.

Recommendation 3: School districts should develop formal mentoring programs, connecting novice administrators with seasoned administrators and exposing novice principals to communication strategies and techniques used with staff, students, parents, and community members.

Recommendation 4: My final recommendation is for school districts to develop a mandatory communication-related professional development track for administrators. This professional development track could also focus on open communication environments and the establishment of campus communication cultures. Incorporating this mindset into school district culture from the top down will establish communication, warmth, and competence as a priority of the district.

Future Studies

Due to limited time and resources, the scope of this study focused on capturing the participants' perspectives and their experiences in only a specified number of categories. The remainder of this section suggests areas that were not addressed during the study that should be considered for future research.

Higher education administration preparation programs. One topic that should be studied further is the connection between participation in particular administration preparation programs and the level of understanding and practice related to the development of campus communication cultures. Participants in this study all possessed advanced degrees but, during the interviews, seven of the participants commented that communication in general had not been a part of their administration programs. Three participants attended the same administration preparation program and reported a more advanced level of reflection and understanding pertaining to the communication aspect in their role as principal. They reported having particular

professors or coursework that focused more on communication than the programs discussed by the other participants. Future research could also include university administrator preparation program course content evaluations. Regardless of university of choice, lack of content related to communication is an area of concern that deserves attention.

T-TESS. The interpersonal communication skill level necessary to achieve the collaborative objectives between evaluator and teacher should be assessed. Education service centers and school districts should be made aware of specific communication training that should be provided for evaluators facilitating one-on-one meetings with teachers during T-TESS meetings.

Communication expectations based on community. A third topic that should be considered for future study is gaining a better understanding of parent and community member communication expectations, based on geographic location. Some of the participants of this study described differences in methods of communication and time spent by campus leadership teams on communication due to differences in community demands. Gaining a better understanding of communication expectations could help districts prepare principals as they transition into new communities.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative interpretive study explored the perspectives of elementary school principals to help gain an understanding of principal experiences with communication. The theoretical framework proposed that communication between administrators and teachers could be impacted by different roles holding different levels of authority. However, based on responses of these participants, I found that elements of communication apprehension did not play an important role in principal-teacher communication challenges or successes. A theoretical

framework that should be considered in this type of research is Full Range Leadership Theory, a component of transformational leadership outlined by Greifner (2006b). The focus of this theory is on leadership vision, capacity to grow meaningful working relations with followers, and the leader's skill to persuade others to be enthusiastic about efforts that go beyond their own interests. Shared campus culture benefits from this type of leadership (Barney, 1996), leading to long-term organizational success (Barney, 1996) and open systems of communication (Halawah, 2005). The 10 participants in this study echo the literature, which demonstrates that public school leaders in our current society require a unique set of skills, understanding, and qualities to manage campuses, large groups of staff and interested communities (Halawah, 2005).

Through this research I learned about the challenges and enormous expectations imposed on principals to meet leadership responsibilities, including establishing and maintaining campus communication cultures. I learned that, although developers of the new teacher evaluation tool and district leadership seem to assume principals are equipped to manage the communication demands of their role, principals did not feel adequately prepared for this portion of their job when they stepped into the role of administrator. I also learned that mentoring relationships served as the most valuable source of training pertaining to overcoming the challenges of the role, and helping leadership, communication styles, and effective methods of communication.

Recent decades have seen the highest turnover and lowest teacher satisfaction in years (Ahghar, 2008). Local, state and national governing bodies encourage the enhancement of campus communication efforts as a way to increase teacher engagement, perceptions of school culture, and the right of teachers to have open and honest communication. The participants in this study agreed that one way to enhance teacher (and other employee) satisfaction within their work places is to create open communication climates which value the contributions of all

employees, promote open exchange of ideas, and create positive work environments (Gonzales, 2014). However, as stated in the literature, participants were also concerned that after meeting educational and certification requirements, novice administrators may not be prepared for the overwhelming pace and expectations placed on principals (Williams & Szal, 2011).

References

- Advancing Educational Leadership. (n.d.). *What is advancing educational leadership?* Retrieved from <http://ael.education/>.
- Afshari, M., Bakar, K. A, Luan, W. S., & Siraj, S. (2012). Factors affecting the transformational leadership role of principals in implementing ICT in schools. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11(4), 164-176.
- Ahghar, G. (2008). The role of school organizational climate in occupational stress among secondary school teachers in Tehran. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*, 21, 319-329.
- Allen, R. D., & Keaveny, T. J. (1988). *Contemporary labor relations* (2nd ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- American Educational Research Association. (2006). Standards for reporting on empirical social science research in AERA publications. *Educational Researcher*, 35(6), 33-40. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upmbinaries/13127_Standards_from_AERA.pdf
- Anderson, G. L. (1991). Cognitive politics of principals and teachers: Ideological control in an elementary school. In J. Blase (Ed.), *The politics of life in schools: Power, conflict and cooperation* (pp. 120-138). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Andrews, J. H. M. (1965). School organizational climate: Some validity studies. *Canadian Education and Research Digest*, 5, 317-334.
- Barnard, C. I. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Barnett, K., & McCormick, J. (2004). Leadership and individual principal-teacher relationships in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(3), 406-434.
- Barney, J. B. (1996). Shared organizational culture: Can it be a source of sustained competitive advantage? *Academy of Management Review*, 11(3), 656-665.
- Baron, L., Rouleau, V., Gregoire, S., & Baron, C. (2018). Mindfulness and leadership flexibility. *Journal of Management Development*, 37(2), 165-177.
- Barth, R. S. (2002). The culture builder. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 6-11.
- Beck, L. G., & Murphy, J. (1993). *Understanding the principalship: Metaphorical themes, 1920s-1990s*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Bednarz, T. (2012). Encourage questions to improve open communication. *Contract Management*, 52(11), 14-16.

- Bennis, W. G. (2003). *On becoming a leader: Updated and expanded*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Berlo, D. (1960). *The process of communication: An introduction to theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Rinehart Press.
- Bernstein, C. (1997). A teacher's story of working in a non-supportive environment. *Education*, 118(1), 63-66.
- Bertrand, M., & Schoar, A. (2003). Managing with style: The effect of managers on firm policies. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118, 1169-1208.
- Bloome, D., Carter, S., Christian, B., Otto, S., Shuart-Faris, N., Madrid, S., & Smith, M. (with Goldman, S., & Macbeth, D.). (2009). *On discourse analysis: Studies in language and literacy*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Branch, G. F., Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin, S. G. (2013). Measuring the impact of effective principals. *Education Next*, 13(1), 12-15.
- Brenner, M. E. (2006). Interviewing in educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357-370). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Brewer, D. J. (1996). Career paths and quit decisions: Evidence from teaching. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 14(2), 313-339.
- Brown, M. E., & Trevino, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 595-616.
- Buchholz, R. H. (2001). How to create a positive environment. *Safe Learning*, 1(1), 16-17.
- Carnival, D. G. (1993). Root dynamics of alternative dispute resolution. *Public Administration Review*, 53(5), 455.
- Carney-Hall, K. C. (2008). Managing parent partnerships: Maximizing influence, minimizing interference, and focusing on student success. *New Directions for Student Services*, 122, 3-14.
- Carr, N. (2007). Research and P.R. *American School Board Journal*, 194(8), 44-45.
- Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical*. London, England: Falmer Press.

- Clampitt, P., & Downs, C. (1993). Employee perceptions of the relationship between communication and productivity. *Journal of Business Communications, 30*(1), 5-28.
- Cohen, N. H., & Galbraith, M. W. (1995). Mentoring in the learning society. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education, 66*, 5-14.
- Cordeiro, P. A. (1994). The principal's role in curricular leadership and program development. In L.W. Hughes (Ed.), *The principal as leader* (pp. 161-183). New York, NY: Macmillan College Publishing Company.
- Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crowson, R. L., & Morris, V. C. (1985). Administrative control in large-city school systems: An investigation in Chicago. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 21*(4), 51-70.
- Cunningham, W. G., & Cordeiro, P. A. (2006). *Educational leadership: A problem-based approach* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.
- D'Aprix, R. (2006). Throwing rocks at the corporate rhinoceros: The challenges of employee engagement. In T. L. Gillis (Ed.), *The IABC handbook of organizational communication: A guide to internal communication, public relations, marketing, and leadership* (pp. 227-239). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Daresh, J. C., & Barnett, B.G. (1993, April). *Preservice administrative mentoring: Reflections of the mentors*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Boston, MA.
- Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammong, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals* (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Day, C. (2000). Beyond transformational leadership. *Educational Leadership, 57*(7), 56-59.
- Day, C., Harris, A., & Hadfield, M. (2001). Grounding knowledge of school in 33 stakeholder realities: A multi-perspective study of effective school leaders. *School Leadership and Management, 21*(1), 19-42.

- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Deetz, S. (2001). Conceptual foundations. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research and methods* (pp. 3-46). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Depree, M. (1998) *Leading without power: Finding hope in serving community*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- DeVito J. (2009). *The interpersonal communication book* (12th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Dituri, J. (2004). *Explaining teachers' intentions to aspire to the principalship* (Doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2004). ProQuest Dissertations Abstracts.
- Dubin, A. E. (2006). *Conversations with principals: Issues, values, and politics*. San Francisco: CA: Sage.
- Dukess, L. (2000). *Meeting the leadership challenge*. New York, NY: New Vision for Public Schools Policy and Research.
- Dunbar, C., Rodriguez, D. & Parker, L. (2002). Race, subjectivity, and the interview process. In J. F. Gubriu & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research* (pp. 279-298). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communicates at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (2006). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Ebmeier, H. (2003). How supervision influences teacher efficacy and commitment: An investigation of a path model. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 18(2), 110-141.
- Euske, N. A., & Roberts, K. H. (1987). Evolving perspectives in organization theory: Communication implications. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts, & L. W. Porter (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 41-69). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fink, E., & Resnick, L. B. (2001). Developing principals as instructional leaders. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 82(8), 598-606.

- Firestone, W. A., & Wilson, B. L. (1985). Using bureaucratic and cultural linkages to improve instruction: The principal's contribution. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 21(2), 7-30.
- Fraser, H., & Schalley, A. (2009). Communicating about communication: Intercultural competence as a factor in the success of interdisciplinary collaboration. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 29(1), 135-155.
- Fugate, M., Prussia, G. E., & Kinicki, A. J. (2012). Managing employee withdrawal during organizational change: The role of threat appraisal. *Journal of Management*, 38(3), 890-914.
- Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-20
- Fullan, M., & A. Hargreaves. (1996). *What's worth fighting for in your school*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ganser, T. (2002). *Supporting new teacher mentor programs: Strategies for principals*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Mentoring Association, Ft. Worth, TX.
- Giboney, R. A. (1987). Education of administrators: An American tragedy. *Education Week*, 6(29), 28.
- Glover, E. (2007). Real principals listen. *Educational Leadership*, 65(1), 60-63.
- Goldhaber, G. (1993). *Organizational communication* (6th ed.). Madison, WI: WCB Brown and Benchmark Publishers.
- Goldring, L. (2002). The power of the school culture. *Leadership*, 32(2), 32-35.
- Goldring, E., Cravens, X. C., & Murphy, J. (2009). The evaluation of principals: What and how do states and urban districts assess leadership? *The Elementary School Journal* 110(1), 19-39.
- Golian, L. M. & Galbraith, M. W. (1996). *Effective mentoring programs for professional library development*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Gonzales, M. (2014). Hear what employees are not saying. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 2(4), 119-125.
- Greifner, L. (2006a). Charter schools. *Education Week*, 26(1), 19.
- Greifner, L. (2006b). SREB calls for better principal preparation. *Education Week*, 25(12), 12.

- Gronn, P. (1983). *Rethinking educational administration: T.B. Greenfield and critics*. Deakin University: Deakin University Press.
- Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of collaborative school cultures with student achievement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 89(645), 43-55.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, 29(2), 75-91.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gubrium, J. F., Holstein, J., Marvasti, A. B., & McKinney, K. D. (2012). *The Sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Habegger, S. (2008). The principal's role in successful schools: Creating a positive school culture. *Principal*, 88(1), 42-46.
- Halawah, I. (2005). The relationship between effective communication of high school principal and school climate. *Education*, 126(2), 334-345.
- Hallinger, P. (1992). The evolving role of American principals: From managerial to instructional to transformational leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 30(3), 35-48.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44.
- Hammersley, M. (2003). Recent radical criticism of interview studies: Any implications for the sociology of education? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 24(1), 119-126. doi:10.1080/01425690301906
- Haraway, W. M. (2005). Employee grievance programs: Understanding the nexus between workplace justice, organizational legitimacy and successful organizations. *Public Personnel Management*, 34(4), 329-342.
- Harris, T. E., & Nelson, M. D. (2008). *Applied organizational communication: Theory and practice in a global environment*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Harris, S., Arnold, M., Lowery, S., & Crocker, C. (2000). Deciding to become a principal: What factors motivate or inhibit that decision. *ERS Spectrum*, 18(2), 44-45.
- Hess, F. M., & Kelly, A. P. (2006). Scapegoat, albatross, or what? In J. Hannaway & A. J. Rotherham (Eds). *Collective bargaining in education: Negotiating change in today's schools* (pp. 53-87). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

- Hirschman, C. (2008). Giving voice to employee concerns. *HR Magazine*, 53(8), 50-52.
- Holloway, I. & Wheeler, S. (2010). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare*. Oxford, England: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Jacobsen, P. B., Logsdon, J. D. & Wiegman, R. R. (1973). *The principalship: New perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Johnson, S. M., & Donaldson, M. L. (2006). The effects of collective bargaining on teacher quality. In J. Hannaway & A. J. Rotherham (Eds.), *Collective bargaining in education: Negotiating change in today's schools* (pp. 111-140). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Jones, E., Watson, B., Gardner, J., & Gallois, C. (2006). Organizational communication: Challenges for the new century. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 722-750.
- Julia, C. H., & Rog, E. (2008). Talent management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(7), 743-757.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Karns, G. L. (2005). An update of marketing student perceptions of learning activities: structure, preferences and effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 27(2), 163-171.
- Kellam, S. (2003). Try mentoring: It's an effective tool for employee and company growth. *Indiana Business Magazine*, 47(7), 56.
- Kerchner, C. T. & Douglas, E. D. (1986). Teaching reform and union reform. *Elementary School Journal*, 86(4), 449-470.
- Keyton, J. (2011). *Communication and organizational culture: A key to understanding work experience*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kim, S. (2002). Participative management and job satisfaction: Lessons for management leadership. *Public Administration Review*, 62, 231-41.
- Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. A., Plecki, M. L., & Portin, B. S. (2006). *Leading, learning, and leadership support*. Seattle: University of Washington.
- Koballa, T., & Bradbury, L. (2009). Mentoring in support of science teaching. In A. Collins & N. Gillespie (Eds.), *The continuum of secondary science teacher preparation: Knowledge questions and research recommendations* (pp. 171-187). Boston, MA: Sense Publications.
- Koopmans, S. & Cunningham, E. (2007). May I help you? Developing a culture of customer service. *College and University*, 83(1).

- Kouali, G. & Pashiardis, P. (2015). Time management profiles of Cypriot school principals: A mixed-methods approach. *Elementary Education* 29(4), 492-518.
- Kuh, G. & Whitt, E. J. (1988). *The invisible tapestry: Culture in American colleges and universities*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2005). A review of transformational school leader research: 1996–2005. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4, 177–199.
- Lerner, M. J. (1980). *The belief in a just world: A fundamental delusion*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Linde, C. (1993). *Life stories: The creation of coherence*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Looney, T. L. (2016). *NVIVO in 7 steps: Qualitative data analysis and coding for researchers*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Lunenburg, F.C. & Irby, B. J. (2006). *The principalship: Vision to action*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage.
- Manna, P. (2015). *Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and learning: considerations for State Policy*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Martin, W. J., & Willower, D. J. (1980). The managerial behavior of high school principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 17, 69–90.
- McCabe, D. M. (1997). Alternative dispute resolution and employee voice in nonunion employment: an ethical analysis of organizational due process procedures and mechanisms – the case of the United States. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 6(3), 349-356.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1970). Measures of communication-bound anxiety. *Speech Monographs*, 37, 269-277.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1976). The effects of communication apprehension in the classroom. *Florida Speech Communication Journal*, 4, 1-12.
- McCroskey, J. C. (1977). Oral communication apprehension: A summary of recent theory and research. *Human Communication Research*, 4, 78-96.

- McHatton, P. A., Boyer, N. R., Shaunessy, E., Terry, P. M., & Farmer, J. L. (2010). Principal's perceptions of preparation and practice in gifted and special education content: Are we doing enough? *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 5(1), 1-22.
- Mendels, P. (2012). The effective principal. *Leadership*, 33(1), 54-58.
- Merriam, S. B. & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- MetLife, Inc. (2011). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Teachers, parents and the economy*. Author. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530021.pdf>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitchell, D. E., & Tucker, S. (1992). Leadership as a way of thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 49(5), 30-35.
- Morison, M., & Moir, J. (1998). The role of computer software in the analysis of qualitative data: Efficient clerk, research assistant, or Trojan horse? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 28, 106-116.
- Mumby, D. K., & Stohl, C. (1996). Disciplining organizational communication studies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 10, 50-72.
- Myers, M. D. (2009). *Qualitative research in business & management*. London, England: Sage.
- Myung, J., Loeb, S., & Horng, E. (2011). Tapping the principal pipeline: Identifying talent for future school leadership in the absence of formal succession management programs. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 47(5), 695-727.
- National Association of State Boards of Education. (2012). *Teacher induction: Improving state systems for supporting new teachers*. (NASBE discussion guide). Retrieved from: <http://www.nasbe.org/project/teacher-induction/>
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2010, January). *Who will teach? Experience matters*. Retrieved from: <http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/NCTAF-Who-Will-Teach-Experience-Matters-2010-Report.pdf>
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (n.d.). Alliance for advancing school leadership. Retrieved from <http://npbea.org/about-npbea/>
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425. (2002).

- Notar, G. (1988) Top Notch. Award winning principal preparation programs. *School Administrator*, 45(9), 26-27.
- Ogawa, R. T., & Bossert, S. T. (1995). Leadership as an organizational quality. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 31(2), 224-243.
- O'Reilly, C.A. & Anderson, J.C. (1980). Trust and the communication of performance appraisal information: The effect of feedback on performance and job satisfaction. *Human Communication Research*, 6(4), 290-298.
- Osborne-Lampkin, L. (2008, March). *Exploring grievance arbitration in education*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.
- Padilla, A. M., & Perez, W. (2003). Acculturation, social identity, and social cognition: A new perspective. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25(1), 35-55.
- Pandey, S. K., & Garnett, J. L. (2006). Exploring public sector communication performance: Testing a model and drawing implications. *Public Administration Review*, 66(1), 37-51.
- Pardo-del-Val, M., Martinez-Fuentes, C., & Salvador, R. D. (2012). Participative management and its influence on organizational change. *Management Decision*, 50(10), 1843-1860. doi:10.1108/00251741211279639
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. London, England: Sage.
- Porter, L., & Roberts, K. (1976) Communication in organizations. In M. Dunette (Ed.) *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1553-1589). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally Publishing.
- Preece, J., Rogers, Y., & Sharp, H. (2002). *Interaction design: Beyond human-computer interaction*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Protheroe, N. (2006). The principal's role in supporting new teachers. *Principal*, 86(2), 34-38.
- Putnam, L. L., Phillips, N., & Chapman, P. (1996). Metaphors of communication and organization. In S.R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W.R. Nord (Eds.), *The handbook of organization studies* (pp. 375-408). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rafferty, T. J. (2003). School climate and teacher attitudes toward upward communication in secondary schools. *American Secondary Education*, 31(2), 49-70.
- Richards, L., & Richards, T. (1991). The transformation of qualitative method: Computational paradigms and research processes. In N. G. Fielding & R. M. Lee (Eds.), *Using computers in qualitative research* (pp. 38-53). London, England: Sage.

- Richmond, V. P., Wrench, J. S., & McCroskey, J. C. (2013). *Communication apprehension, avoidance, and effectiveness*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Robbins, P., & Alvy, H.B. (2004). *The new principal's fieldbook: Strategies for success*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Rogers, D. P. (1987). The development of a measure of perceived communication openness. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 24(4), 53-61.
- Ryan, K. D., & Oestreich, D. K. (1991). *Driving fear out of the workplace*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Saphier, J., & King, M. (1985). Good seeds grow in strong cultures. *Educational Leadership*, 42(6), 67-74.
- Sava, S., & Koemer, T. (1998). *Is there a shortage of qualified candidates for openings in the principalship? An exploratory study*. In ERS Report. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schneider, B. (1990). *Organizational climate and culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Service, B., Gulay, E. D., & Kate, T. (2016) Implications of a shadowing mentoring program for aspiring principals. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 5(3), 253-271.
- Shannon, C. E., & Weaver, W. (1949). A mathematical theory of communication. *The Bell System Technical Journal*, 27, 379-423.
- ShIPLEY, D. E. (1974). Defining the scope of grievance arbitration in public education employment contracts. *The University of Chicago Law Review*. 41(4), 814-824.
- Shneiderman, B., & Plaisant, C., (2005). *Designing the user interface —Strategies for effective human-computer interaction* (4th Ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Shockley-Zalabak, P. (2002). Protean places: Teams across time and space. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 30, 231-250.
- Smidts, A., Pruyn, A. T. H., & van Riel, C. B. M. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organizational identification. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 1051-1062.
- Smith, J. M. (1989). Preparing principals for the future: experiential learning in educational administration. *Education*, 109(4), 3-16.

- Smith, P. A., & Shoho, A. R. (2007). Higher education trust, rank and race: A conceptual and empirical analysis. *Innovative Higher Education* 32(3), 125-138.
- Snape, D., & Spencer L. (2003). The foundations of qualitative research. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 1-23). London, England: Sage.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979a). *The ethnographic interview*. Fort Worth, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979b). *Participant observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *The ethnographic interview*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.
- Straka, D. A. (2017). Collaboration in multi-stakeholder, multi-cultural organizational environments. *Issues Informing Science and Information Technology*, 14, 163-175.
- Suter, W. N. (2012). *Introduction to educational research: A critical thinking approach*. Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.
- Tamuz, M. (2001). Learning disabilities for regulators: The perils of organizational learning in the air transportation industry. *Administration and Society*, 33(3), 276-302.
- Texas Education Agency (2016). Chapter 149, commissioner's rules concerning educator standards, subchapter bb, administrator standards. Retrieved from: http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Educator_Evaluation_and_Support_System/Texas_Principal_Evaluation_and_Support_System/
- Uhl, S. C., & Perez-Selles, M. E. (1995). The role of collaboration in school transformation: Two approaches. *Theory Into Practice*, 34(4), 258-264.
- Vail, K. (2005). Climate control: Ten ways to make your schools great places to work and learn. *American School Board Journal*, 192(6), 16-19.
- Vakola, M., & Bouradas, D. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of organizational silence: An empirical investigation. *Employee Relations*, 27(4), 441-458. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/235200611?accountid=7139>
- Villa, R. A.(1992). *Restructuring for caring and effective education: An administrative guide to creating heterogeneous schools*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks.
- Walford, G. (2008). *How to do educational ethnography*. London, England: Tufnell.
- Walker, A., & Qian, H. (2006). Beginning principals: Balancing at the top of the greasy pole. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 44(4), 297-309.

- Wallis, N. C., Yammarino, F. J., & Feyerherm, A. (2011). Individualized leadership: A qualitative study of senior executive leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 182-206.
- Walsham, G. (1993). *Interpreting information systems in organizations*. New York: NY, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(2), Art. 26.
- Williams, H. S. & Szal, D. (2011). Candidates' assessment of a principal preparation program. *Education*, 131(3), 481-485.
- Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. London, England: Sage.
- Woods, A. M. & Weasmer, J. (2004). Maintaining job satisfaction engaging professionals as active participants. *The Clearing House*, 77(3), 118-121.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Appendices

Appendix A
Participant Invitation Letter

Ms. XXXX,

My name is Melissa Gonzales and I am currently a doctoral student working on a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in higher education administration. I have been working toward this goal over the past 3 years and have completed all academic courses, qualifying examinations, proposal defense, and other requirements. The last step for completion of the degree is to write and defend a dissertation; thus, I am hoping to conduct a face-to-face interview with you as part of the research.

I decided to conduct a qualitative research dissertation because I want to explore principals' views and actions relating to open communication on K-12 campus environments. More specifically, this study seeks to examine meanings attached to open communication and how these meanings are translated into campus communication culture.

As you may already be aware, communication practices within organizations influence employee satisfaction, productivity, relationships and the overall organizational success. Yet, there is little written on ways in which school leaders create open communication and engage with their employees in sharing information and accomplishing organizational goals.

Adding to the literature has motivated me to interview current elementary school principals such as yourself who have experience with campus communication practices. By studying the perspectives and experiences of school principals, this research has the potential to impact higher education principal certification programs and school district leadership training. In my hope to add to current literature pertaining to campus communication culture, my aim is to learn from and provide your insight and viewpoints.

Please let me know if you would be able to participate in this study. My contact information is below.

Respectfully,

Melissa Gonzales (XXX) XXX-XXXX
Email: XXXX

Appendix B

Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study Form SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

Understanding Communication Within a School District From the Insiders' Point of View

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study, which explores school leaders' views and actions relating to open communication with school staff and constituents. This study seeks to examine ways in which school leaders develop communicative environments with their employees. By understanding communication from the perspective of school leaders and by engaging in dialogue with leaders about the role of communication, this researcher seeks to provide insights that district and school leaders can utilize as they continue working toward school transformation and student achievement.

Background Information:

In a meeting with school administrators, the North East Independent School District (NEISD) superintendent and executive staff emphasized the importance of communication and stated that school transformation starts with open communication practices. This emphasis on communication echoes research literature, which demonstrates that communication practices within organizations influence employee satisfaction, productivity, relationships and the overall organizational climate and organizational success (Osborne-Lampkin, 2008; Ahghar, 2008; Buchholtz, 2001). Osborne-Lampkin (2008), emphasized the importance of open communication, which he defined as a working environment in which employees feel safe and confident about being open and honest, are encouraged to contribute ideas at every level in the organization, and receive the information they need to excel at their jobs.

School leaders play a crucial role in fostering a climate of open communication, necessary for employee satisfaction and organizational success. However, the voices of the leaders are rarely heard in the research literature or in organizational discussions. The goal of this study is to develop this understanding of what school leaders think and experience about communication. Understanding communication from the principal perspective can showcase the district as a learning organization, which cares for its people and their well-being.

Procedures: The study will take place across multiple schools within NEISD. Locations for research will include schools in which the participants work or choose to meet with the researcher. The study will take place over a period of 6 months. Your participation will be determined by your willingness to contribute.

If you decide to take part in this research, you will be asked to share your views and experiences about communication in your role as school leader. You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview conversation with the researcher. The researcher will use an audio recorder to record the interviews.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:

The benefits include having your voice heard, sharing your experience, and contributing to understanding and creating open communication environments within your school and district.

You will also provide invaluable insights and information to research about communication and its impact on people in schools.

The primary risk from this study is the potential for the school district and its employees to be identified. The district may feel the risk of any potentially damaging information from this study becoming public, while employees may fear sharing their perspectives for fear of retaliation.

To minimize these risks, no identifying information will be used for any person or school, unless you explicitly request in writing to include your real name in research reporting. The design of this study focuses on learning from the participants from their points of view. Research reporting will be based on the goal to make visible participant points of view and to learn from them about what is or needs to be done to improve communication within schools. The researcher will have completed research ethics training and will conduct the research from a non-judgmental perspective.

Confidentiality:

All participant names will remain confidential. All identifying information for the school administrators will be removed and pseudonyms will be assigned. Transcripts from the audio recordings will be redacted and the identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms. Audio records, all data, and any other potentially identifiable information will be accessible only to the primary researcher and will not be shared with the school district, or other interested party under any circumstances.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the Principal Investigator, or the NEISD. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Contacts and questions:

The University of the Incarnate Word committee that reviews research on human subjects, the Institutional Review Board will answer any questions about your rights as a research subject (you may contact (210) 805-3036, Office of Research Development. For questions about the research study and your participation you may contact Melissa Gonzales at megonza7@student.uiwtx.edu or (210) 232-5925.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this research study (2) that you have read and understand the information given above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you.

Participant name _____ Participant role _____

Researcher signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Participant Interview Guide

The interview guide is organized around the main topics that will be explored for this research study. Specific questions will be developed in the course of the conversation and/or based on preliminary findings, as is common in qualitative research (Brenner, 2006; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Patton, 2015).

Interview Guide for School Administrators

- Preparation for the administrative position, with probing questions about training in communication and interpersonal skills
- View about the role of the administrator
- Views about an ideal school and work environment
- Communication with employees
- Problem solving through communication
- Challenges in administrative work and communication
- Suggestions and solutions for communication

Research Questions

What are elementary school leaders' perspectives about and experiences with communication and the development of open communication environments?

How may school leaders' perspectives about communication impact campus communication culture?

References

- Brenner, M. E. (2006). Interviewing in educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357-370). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum for AERA.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkman, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed.). London, UK: SAGE.