Optimum Learning for All Students

Implementation of Alberta's 2018 Professional Practice Standards

A Literature Synthesis

Editors

Bonnie Stelmach, University of Alberta

Pamela Adams, University of Lethbridge

Chapter Seven

WHAT IS QUALITY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

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Chapter Authors

Carmen Mombourquette and Leonard Sproule

University of Lethbridge

What is Quality School Leadership?

For this section, our review pursued two overarching questions: Which aspects of educational leadership does contemporary and foundational scholarship associate with quality teaching and optimum learning for all school students? To what extent are those aspects of educational leadership represented in the *Leadership Quality Standard*?

Review Methods

Education and other social science databases were searched for large scale and meta-analytical studies, as well as systematic reviews germane to the question of what and how leadership practices influence the quality of teaching and student learning. A host of criteria guided the search for contemporary literature. Keyword searches with Boolean parameters were used. Because this is an area of study with significant history, we felt it appropriate to extend our search back to 2000. Search terms included "education leadership", "educational leadership", "school leadership", "principalship", "headteacher", and "principal". To locate research regarding the principal's influence on student learning we also searched with the following terms: "school effectiveness", "school outcomes", "school performance", "student learning", "student achievement", "academic achievement", and "academic outcomes". We had limited success by combining these searches with genre-specific terms such as "meta-analysis", "executive summary", "systematic review", "comprehensive review", "large scale", and "state-of-the-art". When available, the related records function of databases was also used to expand subject terms in our searches. Finally, current books and reviews of books on school leadership and school effectiveness were considered.

Combined with the above strategies, we also applied ancestral search strategies, meaning reference lists from large-scale and comprehensive meta-analytical studies created a trail of both historical and contemporary research, and international scholarship. There are

various accounts of successful leadership in the literature, and sometimes there are overlapping categories of practices, actions, and behaviours articulated in seemingly new ways. The trend of leadership-by-adjective models or styles, however, are sometimes "more distinct than the practices they include" (Leithwood, Sun, and Pollock (2017, p. 12). Our aim was to synthesize empirical findings with theoretical and conceptual ideas. To do so, we organized the synthesis using the competencies in the LQS. In practice, principals' responsibilities span a spectrum of administrative, managerial, and leadership functions, including establishing and sustaining external and internal relations with various stakeholders, and being involved in instruction and learning (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017). The nine competencies of the LQS constitute an interdependent and holistic system, informed by the contextual variables and processes of schools and their respective communities. We acknowledge that addressing the competencies individually sets up a false picture of separation.

Fostering Effective Relationships

The quality of relationships among members of the school community constitute and are constituted by climate and culture, which make a difference to students' experiences and learning outcomes. Trust is a central concept that has been examined, and is the bedrock for relationship building. Tschannen-Moran is often cited in this area, but Canadian scholars Kutsyuruba and Walker have contributed substantially to this area (e.g. 2011, 2015, 2016; Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Noonan, 2011).

Trust is widely recognized as a complex, multi-dimensional social construct (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; R. Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998), representative of a dispositional attitude or state of mind developed by individuals and organizations over time, and resulting from experiences and interactions with others (Kwan, 2016). Trust implies a person's willingness to be vulnerable to the influence of another, based

on the belief that the latter possesses the qualities of being honest, reliable, open, concerned, competent, and benevolent (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

International research findings point to the degree to which principals are respected and trusted by the members of their school communities as a defining characteristic of successful schools (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Day et al., 2009; Moos, 2014; Pashiardis & Savvides, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2017; Wang, Gurr, & Drysdale, 2014). Principals can build teacher trust by fostering professional collaboration (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010), providing opportunities to learn (Leithwood, 2012), supporting, buffering, and recognizing individuals (Fancera & Bliss, 2011), forming communities of practice (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008), and promoting responsibility for learning (Leithwood, 2012).

Teachers' sense of trust in principals relates to three key aspects of school culture: academic press, collective teacher efficacy, and teacher professionalism (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2017). Teacher trust in colleagues and principals have been linked to school effectiveness (Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002), positive school climate (Hoy, Hannum, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998), and student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Day et al., 2009; Hoy, Tarter, & Bliss, 1990; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Of the four paths delineated by Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010), trust played a role in each. The emotions path, for example, has been recognized as a powerful influencer of three key dispositions of teachers, namely: teacher trust, collective teacher efficacy and teacher commitment (Leithwood & Mccullough, 2017). Teacher trust in others is also a significant determining factor on student learning (Bolam et al., 2005; Day et al., 2016; Day et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010; MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Sebastian et al., 2017; Wahlstrom & Seashore-Louis, 2008).

The relationship among trust, leadership, and student learning is indirect; however, empirical evidence suggests the learning climate of the school is the only organizational factor linking principal and teacher leadership with student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017). This is where trust comes into play. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) surmised that principals who are reliable elicit trust across time and settings, and are "more likely to earn and maintain the trust of their faculty than those who do not" (p. 70). Research by Robinson et al. (2008) promoted the inductive conceptualization of five dimensions of educational leadership: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. Their conceptualization eschewed traditional task-relationship distinctions between leading through tasks and organization and leading through relationships and people because of an emerging awareness that relationship skills were embedded within all five dimensions. Sun and Leithwood (2015) also recognized that effective principals distinguish their positional, evaluative responsibilities from the collaborative, formative work of eliciting creative expertise from teachers in ways that can influence desired changes.

The *Fostering Effective Relationships* competency also recognizes the potential for conflict within the school community, and the accompanying need for educational leaders to engage in ways that can resolve conflicts and improve working conditions and relationships for all members of the school community. Trust is recognized as an integral aspect of human relationships and, when broken, must be restored through the time and concerted efforts of the principal to communicate and resolve issues in a timely and effective manner (Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Noonan, 2011, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2017). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2017) emphasized that, "the challenge of cultivating high trust environments may be one of the most important tasks facing school leaders in the times in which we live" (p. 170).

Academic optimism is an emerging concept in the literature on effective schools (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). The driving idea behind academic optimism is that collective efficacy (R. Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Woolfolk Hoy, 2012), faculty trust in students and parents (Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998), and academic emphasis (Hoy & Feldman, 1987; Hoy et al., 1990) combine into a unitary element of school culture, ultimately predicting student achievement (Woolfolk Hoy, 2012). Academic optimism is a derivative of research on efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Goddard et al., 2001), positive psychology (Seligman & Peterson, 2003), and school climate and culture (Hoy et al., 1998; W. Hoy et al., 2002; Hoy et al., 1990). For more than thirty years, empirical studies have demonstrated that collective efficacy, faculty trust in clients, and academic emphasis are individually predictive of student achievement. More recent studies confirm when efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis are combined into the latent construct of academic optimism (Mitchell & Tarter, 2017), they are also predictive of student achievement (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Mitchell & Tarter, 2017; Wu, 2013). Further, the only leadership pattern known to have a positive and significant correlation to academic optimism, and the components that blend to support student learning gains, is that of purposefully aligned distributed leadership (Malloy & Leithwood, 2017). As argued by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2017), "few other variables examined by educational researchers come close the level of predictive power of trust on student achievement" (p. 155).

Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning

By virtue of their formal leadership roles, principals' practices are often on display for others to notice. The literature reflects an emerging awareness that as important as it is for school leaders to communicate effectively in the pursuit of organizational goals and priorities, it is imperative that leaders deliberately embed preferred changes within their own

professional practices so that teachers see and experience desired changes in action (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Day & Sammons, 2013; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009).

To model commitment to professional learning, effective educational leaders demonstrate the qualities of self-leadership. Self-leadership refers to the process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform the complex work of school leadership (Neck & Manz, 2010). Australian researchers Drysdale and Gurr (2011) recognized that principals engage in self-leadership when they take responsibility for self-development, reframe and open up their and others' minds to new possibilities, and question their assumptions. In this way, effective school leaders accept that they are ultimately responsible for their own professional learning (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017). Gurr and Drysdale (2015) described how leadership development relies on self-development within a framework of expanded resources and opportunities at system and service levels. Self-leaders are proactive in their own growth and development and dedicated to the pursuit of new ideas. They understand that leadership involves influencing the behaviours in intentional and purposeful ways to bring about change. Understanding and responding to the complex contexts in which their schools exist is an important aspect of this.

The concepts of capacity, and capacity building, are also central to modelling professional learning. Elmore (2008) defined capacity as the "fund of skill and knowledge that the organization can bring to bear in responding to external pressures" (p. 43). Drawn from the research of King and Newmann (2001) and Mitchell and Sackney (2001), capacity building typically refers to a leader's efforts to support advancements in the knowledge, skills, and abilities of others. Results of meta-analytical research by Robinson et al. (2008) found that the principal's support for, and participation in, the professional learning of staff generated the largest effect on the learning outcomes of students. Principals can support the

efforts of teachers to improve teaching and learning by providing and/or arranging for relevant opportunities for staff development and encouraging staff development that is closely linked to the goals of the school (Day et al., 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Robinson, 2010)

Ultimately, to model a commitment to professional learning a principal must be focused on developing capacity in the school Conceptualized as a function of teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions, professional community, program coherence, technical resources, and principal leadership, 'school capacity' was defined by Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) as "the collective power of the full staff to improve student achievement schoolwide" (p. 261). Building school capacity involves continually bolstering of an array of resources to support schools in responding to the dynamic contextual demands of their respective communities.

School capacity-building efforts have traditionally emphasized the development of teachers' pedagogical capacities as a strategy for increasing student learning (Newmann et al., 2000). More recent conceptualizations of school capacity-building recognize the importance of individual learning and organizational learning (King & Newmann, 2001; Louis & Marks, 1998; Newmann et al., 2000). The concept of capacity building has expanded to include items such as: personal, professional, organizational, and community (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011). In this way, efficacious leaders willfully model efforts to establish those conditions capable of fostering teacher learning within communities of practice, engaging teachers in decision-making processes, promoting school-community connections that enhance collective participation, and aligning school goals and priorities with contextually-specific conditions and demands (Lai, 2015).

There is also an emerging awareness of the importance of the professional growth, learning, and development of educational leaders themselves (Gurr, 2017). As noted by

Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011), the characteristics, dispositions, and qualities of effective educational leaders develop over time. Evidence from large scale and international research suggest that a combination of on-the-job learning, formal and informal professional learning, mentoring and sponsorship by significant others, and even serendipity on principals' leadership journeys contribute to principals' effectiveness (Gurr, 2017).

Embodying Visionary Leadership

Vision is widely recognized as a cornerstone of educational leadership; knowing where you are going is central to the success of individuals and organizations (Bush & Glover, 2014; Day et al., 2016; Gurr, 2017; Marzano et al., 2005; Murphy, Elliot, Goldring, & Porter, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008; Seashore Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Southworth, 1993; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Strong values, a sense of moral purpose, and a desire to raise standards for pupils have long been recognized as qualities of effective school leaders. Contemporary literature emphasizes shared, or collective, expressions of visionary leadership in the pursuit of learning for all students.

Most definitions of educational leadership include notions of vision, setting the direction, core values, defining and communicating mission, strategic orientation (Murphy, 2017; Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006) and establishing goals and expectations (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Murphy et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2009; Sun & Leithwood, 2015; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003). Early conceptions of visionary leadership suggested that the complex work of school principals was motivated by the pursuit of their individual visions (Southworth, 1993). A major study of improving schools in England conducted by Barber, Whelan, and Clark (2010) determined that "there are statistically significant empirical and qualitatively robust associations between heads' educational values, qualities, and their strategic actions and improvement in school

conditions leading to improvements in student outcomes" (p. 5). Visionary leaders seek the input of others only after having already developed a preliminary vision of the school in isolation (Sebring et al., 2006).

Contemporary literature is increasingly cognizant that it would be largely inadequate for individual principals to determine the vision, direction, and goals of the school in isolation. It is now widely accepted that, in addition to the directions themselves, the methods and processes by which those directions get determined stand to influence the success of schools (Bush & Glover, 2014; Drysdale & Gurr, 2011, 2017). Effective principals consider the internal organization and the external community as valuable contributors to the vision of schools, and they make a point of communicating the vision with the extended school community on a regular basis (Leithwood, 2012).

Meta-analytical research by Robinson et al. (2008) and Robinson & Gray (2019) identified the development of goals and expectations as one of five key dimensions of effective school leadership. Informed by research traditions in social psychology, goals are deemed important for their ability to establish a sense of purpose and priority in environments where a multitude of tasks can seem equally important and subsequently overwhelming. The clarity of goals focuses attention and effort to enable individuals and groups within an organization to use feedback to regulate their performance. Goal setting is known to exert indirect influence on students by focusing and coordinating the work of teachers and, in some instances, parents. Goal setting also signals priorities to teachers. As argued by Robinson et al. (2008), "Without clear goals, staff effort and initiatives can be dissipated in multiple agendas and conflicting priorities, which, over time, can produce burnout, cynicism, and disengagement" (p. 666).

The role of the contextual, or situational, awareness of school leaders (Marzano et al., 2005) also impacts principals' effectiveness. Importantly, as Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011)

argue, successful school leadership is context *sensitive*, but not context *driven*. Principals of successful schools apply a range of core leadership practices, such as those recognized by a report prepared for The Wallace Foundation by Murphy et al. (2006): provision of appropriate resources, development of enabling systems, delegation of responsibility and accountability, development of consensus and buy-in from staff toward polices and goals, supervision of faculty and committees tasked with identifying staff and resource requirements, supervision of the analysis and development of system requirements required to achieve teaching and learning goals, and encouraging the development of new policies and practices capable of supporting the achievement of goals. These leadership practices are thought to promote success in most contexts, but contemporary research emphasizes the responsibility of educational leaders to refine and adapt their responses to reflect the specific contexts and cultures of their own school communities to optimize opportunities for success (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011; Gurr, 2014; Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011). As noted by Day (2007), successful principals demonstrated the ability to not be overly confined by the contexts in which they work; rather "they actively mediate and moderate within a set of core values and practices which transcend narrowly conceived improvement agendas" (p. 68).

Leading a Learning Community

The *Leading a Learning Community* competency reflects an emerging awareness of educational and societal priorities associated with the rights and needs of diverse populations. Principles of inclusion, belonging, shared responsibility, and collaboration amongst a community of stakeholders inform much of the purpose and rationale of contemporary public education. Accordingly, the indicators associated with the *Leading a Learning Community* competency reflect themes located in educational leadership literature, such as leveraging diversity, anchoring schools in the community, evidence-informed and collaborative decision-making, and optimizing school culture (Hitt & Player, 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

As argued by Murphy et al. (2006), "effective leaders demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the benefits diversity offers the school" (p. 30). Effective principals approach the diversity of people and ideas within school communities as strengths, and model an inclusive mindset by actively demonstrating their commitment to divergent and varying cultures, views, and people (Sebring et al., 2006). Through purposeful, frequent, and ongoing communications with stakeholders throughout the school community, principals exercise multi-directional communications and collaborative decision-making to both inform and achieve the school's collective sense of mission and vision (Murphy et al., 2006).

It is widely recognized that principals can and should establish important bridges between families and the school. Large scale Canadian research conducted by Leithwood (2012) concluded that principals play an important role in helping families connect with community agencies, and in establishing inter-agency collaboration to better meet the needs of all students. Leithwood (2012) found that effective principals engaged parents by designing welcoming and inclusive environments, developing multiple ways to involve parents and caregivers, and supporting teachers' understanding and commitment of the importance of parent and community participation. Research by Sebring et al. (2006) and Murphy et al. (2006) highlighted the importance of school leaders facilitating the faculty's understanding of their students' cultural backgrounds, building trusting relationships with parents, and mobilizing existing community resources to establish partnerships capable of supporting the needs of every student.

Considerable research evidence supports that principals can foster teacher commitment to the needs of individual students through the purposeful application of collaborative decision-making, modification of existing organizational structures, and focus on developing teacher trust (Murphy et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran, 2004, 2014). The intentional sharing of decision making and purposeful building of capacities of those who

may have previously existed as passive followers can exert positive influence on student achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2016).

Principals of learning communities focus on developing working conditions throughout the school that attend to the needs and concerns of everyone in the organization and enable various stakeholders to achieve agreed-upon goals (Murphy et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). The norms and values of schools can be shaped by principals in ways that support positive and professional learning communities. Research by Hulpia, Devos, and Rosseel (2009) found that the presence of authentic professional learning communities, openness, transparency, efficacy, trust, and conflict resolution served to meet the affective needs of teachers and helped maintain their commitment to the aims of the school organization. Fancera and Bliss (2011) found that, out of ten leadership practices studied, protecting teachers' time was the only one with significant effects on student achievement and the collective efficacy of teachers. Further, effective principals are known to recognize and celebrate high-quality teaching and improved student performance through various social incentives and rewards (Leithwood, 2012; Murphy et al., 2006).

Supporting the Application of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Foundational Knowledge

Due to a paucity of large scale and/or meta-analytical evidence of principal behaviour and impacts on Indigenous students' learning outcomes, this section was informed primarily by grey literature at the international, national, and provincial levels. Research on social justice and cultural diversity was also informative.

Canada has committed to a renewed relationship with Indigenous peoples, rooted in the principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2007). As a representation of political commitment, this declaration articulated the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world, including culture, identity, religion, language, health, community, and education. Resultant from this human

rights movement, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, representing the largest class-action lawsuit in Canadian history, informed the development of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC) and subsequent mandate. In June of 2015, the TRC presented its executive summary of findings, including 94 recommendations referred to as *Calls to Action*. In response to the 94 Calls to Action, the Government of Canada continues to advance its efforts in an array of operations. Competency five of the LQS is informed by the intention for the educational community to attend to Calls to Action 62 through 65 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

In a study for *Centre for the Study of Living Standards,* Sharpe, Arsenault, & Lapointe, (2007) reported that, in general, people with higher educational attainment experience lower unemployment, participate at a higher rate in the labour market, stand a higher chance of being employed, and earn more. The report found that a major divide existed between people who finish high school and those who do not, which is relevant when considering the school completion rate for Indigenous students is lower than non-Indigenous students' completion rates. Sharpe et al. (2007) argued that the impact of improving the educational attainment of Indigenous peoples would be two-fold: not only would it significantly contribute to increasing the personal well-being of Indigenous Canadians, but it would address slower labour force growth and lackluster labour productivity growth. A follow-up study by Calver (2015) found little improvement in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people participating in the labor market between 2001 and 2011, asserting that the potential benefits associated with improving Indigenous education is significant, and that "the pursuit of cost-effective strategies to improve Aboriginal education should remain a top priority for policymakers" (p. xv).

In a comprehensive review of 16 *Alberta Initiative for School Improvement* (AISI) projects focused on FNMI education, Gunn, Pomahac, Good Striker, and Tailfeathers (2011)

found that by involving Aboriginal parents, caregivers, and Elders in meaningful ways in the school, and by focusing on Aboriginal language, culture, and history as integral aspects of Canadian history and culture, Indigenous students were more likely to remain in school. Schools created a sense of belonging and enhancing cultural awareness throughout their communities by purposefully increasing communications with and involvement of Indigenous caregivers. Effective schools implemented the use of: Aboriginal liaison officers; cultural events; Elder visits; in-services for school personnel toward First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, language, and culture; and Aboriginal language, history, and culture classes, among other strategies. The study recommended that in order to promote the success of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, schools should offer comprehensive Aboriginal history, language, and culture courses, adopt teaching approaches that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, and create a sense of belonging and cultural pride through mentorship programs, liaison officers, and counseling services (Gunn et al., 2011). Gunn et al. also recognized the grassroots, needs-based nature of these initiatives, noting that key to success is the engagement of stakeholders who are "fiercely committed to the best education for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike" (p. 343).

Kanu's (2002, 2005, 2007, 2011) studies in Manitoba provide important insights. Over the course of a six-year investigation, Kanu examined the rationale and context for integrating Indigenous perspectives in schools, theories of human development, cultural mediators of learning, integration methods, elements of success, challenges to integration, and both students' and teachers' perceptions of infusion. The central purpose behind infusion is to affect the high rates of underachievement and non-completion among Indigenous students. Some of the factors of school failure for Aboriginal students that Kanu identified in the literature include a lack of Aboriginal cultural knowledge in curriculum and among teachers, as well as conflicting culturally embedded styles of interaction between teachers

and students. Kanu found that underlying assumption of infusion is that integrating Aboriginal socialization processes will create connections between students' home cultures and that of the school, thereby motivating them to learn and reducing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. This is part of cultural discontinuity theory, which argues that compatibility between curriculum, teaching and learning processes increases the chances for academic success and, conversely, that a lack of cultural continuity contributes to school failure (Kanu, 2011).

The work of supporting the application of foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit will need to include extensive and ongoing work with teachers, a primary role of how the competencies with the LQS are meant to be viewed within the whole of the standard. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are critical factors in the success of curricular reforms and innovations in teacher practice (Kanu, 2005). In an investigation of Manitoba teachers' perceptions on infusing Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, Kanu (2005) reported some of the issues that teachers considered challenging to meaningfully integrating Indigenous perspectives and content. She documented teachers' lack of knowledge of Indigenous cultures, non-Indigenous teachers' racist attitudes, and incompatibility between school structures and Indigenous cultural values as the greatest challenges to infusion (p. 57). Kanu's findings on teachers' perceptions support the need to work with non-Indigenous teachers to infuse Indigenous perspectives into school curricula while also paying considerable attention to how the work will also impact non-Indigenous students. Internationally, supporting teachers to develop inclusive practices has been fundamental to New Zealand's Te Kotahitanga project, led by Russell Bishop and Mere Berryman. This project is renowned for making an impact on Maori student achievement (Te Tahuho O Te Me Matauranga Ministry of Education, n.d.). In fact, the success of this project inspired an initiative by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, *Following their Voices,*

which has demonstrated improvements for First Nations, Metis and Inuit students (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 2019). Research that was conducted to support the development of *Following their Voices* highlighted the centrality of relationships; Indigenous parents and students who participated in the study emphasized a need to feel included and respected, and to be equal among their non-Indigenous peers (Berryman, … Steeves, 2014). Furthermore, in focus groups with over 70 Indigenous students who participated in that study, racism, unfair treatment, and low expectations were thematic among the concerns that students reported (Stelmach, Kovach, & Steeves, 2017).

The substance of this competency also reflects the tenets of social justice. Appreciating that social justice encompasses a broad range of concepts (Lewis, 2016) that can be understood differently by people in pluralistic societies (Taysum & Gunter, 2008), Furman (2012) recognized that social justice focuses on "the experiences of marginalized groups and inequities in educational opportunities and outcomes" (p. 194). For Theoharis (2007), the leaders of social justice are expected to make issues of race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and other marginalized peoples the core of their "advocacy, leadership, practice, and vision" (p. 223).

To address issues of social justice and marginalization, educational leaders are encouraged to create more inclusive practices within their schools (Lewis, 2016; Ryan, 2006; Shields & Mohan, 2008; Theoharis & Causton, 2014). The landscape of inclusive leadership includes: advocating for inclusion; educating participants; developing critical consciousness; nurturing dialogue; emphasizing the qualities of classroom practices and student learning; adopting inclusive decision- and policy-making strategies; and incorporating whole-school approaches. Furman (2012) posited a nested leadership framework centered on five dimensions for social justice leadership as praxis: personal, interpersonal, communal,

systemic, and ecological. Like social justice leadership, inclusive leadership actively addresses the inequities of the current school system (Lewis, 2016).

This field of literature recognizes inconsistencies between traditional conceptualizations of school leadership, where terms such as "success", "improvement", and "effectiveness" have been associated most closely with the academic achievement of students on external, norm-referenced examinations (Reynolds et al., 2014), and that of inclusion, which prioritizes equity, emancipation, empowerment, and self-determination (Capper & Young, 2014; Lewis, 2016; Rodela & Bertrand, 2018; Theoharis, 2007). For Shields (2014), a social justice education teaches students about the world in which they live, prepares them to become fully participating citizens in that world, and helps them to take proactive positions for justice, equity, dignity, and human rights. As asserted by Shields and Mohan (2008), "Overcoming the dichotomy that separates notions of social justice and academic excellence will not necessarily solve all of our educational or societal problems, but we are convinced it is an essential first step" (p. 298). Moving forward, it may be helpful to view effective educational leadership as inherently inclusive, and inclusive leadership as inherently educative (Ryan, 2006).

Providing Instructional Leadership

Blase and Blase (1998) asserted, "the facilitation of learning and growth should be the number one responsibility of an educational leader" (p. 14). This has now become unquestioned wisdom and perhaps explains why instructional leadership is extensively studied in educational research. In relation to the indicator statements associated with the instructional leadership competency, the literature offers a series of related themes, such as: content knowledge of school leaders; levels of leadership influence; capacity building of teachers; and the sharing and distribution of lea*dership*.

Instructional leadership is founded upon a chain of fundamental assertions. First, the quality of teaching matters most in student learning (Day & Sammons, 2013; Hitt & Tucker, 2016), and secondly, school leaders can directly support the advancement of teachers' professional capacities. Third, advancements in the professional capacities of teachers inform sustained changes in the pedagogical practices of teachers, and, in turn, these informed pedagogical changes exert positive influence on student outcomes (Day et al., 2016). This is perhaps why instructional leadership is widely regarded as the most effective approach leaders can take to exert positive influence on student learning (Barber et al., 2010; Day & Sammons, 2013; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Murphy et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2009; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, et al., 2010).

Stein and Nelson (2003) espoused that effective instructional leaders have an understanding of curriculum content in ways that differ from that of classroom teachers. Contemporary literature continues to reinforce the expectation that school leaders will possess a deep knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to support their ability to develop and monitor the alignment of these fundamental school operations (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2012; Murphy et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2008; Roegman, Perkins-Williams, Maeda, & Greenan, 2018; Stark, McGhee, & Jimerson, 2017).   Large scale research has determined that the planning, coordinating, and evaluation of teaching and curriculum exerted appreciable influence on student learning, and involved essential leadership actions such as collegial discussions of teaching and its impact on student achievement, direct observations of in-class teaching and subsequent provision of feedback, and the systematic monitoring of student progress (Robinson et al., 2009). As argued by Drysdale and Gurr (2017), "Successful school leaders know about good curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and how to help improve teaching and learning in their school" (p. 135).

The instructional leadership literature is also replete with considerations for the levels, or direct-ness, of influence that exist between principal leadership, teacher practice, and student learning. Much of the scholarship reflects an indirect model of instructional leadership, where the actions of the principal are known to influence the practices of classroom teachers, as opposed to the direct model of instructional leadership that attempts to correlate leadership directly to student achievement (Hallinger, 2003, 2005, 2011).

More recent scholarship approaches the concept of instructional leadership more holistically, decentering authority and influence from the principal to a network of others throughout the school community (Brandon, Hollweck, Donlevy, & Whalen, 2018; Day & Sammons, 2013; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2017). Distributive and collaborative instructional leadership practices can provide targeted assistance toward pedagogy, data analysis, or assessment strategies. Iterations of peer coaching and teacher leadership have become increasingly commonplace in schools. Research is finding evidence of indirect leadership influence on student achievement in those instances where some instructional leadership tasks are delegated to informal leadership roles of various designations, such as academic deans, department heads, instructional coaches, and curriculum specialists, among others (Stark et al., 2017).

The principal's analysis and subsequent use of data to support teachers are intended to drive the instructional decision-making of classroom teachers with the expressed purpose of increasing student achievement. Mandinach and Gummer (2013) recognized data as any information, quantitative or qualitative, standardized or informal, formative or summative, that educators use to inform instructional decisions. Marsh (2012) described data utilization as a progression of adaptive stages: access; analysis and action. Each step involved any combination of test-based accountability, and/or dynamic socio-cultural networks of people, technologies, and policies associated with respective school communities (Grissom et al.,

2017). Data literacy can be understood as a component of data literacy that focuses on educators' abilities to recognize sound assessment, evaluation, and communication practices that contribute to student learning and achievement (Roegman et al., 2018). For Roegman et al. (2018), the notion of data leadership is a central component of instructional leadership. Data leadership is defined by two primary components: the principal's data literacy and data use, and the principals' support of teachers' data literacy and data use. Effective instructional leaders encouraged and expected teachers to collaboratively examine data through the organization of various job-embedded opportunities, including departmental meetings, subject- and grade-level teams, professional learning communities, and individual exchanges, among others (Murphy et al., 2006; Roegman et al., 2018).

In addition to collaboration and professional development, the instructional leadership literature also recognizes the role that teacher supervision plays in ensuring that quality teaching and optimum learning opportunities are provided to all students (Blase & Blase, 1998; Brandon et al., 2018; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2017; Timperley, 2011; Zepeda, 2017). In Alberta, the roles associated with teacher supervision and evaluation are reserved solely for the formal leader of school; namely, the principal.

Zepeda's (2017) instructional supervision model is premised on the assumption that teachers should receive opportunities to transfer information, and to construct deeper understanding of their own practices within a capacity-building learning community. The developmental supervision model posited by Glickman et al. (2017) established a continuum of potential supervisory behaviours, including directive control, directive informational, collaborative, and non-directive. Such conceptualizations of teacher supervision support processes of professional reciprocation that are capable of providing differentiated supports to meet the developmental needs of novice and veteran teachers alike (Brandon et al., 2018). Adams, Mombourquette, and Townsend's (in press; Mombourquette & Adams, 2018) work

on instructional supervision extends the collaborative inquiry work of Glickman, bringing teachers, groups of teachers, and school leaders into direct and ongoing conversations, called 'generative dialogues' about teacher driven quests for their own growth as optimizers of student learning.

Developing Leadership Capacity

Leadership theory continues to evolve and generate increasingly inclusive and pluriversal models where principals are no longer perceived as the sole source of leadership in the school (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). Some of the most significant discussions associated with the development of leadership capacities in schools have involved distributive leadership (Bush, 2013; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2007; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) and teacher collaboration (Glazier, Boyd, Bell Hughes, Able, & Mallous, 2017; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015).

Distributed leadership first emerged as a pragmatic tool that allowed educational leaders to share their workload with others. More recently, distributed leadership has been applied to the leadership influence of other actors within the school community (Robinson et al., 2008; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016). Conceptualizations of distributive, delegated, democratic, dispersed, shared, collective, and collaborative leadership each consider the potential associated with multiple sources of leadership throughout the community for promoting and sustaining the success of the school program as evidenced increasing measures associated with student learning (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2003; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Tian et al., 2016).

Meta-analytical research by Tian et al. (2016) defined and studied distributed leadership as a process comprised of organizational and individual scopes, regarding leadership as both a resource and an agency, emerging and co-existing at all levels of the

school community. Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss (2009) recognized distributed leadership as a tool for collecting dispersed expertise and as a means of further cultivating the potential of individuals and organizations. As noted by Harris (2013), distributed leadership implies "actively brokering, facilitating and supporting the leadership of others" (p. 547). All of these factors require professional agency from both the formal and informal leaders of a school (Tian et al., 2016). It is widely accepted that distributed leadership can positively impact student outcomes (Gurr, 2017; Leithwood & Azah, 2016; Malloy & Leithwood, 2017; Tamtik, 2018).

According to Glazier et al. (2017), an essential characteristic of collaboration is its task-related focus, including working and reflecting together for job-related purposes. The results of a meta-analytical review of the teacher collaboration literature indicated that the majority of advantages associated with teacher collaboration are situated at the teacher level: increased motivation, decreased workload, improved sense of morale, greater efficiency, increased communication, improved technological skills, reduced personal isolation, as well as the uptake of increasingly student-centred teaching practices (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Efforts to increase opportunities for teacher collaboration are also known to exert benefits at the organizational level, including a positive influence in the perception that the school climate is more adaptive and supportive of innovation, increasingly attentive to the needs of students, and capable of fostering a professional culture of intellectual inquiry (Moolenaar, Daly, & Sleegers, 2010; Westheimer, 2008). A construct for teacher collaboration posited by Little (1990) distinguished between four different types situated on a continuum ranging from independence to interdependence, including: storytelling and scanning for ideas, aid and assistance, sharing, and joint work.

A systematic literature review of contemporary leadership frameworks by Hitt and Tucker (2016) highlighted several key aspects of shared, collective, and distributed decision-

making that require consideration by educational leaders, such as: building collaborative processes for decision-making, sharing and distributing leadership, tending to and building on diversity, and strengthening and optimizing school culture. In each category, the meta-analysis recognized specific leadership strategies and actions that resulted in improved student learning; its findings generally supported that the overall organizational health and performance of schools improved when leaders shared authority and responsibility and, by so doing, increased leadership ability and agency in others (Murphy et al., 2006). Similarly, in an executive summary of the largest and most extensive study of contemporary educational leadership in England to date, researchers Day et al. (2016) concluded that effective school leaders "improve teaching and learning and thus pupil outcomes indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, teaching practices and through developing teachers' capacities for leadership" (p. 2).

Managing Operations and Resources

While leadership is en vogue, management is still a fundamental aspect of the principalship. The concept of management in education is referred to by many labels, including: managing the teaching and learning programme (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008); organizational path (Leithwood et al., 2010); resourcing strategically (Day & Sammons, 2013; Robinson et al., 2009; Robinson et al., 2008); and managing people, data, and processes (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, et al., 2010) among others. Educational leadership research findings consistently recognize the importance of aligning managerial decisions with the overarching vision and priorities of the organization (Bush & Glover, 2014).

Hitt and Tucker (2016) highlighted the importance of considering the context to maximize organizational functioning, and the strategic acquisition and allocation of resources that align with the mission and vision of the school community. Principals who promoted

improvements in student achievement were able to adapt to context and maximize the strengths of the school community (Leithwood, 2012; Murphy et al., 2006). Leaders approached their organizations from a strengths-based perspective, saw the best in people and situations, and allowed for development and growth in themselves and school stakeholders (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2017). Research by Robinson et al. (2008; Robinson & Gray, 2019) found that strategic resourcing had an appreciable effect on student learning, and addressed the practices necessary for principals to align resources with optimal program delivery. Effective principals carefully allocated available budget to professional learning for teachers and program supports for students in ways that further supported the vision of their schools (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Day and Sammons (2013) recognized the overlap between the previously distinct concepts of leadership, management, and administration, particularly in those schools where principals actively prioritized student care, well-being, and achievement in their daily interactions throughout the school community, and in all of their professional decisions.

Larger Societal Context

Successful leaders have a high degree of sensitivity to the contexts in which they work. Braun, Ball, Maguire, and Hoskins (2011) examined the role of context in shaping policy enactments in schools, conceptualizing a variety of interrelated and overlapping site-based conditions as situated, material, professional, and external dimensions. The four sets of contexts should be seen as constituting a heuristic device, rather than discrete entities, and, according to British researchers Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017), can be applied to "a diversity of educational contexts in order to reveal some of the exigencies that can be brought to bear on school leadership in accordance with the specific setting in question" (p. 175).

As another example, Clarke and O'Donoghue (2017) generated five key elements to guide leadership practice in diverse contexts, including the importance of acknowledging the

complexity of context, being sensitive to context, and being flexible. Ylimaki and Jacobson (2011) also found that successful leadership was context-sensitive, but beyond the local Global, national, and local, contexts need to be considered to fully understand the behaviour of principals, whose work is best thought of as layered and multidimensional. Finally, Lovett, Dempster, and Flückiger (2015) advocated for leaders to focus on learning the contexts of pedagogy (learning about teaching and learning), people (learning about those with whom leaders work), place (leaders learning about the educational context), system (leaders learning about the education system), and self (leaders learning about 'me' the leader).

A review of the international literature by Day and Sammons (2013) confirmed that school leaders improved teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. The ways in which successful leaders applied these leadership practices, rather than the practices themselves, were indicative of their responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they worked. While sensitive to the contexts in which they worked, successful leaders applied contextually sensitive combinations of the core leadership practices articulated within the review. Hitt and Tucker (2016) recognized that school leaders served as connectors for families of their students with necessary community agencies and participated in networks with other school leaders in the broader community to share and discuss ways to meld home, community, and school efforts.

While not exhaustive, this section of our synthesis demonstrates that Alberta's LQS is empirically and theoretically supported by foundational and current literature. The competencies and their accompanying indicator statements capture the appreciable depth, breadth, and complexity of responsibilities entrusted to principals as part of their daily work in schools.