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Understanding the Development of Relational Trust Through Pedagogical Leadership in an Elementary School

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Elementary School

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this practical action research study was to determine how relational trust was developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. The study was set in a Kindergarten to Grade 4 school with approximately 700 students, in the context of a large urban school district in the province of Alberta. The study included 10 participants in Cycle 1 and seven participants in Cycle 2. Participants were self-selected leaders, formal and informal, participating in leadership learning sessions throughout the year. Data were gathered through both cycles which included documents, participant researcher field notes, survey responses, and planning agendas, and summaries from the leadership learning sessions. The following research question framed this research study: How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school? This research study, anchored in social-ecological theory, describes and documents how one principal established relational trust through a pedagogical leadership approach. The findings from Cycle 1 guided the development of the participant researcher's action plan in Cycle 2, which lead to further findings and learnings. Five findings emerged from this study: a) committing to knowing the staff personally and professionally by prioritizing time to engage in diverse forms of communication including ongoing cycles of feedback; b) ensuring staff voices are heard through multiple key actions including decision making processes and protocols; c) honouring learning through dedicating time for professional learning, setting goals, and ensuring all decision making is guided by what it best for student learning; d) honouring transparency by creating a visible principal practice in matters related to accountability, expectations, and decision making; and e) creating a leadership learning model that is open to all teachers to participate in a self-discovery process of who they are as leaders.

Two key conclusions from the research are: to build relational trust, principals need to design a leadership learning model, with a pedagogical leadership approach in mind, in which all teachers are welcome to participate; and relational trust was developed during the professional learning sessions, and led to risk taking and innovation.

Keywords: relational trust, pedagogical leadership, practical action research, principal leadership

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As I reflect on my doctoral study, I want to acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude to so many people who accompanied me on this 6-year journey. I was able to initiate my inquiry because of the ten willing participants, who made a difference in my leadership practice. Thank you for thinking deeply, responding to surveys, participating in leadership learning sessions and reflecting in your visual journals. I am very grateful for your insights, time, and positive energy. Thank you.

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I have met so many amazing people on this journey, including my committee members, Dr. Jim Brandon, Dr. Catherine Chua, and Dr. Barbara Brown, who made me feel like I was their only student. I thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your endless hours. I was inspired by your practice, which impacted my practice. Where will it lead us from here? Thank You.

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Dedication

For Dr. Sharon Friesen whose strong ethic of care was ever present,

during my small journey

and

just when the world needed it most.

And

For my parents, Ross and Beryl, who have always watched over me and still are ……

First Row, First Balcony.

Your strength and authenticity always inspired me.

Good Night Sweethearts, Good Night

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

> Thank you for your leadership. I realize that as I am involved in many things in life, I
>
> encounter many forms of leadership. I have come to realize that it is a big deal to be able
>
> to trust your leader. And I trust. (teacher communication to me, 2017)

One morning, this unexpected email message appeared out of nowhere. As a principal and as a

doctoral student, I am reminded each day of the value of building relational trust, which is one of

the leadership capabilities that Robinson (2011) described as an essential element for effective

leadership in schools. Several educational researchers have identified the value in developing

relational trust as a leader (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Bryk & Schnieder, 2002; Cranston, 2011;

Leithwood, & Louis, 2011; Louis et al., 2016; Murray & McDowell Clark, 2013; Robinson,

2011; Sosik & Dionne; Walker et al., 2010). While research confirms the importance and value

in developing relational trust as one of the hallmarks of successful school leadership (Leithwood

et al., 2020), the ways in which principals undertake creating a culture of relational trust with

their staffs is not yet well understood (Robinson, 2011). Such research would require attending

carefully to the context (Hallinger. 2018). Given the importance of relational trust as a

competency or capability of school leaders within their school context, further research is

required to determine how principals establish a culture of trust. As Robinson (2011) discussed,

there is a relationship between relational trust and teachers' positive attitudes toward innovation

and risk and their professional commitment. With innovation and risk, sustainable improvement

can be developed (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Improvement evolves with practice. There is a

greater opportunity for teachers to practice in trusting and caring environments. As I thought

about Robinson's (2011) definition of relational trust, "the type of trust that is essential for doing

the hard work of improving teaching and learning" (p. 17), I agreed whole–heartedly; but I

continued to ask myself how this might come about. This inquiry explores the development of relational trust through a pedagogical leadership approach.

Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) explained that pedagogical leadership is a subset of the instructional leadership construct and that it is found to be most relevant in the early childhood field.

> This is because instructional leadership has its roots in school improvement, and effective principals in formal school contexts, whereas pedagogical leadership has the 'care' component that is crucial to supporting and promoting positive learning and development in very young children through the provision of quality care and educational programmes. (Moen & Granrusten, 2013, p. 221)

Given the care component in pedagogical leadership, intentionally designing a pedagogical leadership model creates an appropriate context in which to explore relational trust. As Wu (2017) suggested, pedagogical leadership is different from the rest, because its specific focus is on the care component in children's positive learning and outcomes. Sergiovanni (1998) stated that pedagogical leaders develop intellectual capital in their schools by making them into inquiring communities, while professional capital is created through reciprocal responsibilities that add value for teachers and students alike. I value the belief in creating inquiring communities in schools, and I want to support pedagogical leadership by focusing on relational trust, which will impact teacher and leader learning and will enhance the academic achievement, engagement, and well-being of students. As Kutsyuruba et al. (2016) stated, "trust is a fundamental concept in everyday human interactions. As such, trust is important for understanding and mediating the social structures in school organizations, learning organizations, and professional communities" (p. 343).

In the context of school social structures where intellectual and professional capital are developed, this research study focuses on how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership. Bryk and Schneider (2002), in their 3-year longitudinal study, found that leaders build relational trust by modeling and expecting the four qualities on which it is based: respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity. Robinson (2011) identified that school leaders build trust by modeling and expecting these four qualities. Relational trust is one of Robinson's key leadership capabilities and is explored in this inquiry through a pedagogical leadership model, with the understanding that a pedagogical leadership approach highlights a care component (Wu, 2017) while developing intellectual and professional capital (Sergiovanni, 1998). As relational trust is essential for working alongside teachers to improve teacher practice and student learning (Robinson), it is important to investigate and learn how to develop relational trust.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of the context, the background leading to the study, and continues with an outline of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the over-arching research question. I then describe the research design, and the assumptions. I conclude Chapter 1 with an explanation of the significance of my research study, and close with definitions of key terminology and my summary proposal organization.

Context

Alberta's teachers, students, parents, educational leaders, and members of the public have a strong will to ensure all Alberta students have access to quality learning experiences that enable their achievement of the learning outcomes and goals outlined in provincial legislation and programs of study. (Alberta Education, 2016, p. 2)

Alberta Education, the Provincial Ministry of Education in Alberta, released the document, "Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans" (2010). This document was based

on public dialogue with Albertans regarding their experiences of education in the 21st century (Alberta Education, 2010). Albertans voiced their vision for education through specific outcomes, summarized as the three Es of education, Engaged Thinker, Ethical Citizen, and Entrepreneurial Spirit. The Kindergarten to Grade 12 system should strive to help students reach their potential as engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit, endeavor to build engagement and personal excellence in the learning journey, employ literacy and numeracy to build and communicate understanding, and discover, develop, and apply competencies across subject and discipline areas for learning, work, and life (Alberta Education, 2013).

This study takes place in a large urban district in Western Canada. Within the school district, public education is a shared responsibility. The students, families, employees, partners, and communities work together every day to build positive learning environments, because when students succeed, the community benefits. Day-to-day operations are led by a team of superintendents, who are responsible for meeting the expectations of the Board of Trustees.

Each school develops its own culture that represents the unique needs and expectations of students, staff, parents, and school community members. Along with their own school culture, each school reflects a unified culture of inclusion. Elementary schools vary in organization from Kindergarten to Grades 3, 4, 5, or 6, depending on the number of students in the community and the organization of the middle schools or junior high schools. Elementary schools range in size from approximately 250 to approximately 700 students.

The Government of Alberta has developed a document of a Leadership Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2020) "providing a framework to support the professional growth, supervision, and evaluation of all principals" (p. 2), one that is able "to recognize the value of a consistent standard of practice for all principals in the province" (p. 2). The Principal Leadership

Quality Standard is described by the following competencies and indicators: Fostering Effective

Relationships, Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning, Embodying Visionary

Leadership, Leading a Learning Community, Supporting the Application of Foundational

Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, Providing Instructional Leadership, Developing

Leadership Capacity, Managing School Operations and Resources, and Understanding and

Responding to the Larger Societal Context (Alberta Education, 2018). The Principal Leadership

Quality Standard states, "Quality principal leadership occurs when the principal's ongoing

analysis of the context, and the principal's decisions about what leadership knowledge and

abilities apply, result in quality teaching and optimum learning for all students in the school"

(Alberta Education, 2016, p. 3).

Learning Focused Leadership - Student-Centered Leadership

Student centered leadership

In reviewing Robinson's (2011) *Student-Centered Leadership*, it is evident that the

dimensions and capabilities contribute to the effectiveness of leadership. As Robinson stated,

"The ruler I use to judge effectiveness of leadership is impact on the learning of those students

for whom the leader is responsible" (p.18). In 2007, Robinson conducted a meta-analysis of

published research examining the direct or indirect connections between school leadership and

student outcomes. Eleven of the 26 studies were analyzed to derive three leadership capabilities

and five leadership dimensions, their definitions, and effect size. The understanding of the

dimensions and capabilities contributes to the effectiveness of leadership. The capability of

relational trust is the focus of this inquiry, as it functions in understanding the development of

relational trust through pedagogical leadership. Robinson (2011) discussed the determinants of

relational trust and how it is built by modeling and expecting these four qualities: interpersonally

respectful, personal regard for others, competent in role, and personal integrity (Byrk &

Schneider, 2002). Relational trust is a topic worthy of attention.

Pedagogical leadership

Although there are questions and concerns regarding pedagogical leadership, the literature

indicates why pedagogical leadership is worth pursuing. Male and Palaiologou (2015) have

acknowledged their own questions and have also stated a desire to examine the construct of

pedagogical leadership more fully to create an understanding of the dual relationship of

pedagogical leadership with teaching and learning, avoiding an interpretation that is "too

simplistic for the 21st century" (p 215). Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) are also committed to

further exploration of pedagogical leadership. Some of their research identified the reasons and

the possible next steps.

Reasons:

- …found that principals only acted as pedagogical leaders in their spare time between

    other duties, rather than the first priority

- saw pedagogical leadership as having more general conversations about schooling and

    the school's mission, rather than conversations with teachers about teaching and

    learning,

- observed principals as resource teachers instead of pedagogical leaders, when

    attempting to complete classroom visits,

- noted that it was difficult for principals to find time for classroom observations, when

    observations are ad hoc, irregular, and not documented – they do not serve as robust

    prerequisites for pedagogical dialogue and feedback. (p. 866)

Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) stated: "There is no one best pedagogical leadership practice – pedagogical leadership, due to its complexity, is a qualitative concept that can include both the novice and experienced leader" (p. 866). For example, Hallinger (2009) described pedagogical leadership as learning to lead in the center by "stimulating, supervising and monitoring teaching and learning" (p. 9) instead of the leaders-followers relationship. The challenge for principals is to evolve as pedagogical leaders, based on experiences and new knowledge, needs of the school, goals, and results. Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) discussed that understanding how leaders affect others requires detailed studies of both principals' learning and how they act in their daily work. This "calls for more empirical studies related to principals' pedagogical leadership" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p. 866). As a result of reviewing concerns, questions have surfaced that related to the tentativeness of pedagogical leadership, and these have spurred the authors' desire for further research, rather than limiting exploration. The conversation of pedagogical leadership is ongoing, and as Male and Palaiologou (2015) remarked, "this dialogue will never be complete in any discussion of pedagogy……there is no final point of permanent and perfect equilibrium" (p. 228).

"Pedagogical leadership is a work in progress" (Male & Palaiologou, 2015 p. 229). As I review the literature and understand that pedagogical leadership is much more aligned with the contemporary nature of learning and education and continues to be work in progress, I believe that, as a pedagogical leader, it is the right time to further explore the phenomenon of pedagogical leadership and the development of relational trust.

Relational Trust

Developing caring relationships is critical in building relational trust as a pedagogical leader. For teachers to share and critique their practices with one another and their leaders,

relational trust is an essential element of the process. Louis et al. (2016) noted that "as important as caring seems to be, its meaning in schools is vague, ambiguous, unsettled, and weakly explicated" (p. 312). Further study will assist in developing a less vague, ambiguous, and unsettled understanding of the contributing value of relational trust to pedagogical leadership. This is because human beings need a positive, social, and caring environment—and trust is an important component. This need is addressed in the theoretical framework of my inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws upon social-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The social-ecological theory (SET) framework expresses an understanding and recognition that human development is a process that is undoubtedly influenced by its environment. Bronfenbrenner (1994) argued,

> …in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which it occurs. The system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family, to the macro system, which refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and bodies of knowledge. (p. 37)

This inquiry around the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership is anchored in social-ecological theory, with a specific focus on the meso system. Bronfenbrenner described environments as contexts of development and stated that the ecological environment is "conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (p. 39).

The five socially organized subsystems are as follows:

- Microsystem: Settings such as family, school, peer group, and workplace; pattern of activities or social roles and interpersonal relations; face to face engagement.

- Mesosystem: A system of microsystems; for example, the relations between home and school, school, and workplace. Mesosystem processes take place between two or more settings containing the developing person.

- Exosystem: Processes taking place between two or more settings; one does not contain the developing person, but events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives; for example, for a child, the relation between the home and the parent's workplace.

- Macrosystem: may be thought of as a societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture; the overarching pattern of micro, meso, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems.

- Chronosystem: encompasses change or consistency over time, not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives; (e.g., changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pp. 39-40).

I drew upon Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory as it provided the primary means through which the research problem was understood and investigated. As I conducted my literature review, and created the conceptual framework, it became evident that pedagogical leadership, when viewed through ecological systems theory provided a way to explore and

understand the influences of social environments on the whole child. While this study focused most strongly on the meso system it was evident throughout the analysis on the data that policy mandates and directives from the provincial and school district level directly impacted the meso level. In addition, the professional learning carried out during this study, impacted teachers' practice which in turn impacted the micro system. Exploring and examining the research problem, purpose, and questions, through an ecological systems theory when supported by the conceptual framework, assisted the facilitation of this study, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems
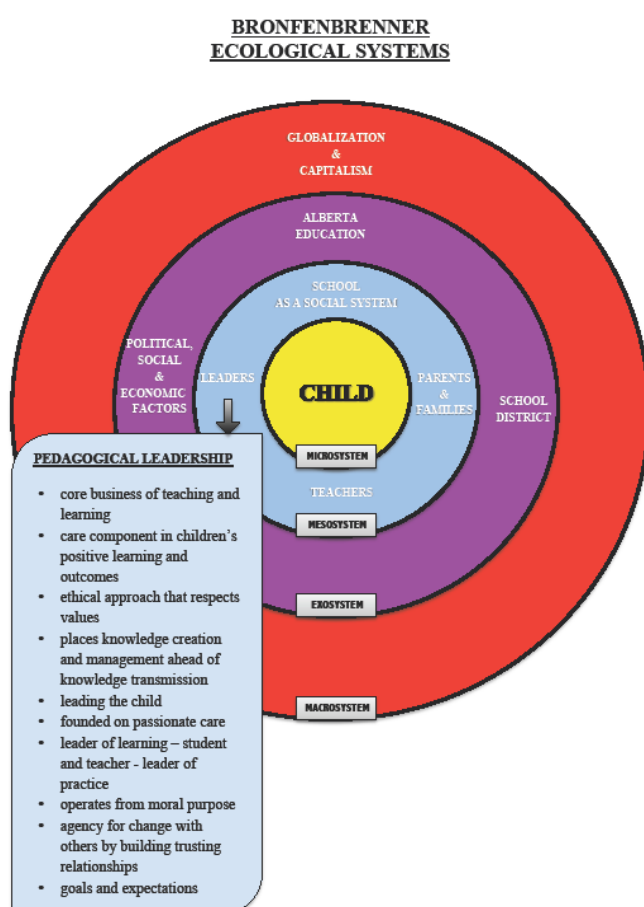
Educators have learned that for the success and well-being of both teachers and students in schools, caring leadership is important (Louis et al., 2016). "While the work is exploratory, it points in promising directions for further theory building, research and development of leadership practice" (p. 311), which is an open door for continued exploration. There are relatively few educational studies that have completed an in-depth study of caring among formal leaders (Louis et.al, 2016). Considering the indirect relationship to student achievement through academic support that caring leadership demonstrates, further research is important for the academic success and well-being of students (Louis et.al. 2016).

All four areas, educational leadership, learning focused leadership, student-centered, and pedagogical leadership, and relational trust are worthy of attention. The ways in which principals go about creating a culture of relational trust with their staffs is not yet well understood (Robinson, 2011). Given the importance of relational trust as a competency or capability of school leaders within their school context, further research is required to determine the ways principals go about establishing a culture of trust. This inquiry of how to develop relational trust was explored through a pedagogical leadership model.

This research is a qualitative study through practical action research. Creswell (2015) explained that a qualitative research problem is one that needs to be explored to obtain a deep understanding, as opposed to quantitative research which is best suited for problems in which trends or explanations need to be made. Based on Creswell's description, the problem of this inquiry is suitable for a qualitative study. Kemmis et al. (2014) described the purpose of practical action research as "guided by an interest in educating or enlightening practitioners so they can act more wisely and prudently" (p. 14). This is exactly what I have hoped to accomplish in this

study. Qualitative research and practical action research will be described in more detail, in the research design section.

Statement of the Research Problem

Robinson (2010) indicated,

…effective instructional leadership probably requires leaders to be knowledgeable about how to align administrative procedures and processes to import learning outcomes, to be highly skilled in using their knowledge to solve the myriad of problems that arise in the course of improving learning and teaching in their own contexts, and to use their knowledge, their problem-solving ability and their interpersonal skills in ways that build relational trust in their school community. (p. 21)

To trust is to be vulnerable. Robinson (2007) stated, "In the context of schooling, relational trust involves a willingness to be vulnerable to another party because one has confidence that he or she will fulfill the obligations and expectations relevant to the shared task of educating children" (p. 18). An environment of relational trust and vulnerability provides opportunities to enhance teacher practice. Katz and Earl (2010) shared Hargreaves' (1998) discussion of teachers becoming more trusting in making their practice visible. When willing to make practice more visible, teachers begin to improve their practise in the company of their peers, understanding that teaching is scholarship (Friesen, 2009). For teachers to be vulnerable, sharing and critiquing their practices with one another and with their leadership team, relational trust is an essential element in the process. As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) stated, "It is a willingness to be vulnerable under conditions of risk and interdependence, rather than a feeling of warmth or affection" (p. 18). With risk and interdependence, the potential for innovation and sustainable change is

increased. There is a potential for a willingness to be vulnerable in an environment of relational trust.

While Robinson (2010) indicated that the relational trust is a significant capability impacting both student and teacher learning within a school, her research remains unclear as to how principals go about creating a culture of relational trust within their schools. In a school of approximately 700 students and 40 teachers, with six formal leaders, the task appears daunting. The problem that this research addresses is how a principal goes about creating relational trust through a pedagogical leadership approach within a school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school.

Walker et al. (2010) suggested that understanding trust dynamics in schools is vital, and that the instrumental role in fostering trust in schools lies in the scope of school administrators' everyday activity. It is important to explore the everyday activities of administrators and to think more intentionally about how relational trust is developed in a school environment and through pedagogical leadership. The word pedagogy originates from the Greek "paidagogos" meaning the practice of teaching (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). The word educate stems from the Latin educare, or ducere meaning to "lead the child" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). In the early 13th century, the words pedagogy and educate started to become synonymous (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). Sergiovanni (1998) contended that teachers are pedagogical leaders in the classroom because they are leading the child, and I believe that principals are pedagogical leaders in the school, leading adult students, the leadership team, teachers, and support staff, as well as impacting the learning of the younger students in the school. Teachers and principals care

about students' learning. Pedagogical leadership is an effective model of leadership in developing relational trust because it has the care component (Moen & Granrusten, 2013).

Research Question

In seeking to understand the research problem, one over-arching question frames this inquiry: How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school?

Research Design

This qualitative study has been examined through practical action research. Creswell (2015) identified three factors that are important in selecting the most appropriate research approach, whether quantitative or qualitative. The first factor is matching the approach to the research problem, the second is fitting the research report to the audience, and the third is relating the approach to personal experience and training (Creswell, 2015). My research problem conforms with a qualitative approach because exploring relational trust through pedagogical leadership corresponds with Creswell's explanation that a qualitative research problem is one that needs to be explored to obtain a deep understanding, as opposed to quantitative research which is best suited for problems in which trends or explanations need to be made. Determining how relational trust is developed requires extensive exploration to develop a deep understanding. The research report was prepared with an audience of educational leaders in mind, which matched Creswell's second factor, and the third factor matched my own personal experience and training to the approach. My 23 years of experience as a school principal is a match for my research problem and, as a qualitative researcher, the problem of how to develop relational trust in an elementary school fit well with the qualitative research course work that I had completed.

These three factors added to the rationale of selecting a qualitative research approach for my study.

With a qualitative research design, the researcher and the participants adopt an insider point of view, reflecting on their own voices as well as acknowledging personal values and experiences and how these values and experiences contribute to the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The insider point of view is essential to my study of understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership.

Creswell (2015) defined practical action research as a design in action research by which educators study a specific school situation with a view toward improving practice. This form of action research focuses on a small–scale research project, narrowly focusing on a specific problem or issue undertaken by individual teachers or teams within a school or school district (p. 620). Creswell's definition defines my study.

This action research inquiry took place in my own elementary school, consisting of approximately 700 Kindergarten to Grade 4 students, of whom approximately three quarters are English Language Learners. The study participants self-selected from our leaders, formal and informal, who participated in our leadership learning sessions throughout the year, and who agreed to participate in the study. The inquiry included 10 participants in the Cycle 1 survey and seven of the 10 participants responded to the Cycle 2 survey. The number of responses in the Cycle 2 survey was impacted by transfers, promotions, and personal lives.

With the leadership learning model in place, this research study is site specific and is "defined by and intimately linked to one or more locations" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). "A basic tenet of qualitative research is that each research setting is unique in its own mix of

people and contextual factors" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). For this action research study, the setting is unique and the specific site is our own school.

This research study was conducted in the 2018–2019 school year and after ethics approval from both the University of Calgary and the school district was received. With action research being a "powerful yet cyclical framework of research, reflection and action," the plan was to incorporate two cycles during the research period (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The study was ongoing throughout the year, involving the participants in responding to how relational trust was developed through pedagogical leadership.

Data Collection Methods

I collected data for this action research project, by implementing methods that would support triangulation and increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the project as well as provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Hinchey, 2008; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). I gathered data through documents and my own participant-researcher field notes. Planning my leadership learning session agendas and documenting my session summaries, in my own leadership reflective journal, were two of my data-collection documents (Creswell, 2015). Reflective journals and stories provided a rich source of information that documented participant learning and growth. I listened to stories that helped us to think more wisely about ourselves and our own practice, and that offered the value of seeing anew (Walker, 2007). I also collected data through participant open-ended responses from two surveys, one survey representing Cycle 1 of my action research inquiry and the second survey representing Cycle 2. I also kept additional valuable strategies in mind during data analysis.

Field Notes: Myself as Participant

Creswell (2015) explained that observation, as a data collection method, is a process of initiating and gathering open-ended, first-hand reflections by observing people and places in the research site. In this study, I was a participant and, as a participant researcher, I collected data as an observer of my own practice. The data evolved as I initiated the action research process of plan, act, observe, and reflect. Creswell (2015) cautioned that a disadvantage to observations as data collection is that the observer may have limited access to the sites and situations and may have difficulty developing rapport with the participants. In this study, I had the advantage of working at the site and reflecting on my own practice. Observation is a well-accepted form of qualitative data collection (Cohen et al., 2018).

Leadership Learning Sessions

During the leadership learning sessions, opportunity for conversations and sharing was provided. I documented my planning agendas and summaries as well as my reflections and responses from the sessions. This documentation was in a data source listed as Reflective Journal – Leadership Learning Sessions.

Assumptions

Several important assumptions were made in relation to this practical action research. First, as the researcher, I assumed that members from our leadership learning sessions were willing to participate in this study. Second, my assumption was that all participants would answer the questions honestly, accurately, and to the best of their abilities. Third, I assumed that the concept under investigation, relational trust through pedagogical leadership, was appropriate for research. Finally, I assumed that practical action research methodology and data collection methods, including participant-researcher field notes, planning agendas, and summaries from the

leadership learning sessions, and Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 survey responses were appropriate to the problem being addressed and the purpose of the study.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for this study originated from my own desire, as a principal, to ensure quality teaching by leading teacher learning and development, as represented in my conceptual framework. Quality teaching is described as effective teaching practice, the five principles of the Teaching Effectiveness Framework: teachers are designers of learning; work students undertake is worthwhile; assessment practices improve student learning and guide teaching; strong relationships exist; and teachers improve their practice in the company of peers (Friesen, 2009). I have always believed that teachers' desire to improve their own practice becomes more genuine when they are working in a trusting environment. I wanted to explore how to develop relational trust and the impact it has on teacher practice.

My most valuable learning, teaching, and leading experiences have been when I have had strong and positive relationships with students, teachers, and professors, especially in classes in which I have struggled. It was apparent to me that my teachers cared. It is also apparent when one's administrator cares. I realize now, that throughout my 40 years as an educator, I continue to return to the value of developing our professional practice on a foundation of relational trust. I want to learn more. I also want to create a leadership model that will embrace relational trust as an essential element. From my own reading and learning, the development of a pedagogical leadership model inspired my thinking.

During my principal experience, there have been a variety of approaches to leaders' professional learning. I have felt most inspired during the last seven years with consistent school district learning. I have also been very grateful for the professional learning in my school district

area during the last five years, facilitated by our university professors and the Galileo Network. Through this learning, I have gained knowledge and confidence in my leadership role.

I know how energized I am when learning opportunities are in place and models exist. It is important to research the best ways to create these structures and models. I believed my research exploring relational trust through pedagogical leadership, would contribute to improved leadership practice. I know it was the Area principal learning opportunity that sparked my interest in a doctoral program to help me think about my questions. The rationale for this study was that if teachers felt trusted and opened up their practice to one another and to their leadership teams, practice would improve. This rationale was directly connected to the problem of the study.

During my inquiry, as a researcher-participant, I was hopeful that this research would help me to develop and refine my own leadership practice and assist me in creating a research-based effective leadership model, relational trust through pedagogical leadership, which I could confidently implement. In addition to refining my personal leadership knowledge and understanding, I was hopeful that my research would contribute to the scholarship of educational leadership and its constant quest for quality teaching, by making teaching practices more visible through an environment of relational trust and pedagogical leadership. As the quality of teaching improves, the engagement, academic success, and well-being of students will also begin to improve.

I wanted to research leadership because as I reflected on Friesen's work, *What Did You Do in School Today?* (2009), I asked myself the same question that Friesen (2009) asked of secondary students. As I drove home every day and reflected, "As the principal, what did *I* do in school today?" I wanted to be able to articulate my response in the context of a pedagogical

leadership model that embraced relational trust. The real question was, "As a team of leaders, what did *we* do in school today?" I believed that by employing intentionality and relational trust, we could put in place an effective, productive model, with student achievement, engagement, and well-being in mind. I was hopeful that the research process would be life-enhancing growth for all (McNiff, 2013). Macdonald (1995) contends

> the dialectic of theory and practice must itself be viewed in terms of what it reveals that
> creates new meaning for us through interpretation ….in the engagement of theory and
> practice we are emancipated from previous misunderstandings and are then freed to
> reinterpret situations and reach greater misunderstandings. (p.178)

McNiff (2013) extends Macdonald's (1995) concept of reciprocal care between theory and practice into action research. McNiff (2013) indicated that action research is an act of faith. While action research frequently begins with the commitment of an individual, it is this individual who must recognise themself in relation to others; and this is a reciprocal commitment enacted collectively. It is not a case of one individual against the rest; it is a case of all individuals acting in the best interests of one another. I was inspired to begin the research process to impart a powerful ripple effect, to demonstrate the act of faith, and to show that I was faithful to others and myself throughout the process (McNiff, 2013).

Based on my reading and my principal experience, I noted that there was a gap between what was known about relational trust and how to intentionally develop an environment in which relational trust exists. There was also more to learn about pedagogical leadership. I am hopeful that the knowledge resulting from this inquiry will contribute to what currently exists in educational leadership practices in schools. This study will thus contribute to the research and literature and will also have practical applications for school–based leaders. For one to be invited

into teachers' practice and teachers' honest desire to improve their practice, relational trust is an essential ingredient of pedagogical leadership. I wanted to explore how principals could develop that relational trust. This was significant for all engaged in the pursuit of quality teaching.

Definitions of Key Terminology

I have included a list of key terms that are defined specifically for the purposes of this research:

Caring

Louis et al. (2016) described caring as a "property of relationships, its consequences, conditions, and the conditions that enable caring to become a feature of both relationships and groups, particularly those in schools" (p. 312). Louis et al. also stated that "another enabling relational condition of caring is trust, which creates a sense of dependability in long-term relationships and integrity in those of shorter duration" (p. 314 – 315).

Wu (2017) suggested that pedagogical leadership is different from the rest because its specific focus is on the care component in children's positive learning and outcomes.

Formal Leaders and Informal Leaders

As Katz and Earl (2010) observed, "Networked learning communities include many levels of leadership to direct the work of the network itself – both formal and informal" (p. 10). They explained that formal leaders, such as principals, "provide leadership by encouraging and motivating others, setting and monitoring the direction, sharing leadership, providing support, and building capacity" (p. 10). Katz and Earl described informal leadership as other members of a distributed leadership model who are encouraged to participate as leaders and share their knowledge.

Pedagogical Leadership

Sergiovanni (1998) stated that pedagogical leaders develop intellectual capital in their school by making them into inquiring communities, while professional capital is created through reciprocal responsibilities that add value for teachers and students alike.

Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) explained that pedagogical leadership is a subset of the instructional leadership construct and that it is found to be most relevant in the early childhood field.

This is because instructional leadership has its roots in school improvement, and effective principals in formal school contexts whereas pedagogical leadership has the 'care' component that is crucial to supporting and promoting positive learning and development in very young children through the provision of quality care and educational programmes. (Moen & Granrusten, 2013)

Practical Action Research

Kemmis et al. (2014) defined the purpose of practical action research as "guided by an interest in educating or enlightening practitioners so they can act more wisely and prudently" (p. 14).

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988a) described the action research cycle as a "spiral of self-reflective cycles: planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on the process and consequences, and then re-planning, acting and observing, reflection and so on…. (p. 18).

Hinchey (2008) also described practical action research as research focused on improving practice by identifying a specific classroom problem and working toward implementing a specific change strategy.

Action research is about finding ways to encourage change, as an inquiry by the self, into the self with on-the-job practice and questions at the heart of research, (McNiff, 2013, 2017).

Creswell (2015) defined practical action research as

…a design in action research in which educators study a specific school situation with a view toward improving practice. This form of action research focuses on a small–scale research project, narrowly focussed on a specific problem or issue and undertaken by individual teachers or teams within a school or school district. (p. 620)

Professional Learning

Timperley (2011) defined professional learning as "an internal process in which individuals create professional knowledge through interaction with information in a way that challenges previous assumptions and creates new meanings" (p. 5).

Qualitative Research

Creswell's explanation is that a qualitative research problem is one that needs to be explored to obtain a deep understanding, as opposed to quantitative research which is best suited for problems in which trends or explanations need to be made. Qualitative research values the perspectives of the research participant and "delves into the essence of the topic" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 36). Qualitative research emphasizes exploration, discovery, and description (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Quality Teaching

Friesen's (2009) delineates the five principles related to quality teaching in the Teaching Effectiveness Framework: teachers are designers of learning; work students undertake is worthwhile; assessment practices improve student learning and guide teaching; strong relationships exist; and teachers improve their practice in the company of peers.

Relational Trust

Robinson's (2011) definition of relational trust is "the type of trust that is essential for doing the hard work of improving teaching and learning" (p. 17).

Bhindi and Duignan, (1997) noted that relational trust "implies visionary leadership that takes its energy and direction from the good intentions of current organizational members who put their intellects, hearts, and souls into shaping a vision for the future" (p.148).

Rhythm

Rhythm is a strong regular repeated pattern of movements (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021).

Shared Collaborative Leader Learning (Professional Networks)

Katz and Earl (2010) defined professional networks "as mechanisms for knowledge creation that can lever the kinds of changes that make a difference" (p. 1). They are "collaborative systems that support particular ways of working and find expression within two organizational units – the network itself and its particular schools" (p. 2).

Visual Journal

Visual journal is a term created in the school where this study was situated. In conducting this research study, I have since learned, that visual journals are a place to record and reflect thoughts, generate ideas, reflect, and sketch out options (Pauwels & Mannay, 2020). In the school where this study was conducted, visual journals are a physical journal, similar to a sketch book in which teachers identify their professional growth plans and professional practice journeys. Each teacher has a visual journal. Teachers are invited to write, paint, type, draw, and create as they design their through circles to meet provincial, system, and school goals and expectations. The through circles assist the teachers to make connections between the exosystem,

mesosystem, and microsystem of the socio-ecological model depicted in the theoretical

framework. The visual journals also create space to develop relationships and cycles of feedback.

Summary

Chapter 1 outlined the context of the study, the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the overarching research question to be explored. It continued with the research approach, personal researcher perspectives, research method and methodology, and the researcher assumptions. The chapter concluded with an explanation of the rationale and the significance of the research study and closed with definitions of key terminology and a description of the proposal organization.

The next two chapters continue to set the stage for the study. Chapter 2 is comprised of a critical review of the literature, with the conceptual framework in mind, and Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology of this study. Data collection, analysis methods, limitations, delimitations, and issues of trustworthiness are all explained and discussed in Chapter 3.

The following chapters, beginning with Chapter, 4 review the purpose and continue with the presentation of the themes, actions and findings from Cycle 1 of the study. The findings from Cycle 1 were used to guide Cycle 2 of the study, which is represented in Chapter 5, highlighting the Cycle 2 themes and findings. Chapter 6 highlights the discussion of my findings and Chapter 7 closes my study with my conclusions, recommendations and my professional and personal reflections.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this practical action research study is to determine how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. Specifically, my intent is to understand how an intentional focus on building relational trust through the everyday activities of an administrator is developed within a school environment. To inform this study, it was necessary to conduct a critical review of current and relevant literature on the topic. While the review was captured most succinctly in this chapter, I acknowledge that it was an ongoing process throughout the data collection phase of this study, as well as during the data analysis and interpretation phases. A rhythm of returning to the literature continued to ensure the literature informed the research need as well as the action cycles and data analysis.

Relational trust is an essential element within a pedagogical leadership model (Robinson, 2011). Bryk and Schneider (2002) stated that leaders build relational trust by modeling and expecting the four qualities on which it is based: respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity. The purpose of this inquiry is to research how the qualities of relational trust are developed within pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. As principals invest in time and resources for the capacity building of the leadership team, creating an environment of relational trust is a valuable component of the process, so that opportunities for leaders to effectively lead together can be provided. How is relational trust developed within pedagogical leadership?

To conduct this inquiry, I critically reviewed three topics of selected, current literature: educational leadership, learning-focused leadership, and the leadership capability of relational trust. The literature reviewed for the first section on educational leadership includes the current

literature on the effective educational leadership models, how these models have been developed and how they have been implemented. The second section undertakes a review of learning-focused leadership practices including Robinson's (2011) model of Student-Centered Leadership derived from a meta-analysis of the relationship between leadership and student outcomes and pedagogical leadership. The last section reviews the literature on relational trust. Following the review of literature, a visual, and descriptive representation of the conceptual framework is presented. The conceptual framework "provides the main ideas or concepts to be studied—the key factors, variables and constructs—and the presumed relationships among them" (Miles et al., (2014, p.20). The conceptual framework developed for this study, anchored in social-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner,1994; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), reflects the relationships between the pedagogical leadership team and creating a culture of relational trust among leaders and teachers, and creates the conditions— that is the "ecosystem"—in which the likelihood of a positive attitude toward innovation, risk, and professional commitment with teachers might emerge. Such school culture is critical in the development of the whole child. The conceptual framework for this study also identifies relational trust as one of the capabilities, and the essential element for leadership identified by Robinson (2011), to focus on the goal and leadership dimension of ensuring quality teaching (Robinson). The chapter closes with a summary of the three reviewed components: educational leadership, learning-focused leadership, and relational trust.

To conduct this literature review, multiple sources such as books, dissertations, Internet resources, professional journals, and periodicals were accessed. These sources were accessed through Google Scholar, and the University of Calgary library. My interpretations of the literature were woven throughout the review, informing my understanding of the research and how that research contributed to the creation of the conceptual framework for the study.

Leadership

Over the past 100 years, a general definition of leadership has been agreed upon: "The act of leading people involves influencing them to undertake a course of action that contributes to an objective defined by the leader: his or her vision" (Cutler, 2014, p. 1). The course of action in this definition could imply change and movement, which connects to the understanding that the word lead derives from the Anglo-Saxon for a journey, a road, or a way. Cutler described leading as "concerned with moving from one place to another, from one situation to another" (p. 1). This describes change, and it is during periods of great change that exceptional leaders emerge.

In the 19th century, initial thoughts of identifying the qualities and traits of leadership proved to be a greater challenge than expected and directed the focus of research toward new leaders learning skills from the behavior of successful leaders. This led to many leadership theories and proposed leadership styles (Cutler, 2014). The difficulty was that the theories did not consider the specific environment of individual leaders, which led to the exploration of a situational approach. The critical importance of followers was also identified, leading to relational theory, the understanding that people will not "blindly follow" (Cutler, 2014, p. 7). Cutler stated that in "the 21st century, the focus for leaders will be building relationships, knowing that without the support of followers, leaders will be isolated and ultimately unsuccessful in any situation they face or environment they operate in" (Cutler, 2014, p. 7). Cutler (2014) provided a historical overview of leadership and leadership theories. Against this backdrop, Cutler conceptualized a challenge for contemporary leaders. It is this challenge that supports the value of building relationships and supports the inquiry of this study.

Educational Leadership

In the late seventies, Burns (1978) stated, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 4). Since then, researchers have responded. As Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "Many labels used in the literature to signify different forms or styles of leadership mask the generic functions of leadership" (p. 4). There is a long list of leadership labels, such as instructional, participative, democratic, transformational, moral, and strategic; yet these only capture different stylistic or methodological approaches to leadership. There is wisdom in being skeptical of leadership by adjective (Leithwood et al., 2004). Currently, research continues in educational research (Robinson, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Male & Palaiologou, 2015). As more is learned about the most effective leadership approaches, the question to ask is, "How are the most effective leadership methods developed and implemented in schools?" Presently, the spotlight is on the leadership of teaching and learning (Elmore, 2004; Firestone & Riehl, 2005). Instructional leadership, learning leadership, and pedagogical leadership all emphasize leadership of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2000; Robinson, 2011; Male & Palaiologou, 2015; Wu, 2017). All three approaches connect and overlap with the purpose of designing leadership approaches, with a focus on teaching and learning. Hallinger (2000) highlighted the management of the instructional program and the idea that leadership should be context dependent not model dependent (2018), with leadership being shaped by pedagogy, and not the other way around. Robinson's (2007) findings suggested that for leaders to make a difference for students and their learning outcomes, leaders need to be closer to teaching and learning. Male and Palaiologou (2015), Moen and Gransrusten (2013), and Wu (2017) referred to pedagogical leadership as different from the rest because of the care component, with a specific focus on positive learning outcomes. Robinson (2008) argued that if

pedagogical leadership is defined as leadership that is focused on the core business of teaching and learning, it would make sense to think about pedagogical leadership as an effective approach to leadership. With a leadership focus on teaching and learning, the purpose appears to be clear. As an educator and as a leader, it is challenging for me to know what the most effective and current leadership approach might be. Learning while leading is a valuable and never-ending process. The learning is energizing, but it can be very confusing when there are so many different layers and beliefs related to leadership. Demonstrating confidence and competence is critical as a leader and at times, with the variety of leadership approaches, I question myself in the attempt to become grounded, consistent, and skilled in my beliefs and my approach. Simkins (2005) stated,

> The ocean of leadership literature – both general and educational – abounds with models and theories of leadership. Some of these rise to the surface and float on strong currents for years before eventually becoming beached and replaced by other strong swimmers. Others bob briefly above the surface only to sink again as quickly as they appeared.
>
> (p.11)

Robinson (2008) indicated that fewer than 30 studies have examined the links between educational leadership and student outcomes. From this, she inferred how radically disconnected leadership research is from the core business of teaching and learning. With this disconnection, the logical next step for me was to investigate the literature on pedagogical leadership to determine whether this literature might provide a basis for establishing a relationship between leadership and teaching and learning. "There is a need to redirect research on educational leadership so that it makes stronger links with pedagogy, assessment and student learning and gives less emphasis on generic leadership" (Robinson, 2006, p. 63). Like Burns (1978),

Robinson (2006) identified a gap that is worthy of further research. The research based on student and teacher learning and on effective teaching can give content to otherwise abstract leadership processes (Robinson, 2006). Robinson (2006) concluded with a discussion of the need for leadership research and practice to be more closely linked to the evidence on effective teaching and effective teacher learning. As a principal and as a researcher, I am intrigued by the exploration of pedagogical leadership, knowing the focus on and commitment to teacher practice and student learning. The challenge before many principals is how to develop and implement a pedagogical leadership practice effectively and successfully. Robinson suggested, "The more leaders focus their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 2).

Exploring leadership practices and taking a closer look at pedagogical leadership inspires me in my role as a principal. The question of how to develop and implement a pedagogical leadership approach with a team of school-based leaders is motivational and worthy of research. As Leithwood et al. (2004) discussed, there is a need for more "fine-grained understandings than we currently have of successful leadership practices; and much richer appreciations of how those practices seep into the fabric of the education system" (p. 12).

In 2004, Leithwood et al. indicated that the evidence was not yet clear regarding how leadership matters and what essential elements need to be in place. Lacking solid evidence to answer these questions, researchers and educators have had to rely more on "faith than fact" (Leithwood et al., 2004). In my experience as a leader, many principals develop some practices and approaches on faith. While faith-based approaches might have once prevailed due to lack of evidence, Robinson's (2008) meta-analysis began to identify some of the successful ingredients. However, questions of "how" continue to surface in the research literature. I have continually

assessed and adjusted my leadership practices, searching for a leadership approach that I can
clearly articulate, for which there is strong evidence, and from which I can develop and
strengthen a practice with the school-based leadership team. As Leithwood et al. (2004)
indicated, "It turns out that leadership not only matters; it is second only to teaching among
school related factors in its impact on student learning" (p. 1). Among the responses from many
authors researching leadership during the last 4 decades, Robinson (2006) emphasized the need
for educational leadership to focus on developing stronger connections to pedagogy, assessment,
and student learning. This emphasis will help maintain the goal of connecting educational
leadership and the core business of teaching and learning.

Effective Leadership Practices

A number of processes have been identified in the literature as effective leadership
practices (Table 1). These practices are organized by author and summarized and listed in point
form.

Table 1

Effective Leadership Practices

Leithwood et al., (2004) - Three Processes Executive Summary	• Setting Directions • Developing People • Redesigning the Organization • (p. 1)
Hallinger, (2000): Three Sets of Leadership Dimensions	• Defining the School's Mission • Managing the Instructional Program • Promoting a Positive Learning Climate
Leithwood et al., (2008): Seven Strong Claims	• School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning

About Successful School Leadership Article	• Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices • The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the context in which they work • School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions • School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed • Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others • A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness (pp. 27 and 28)
Robinson (2011): Three Leadership Capabilities and Five Leadership Dimensions Meta-Analysis – (2008) Student – Centered Leadership (2011)	Leadership Capabilities • Applying Relevant Knowledge • Solving Complex Problems • Building Relational Trust Leadership Dimensions • Establishing Goals and Expectations • Resourcing Strategically • Ensuring Quality Teaching • Leading Teacher Learning and Development • Ensuring an Orderly and Safe Environment • (p. 16)
`	• Developing a strong leadership team • Distributing some responsibilities throughout the leadership team • Selecting the right work • Identifying the order of magnitude implied by the selected work • Matching the management style to the order or magnitude of the change initiative • (p. 98)

In summary, the research within educational leadership provides a confusing array of effective leadership practices. With a current focus on leadership of teaching and learning and a cautious awareness of leadership by adjective, label, and metaphor, wisdom in skepticism is

understandable (Leithwood et al., 2004). During the last two decades, researchers have raised more questions than answers about education leadership and student outcomes, demonstrating that better conceptualization of the phenomenon of educational research is needed (Witziers et al., 2003). Simkins (2005) stated that "much of the current discourse implies either that the holy grail of effective leadership practice is within our grasp or at least that the search for it is not in vain" (p. 10). As a principal, I believe we are always exploring and practicing approaches to leadership. I continually learn as a leader, and I know the search is not in vain. The search is energizing, beginning with an awareness of Robinson's (2008) meta-analysis and the initial identification of some of the successful ingredients.

There are important next steps for research. As Robinson (2006) suggested, "the shift from generic leadership to educational leadership has profound implications for research on leadership itself" (p. 73). Robinson (2006) discussed how the question is whether the qualities of good leadership identified by such theories are the same as those identified by one or more of the generic theories. She stated that the question will not be answered until research on leadership and research on effective teaching are much more aligned. With the alignment of leadership and effective teaching, pedagogical leadership surfaces, focusing on the core business of teaching and learning. Researching pedagogical leadership is an important next step.

Learning Focused Leadership

Student-centered leadership is relatively new in the educational research literature. In 2003 Bell et al. reviewed 5000 studies that were published from1988-2002. They reported that only eight of these studies included specific reference to student outcomes such as attitudes, behaviour, or achievement. More recent research compilations (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al. 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Witziers et al., 2003) found up to 70 studies linking

school leadership and student outcomes; however, 60 of these studies were unpublished American dissertations. In 2007, Robinson concluded, there is "a paucity of empirical evidence about the impact of leadership on the core business of schooling" (p. 64).

In 2007, Robinson conducted a meta-analysis of published research examining the direct or indirect connections between school leadership and student outcomes. Eleven of the 26 studies were analyzed to derive the three leadership capabilities and five leadership dimensions listed in Table 1.

> The results showed the magnitude of impact for the five dimensions ranged from small to large, with the moderate and large impacts associated with more direct leader involvement in the oversight of, and participation in, curriculum planning and coordination and the teacher learning and professional development. (Robinson, 2007, p. 21)

Robinson's (2007) findings suggested that for leaders to make a difference for students and their learning outcomes, leaders need to be closer to teaching and learning.

The results of Robinson's (2010) meta-analysis also showed that the three capabilities were directly or indirectly linked to student outcomes. The evidence demonstrated that effective instructional leadership probably requires leaders to be knowledgeable in aligning administrative procedures and processes to learning outcomes, to be highly skilled in solving myriad problems, and to "use their knowledge, problem-solving ability and their interpersonal skills in ways that build relational trust in their school communities" (Robinson, p. 21). Leading is not about mastering a long list of capabilities, but instead the focus for leaders is to learn about capabilities and draw on them effectively in different contexts and situations (Robinson, 2010). The interrelationship among the three capabilities is key in effective leadership. Describing the

separate capabilities is far less important than capturing the holistic and integrated nature that is intended with the capabilities (Robinson, 2010). Understanding the dimensions and capabilities contributes to the effectiveness of leadership.

The capability of relational trust is the focus of this proposed inquiry in understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership. Robinson (2011) discussed the determinants of relational trust and how it is built by modelling and expecting the four qualities: interpersonally respectful, personal regard for others, competent in role, and personal integrity (Byrk and Schneider, 2002).

Leaders earn trustworthiness by being/having:

- Interpersonally Respectful: valuing the ideas of others, listening and being open to influence

- Personal Regard for Others: caring about the personal and professional lives of their staff

- Competent in Role: dealing with competence issues in a timely and effective manner

- Personal Integrity: resolving difficult conflicts in a principled manner and acting in a manner that is understood to be in the best interests of children. (Byrk and Schneider, 2002).

A more in-depth review of relational trust literature will be shared later in the chapter. As Robinson (2011) stated, "Relationships are central to success on all the dimensions" (p. 15). This inquiry will also reflect on the effect of relational trust on three of the dimensions within pedagogical leadership: leading teaching learning and development, ensuring quality teaching, and establishing goals and expectations.

Pedagogical Leadership

"We cannot take for granted the idea that each individual principal will have knowledge of how to act as a pedagogical leader" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p. 865). In reviewing the literature of pedagogical leadership, Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) noted that being "responsible for students' learning and school results requires strategic thinking, knowledge and an active focus on the core processes: teaching and learning." This view is similar to Robinson's (2008) discussion of pedagogical leadership being focused on the core business of teaching and learning (p. 2). Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) also defined pedagogical leadership as focusing "on the core task of schooling—continuous student learning in relation to academic, social and civic objectives" (p. 857). Robinson (2008) and Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) share similar interpretations of pedagogical leadership, which is helpful when reflecting on the **initial** statement, "We cannot take for granted the idea that each individual principal will have knowledge of how to act as a pedagogical leader" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014 p. 865). "How?"[1] is an important question and will be considered throughout the literature review.

The literature on pedagogical leadership and relational trust is reviewed next, beginning with Table 2, which highlights the essential elements of pedagogical leadership and relational trust.

Table 2

Pedagogical Leadership and Relational Trust Summary

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[1] *"*How?" is the label I assigned, understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership. This is my meaning in each heading in the dissertation where "How?" appears

PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND RELATIONAL TRUST SUMMARY

Pedagogical Leadership	**Relational Trust** (Essential Element Within a Leadership Model)

• core business of teaching and learning
• care component in children's positive learning and outcomes
• ethical approach that respects values
• places knowledge creation and management ahead of knowledge transmission
• leading the child
• founded on passionate care
• leader of learning – student and teacher - leader of practice
• operates from moral purpose
• agency for change with others by building trusting relationships
• goals and expectations
	• Interpersonally respectful
	  - openness
	
	• Personal regard for others
	  - sensitive and caring
	
	• Competent in role
	  - empowerment
	
	• Personal Integrity
	  - honesty and authenticity

Understandings of Pedagogical Leadership

The literature on pedagogical leadership contains an array of definitions. Wu (2017) suggested that pedagogical leadership is different from the rest because its specific focus is on the care component in children's positive learning and outcomes. Heikka and Waniganayake (2011) explained that pedagogical leadership is a subset of the instructional leadership construct and that it is found to be most relevant in the early childhood field. Moen and Granrusten (2013) noted:

> This is because instructional leadership has its roots in school improvement, and effective principals in formal school contexts whereas pedagogical leadership has the 'care' component that is crucial to supporting and promoting positive learning and development in very young children through the provision of quality care and educational programmes. (Moen & Granrusten, 2013, p. 2.21)

The literature implies that this leadership construct has been studied in five different contexts that have drawn various associations with (a) EC leaders managing preschool settings (b) teachers as pedagogical leaders as part of their core responsibility; (c) managerial and administrative leadership tasks that enhance pedagogical practice; (d) a leadership style in leading and informing pedagogical practice; and (e) the role of the administrative officers who are involved in EC work in municipalities in the context of Nordic countries (Heikka & Waniganayake, 2011).

Additional definitions of pedagogical leadership include the following:

- Male and Palaiologou, (2015): pedagogical leadership "refers to forms of practice that shape and form teaching and learning to be integrated into leadership" (p. 214).

- Male and Palaiologou, (2015): "pedagogical leadership is an ethical approach that respects values and does not engage in any project that will only benefit the individual, but instead looks after the ecology of the community" (p. 219).

- Male and Palaiologou, (2012): "pedagogical leadership is a construct which places knowledge creation and management ahead of knowledge transmission" (p. 2).

- Sergiovanni (1996): pedagogy, literal translation means "leading the child"
  Pedagogical leadership is related to the teachers' pedagogical work with learners, purposing the term "leadership as pedagogy" (p. 92).

- Murray and McDowall Clark (2013): pedagogical leadership is founded on passionate care – highlights leader of practice – operates from moral purpose – not through authority – "seeks to release agency for change with others by building trusting relationships" (p. 289)

- Brandon, Saar, Friesen, Babb, Alonso (2014): "leaders of teacher learning, rather than mere facilitators of collegial discussants" (p. 16)

- Webb, (2005): pedagogical leadership "appears to offer much greater possibilities for teaching and for promoting both pupil and teacher learning" (p. 69).

The myriad definitions attributed to pedagogical leadership are consistent with the emergence of a new theme within the research literature. While this is somewhat confusing, it is also valuable in developing a literature review of pedagogical leadership. A common theme in the literature appears to be that teacher learning and practice, as well as student learning, and the development of trusting relationships are evolving as integral in pedagogical leadership.

Beliefs: Why Pedagogical Leadership?

With a dedication to pedagogical leadership and working together as a leadership team in the school, curriculum knowledge can be developed among the team members. It is important for leaders to have "opportunities to extend and up-date both the breadth and depth of their pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge" (Robinson, 2006, p. 72). Knowledge of at least one curriculum is valuable and would provide a rich appreciation of the type and depth of expertise needed in other curriculum and instructional areas. When the desire is acknowledged and the goal is identified, an action plan can be implemented to develop pedagogical leadership.

When working with leaders, if one is to understand pedagogical leadership, the knowledge-building and commitment will transfer and cascade as the leadership team works alongside all adults in the school. The focus of learning will be related to three main elements of pedagogical leadership: creating conditions for teaching and learning, leading learning and teaching, and linking the everyday work of teaching with organizational goals and results (Tornsen & Arlestig,

2014). These elements provide focus for the administrative team in beginning to understand pedagogical leadership. Fullan, (2013) stated:

> The new pedagogical learning partnership between and among students and teachers will demand a deep transformation in the nature of how learning occurs. We are, excitingly so, entering unknown territory. When John Hattie (2012) found in his meta-analysis that "teachers as facilitators" generates 0.17 effect sizes on student learning while "teachers as activators" has a 0.6 impact, he opened up a whole new world of questions. We now have our work cut out to discover what this new pedagogical partnership looks like in practice and how you achieve it on a system wide scale. (pp. 85-86)

Sergiovanni (1998) claimed that pedagogical leadership "invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers. Support this leadership by making capital available to enhance student learning and development, teacher learning and classroom effectiveness" (p. 215). As principals invest in time and resources for capacity-building of the leadership team, the leaders will develop a common focus, a common understanding of pedagogical leadership, and a confidence to lead that benefits the whole school community. By articulating the intentionality of developing intellectual and professional capital, leaders and teachers will feel valued, respected, and worthy.

The evidence in the research supports a focus on pedagogical leadership, with the understanding that pedagogical leadership has been a "rhetorical concept without explicit expectations of specific activities" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p. 856). It seems that "how" is an ongoing question. How is pedagogical leadership developed? How is pedagogical leadership implemented? How is relational trust developed within pedagogical leadership?

Webb (2005) remarked that in the "current educational climate educative leadership appears unsustainable" (p.69). Her concern is that although "instructional leadership is an effective model for achieving compliance with government reforms and achieving narrow standards agenda, it stifles teachers' creativity and constrains school innovation" (p. 69). She stated, "While the practice of pedagogical leadership is viewed as conflicting with aspects of instructional leadership, it has a vague congruence with educative leadership and can therefore develop from it" (p. 69). The literature reflects more questions related to pedagogical leadership and ongoing conversations. Male and Palaiologou (2012) argued that the concept of learning-centered leadership needed to be examined and believe that pedagogical leadership "is offered as an alternative because it seems to address more fully the challenges facing educational leaders and managers, alongside providing a more holistic approach to the creation and sustenance of effective learning environments" (p.2). The evidence in the research has led to an exploration of pedagogical leadership as an alternative and the investigation of more explicit approaches.

Male and Palaiologou (2012) supported pedagogical leadership for a number of reasons, having stated, "Leaders should aim to synchronize their actions with the collaborative, interactive nature of pedagogy" (p.17). Male and Palaiologou (2012) indicated that pedagogy evolves over time and that leadership should evolve alongside and flow in a similar fashion, as a match for pedagogical leadership. They also noted that "other leadership approaches did not flow as well, such as learning-centered leadership which appears static and may limit its focus to the outcomes and outputs, rather than absorbing the whole learning process" (p.17).When Male and Palaiologou (2012) compared pedagogical leadership to learning-centered leadership, they stated that pedagogical leadership "respects teachers as intellectuals, and requires leaders to acknowledge the complexity of the interplay between theory and practice, teaching and learning"

(p. 18). After posing a number of questions and concerns, Male and Palaiologou (2012) supported pedagogical leadership, noting that "pedagogical leadership is not only concerned with learners' learning and achievement but with the learning of themselves, and the learning of the team and the community" (p.19).

In reviewing the question of "why?" pedagogical leadership as an alternate form of leadership, the literature reflects an emphasis on capacity building for teachers and leaders and creating conditions for that learning (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014; Sergiovanni, 1998). Leaders leading together is the essential purpose for the capacity building (Fullan, 2013). Pedagogical leadership is an effective leadership alternative.

As the focus of this proposed inquiry is supporting leaders' learning through the development of relational trust, drawing upon pedagogical leadership as the leadership imperative is appropriate, as it requires being attentive to all aspects of the learning of the collective as well as the individual. As leaders, and as leadership teams, purpose is critical. "Pedagogical leadership conveys a purposeful role, characterized by leading people, where those involved develop an attachment and feelings of responsibility towards ethics, values and beliefs central to the standards" (Male & Palaiologou, 2012, p. 19).

Pedagogical Leadership: Approaches

A number of researchers (Arlestig & Tomsen, 2014; Brandon et al., 2015; Leo, 2015; Male & Palaiologou, 2015) have documented beliefs and approaches in developing a practice of pedagogical leadership in the form of perspectives, norms, focus, processes, and lessons. To follow are the beliefs and approaches described with each researcher reference, beginning with perspectives.

Perspectives. Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) shared a pedagogical leadership model that consisted of three interrelated perspectives. They stated that the "most obvious perspective is working with teacher capacity and the instructional core of schooling taking place in classrooms" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p. 857); namely, process steering. A second perspective is "working with factors such as setting directions, expressing high expectations, and encouraging and creating prerequisites for collaboration and communication of teacher activities" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p.857); namely, goal steering. The third perspective was "related to student performance and school results" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p. 858); namely, result steering.

Norms. Leo (2015) shared professional norms that guide school principals' pedagogical leadership:

Be present and close to the teaching and learning processes, be engaged and involve teachers and others in quality development, enhance development of formative assessment and assessment for learning, engage in teacher development through pedagogical discussions, peer learning, etc., and develop the internal organization of the school to promote learning. (p. 472)

Focus. Male and Palaiologou (2015) concluded that pedagogical leadership is praxis that goes beyond the practice within the immediate learning environment and the key focus is a threefold development of: interactions in the ecology of the community, activities with all participants, and the construction of knowledge using all available resources, such as technology. (p. 221)

Process. Male and Palaiologou (2012) also discussed how pedagogical leadership is a "collaborative process among teachers, learners and other members of the community" that

evolves over time, seeks to bring out the learners' best selves, works with institutional barriers

(policies, race, gender, class,), and cooperates collectively with the community in the attempt

to contribute to the growth of knowledge at the collective as well as the individual levels.

(Male & Palaiologou, p.19)

Lessons. Brandon et al. (2014), in their work in supporting pedagogical leadership, framed

four lessons. The first lesson is designed to "build leadership capacity *with* rather than *for* school

leadership teams" (Brandon et. al, 2014, p. 22). Conveying and modeling "an ongoing and

adaptive focus on improving teaching and learning through multiple approaches" (p. 22) was the

second lesson. The third lesson focuses on supporting "improvements in school leadership

practice, through iterative cycles of professional learning that focused on evidence of changes in

teaching practice that better engaged students in learning toward important learning outcomes"

(p. 22). The goal of the final lesson is to "hold leadership teams accountable for improvements in

teaching practice in their school through iterative cycles of professional learning that focus on

evidence of enhanced student engagement and learning toward important learning outcomes" (p.

22).

These four lessons were developed during a design-based research study that included a

design-based professional learning for a group of 42 principals, over a 3-year period, in one area

of a large urban school district (Brandon et al., 2014). The study was described as, "Building on

research-informed conceptions of teaching, instructional leadership, professional learning, and

district leadership, our research focused on the development of pedagogical leadership that

requires school leaders to be leaders of teacher learning" (Brandon et al., 2014, p. 1). The lessons

of pedagogical leadership help to develop leaders of teacher learning. The leading requires

learning, which is "the central focus of the first year, learning task design and the provision of

worthwhile student work within Friesen's (2009) *Teaching Effectiveness: A Framework and Rubric* (TEF)" (Brandon et al., 2014, p. 20). The additional years included professional learning related to the student assessment component of the TEF, Robinson's (2011) dimensions 3 (ensuring quality teaching) and 4 (leading teacher learning and development) with an emphasis on the notion of the leadership team. The study found that the design-based professional learning contributed significantly to the understanding and development of pedagogical leadership. The systematic focus on pedagogical leadership and effective teaching impacted leading, teaching, and learning through Friesen's (2009) *Teaching Effectiveness: A Framework and Rubric* (TEF).

- Principle 1   Teachers are Designers of Learning

- Principle 2   Work Students Undertake is Worthwhile

- Principle 3   Assessment Practises Improve Student Learning and Guide Teaching

- Principle 4   Teachers Relationship with the Students and Students with their Work

- Principle 5   Teachers Improve their Practice in the Company of their Peers

A common theme running through the approaches listed is that pedagogical leadership emphasizes professional learning and teaching by building teachers' and leaders' capacity within a collective and collaborative process.

Pedagogical leadership: Questions and concerns from the field

In reviewing the literature there are questions, concerns, and a tentativeness related to pedagogical leadership. Male and Palaiologou (2015) noted, "Pedagogy is understood as a set of practices that shape educational organizations around teaching and learning in order to match externally applied standards of and expectations of student outcomes" (p. 215). They argued that the "term pedagogy is an ambiguous one when it is attached to the concept of leadership and requires further explanation beyond the seeming current determinism that pedagogical leadership

is only about supporting teaching and learning" (p. 215). In Sweden, the School Commission of 1946 stated that even though the "principal's most important task is to lead pedagogical work and to guide and inspire teachers to develop schools in alignment with the society's democratization process, there is still ongoing debate about what pedagogical leadership is, with several definitions" (Leo, 2014, p 463). It is important to be aware of the ambiguity of pedagogical leadership when exploring the implementation of learning models for leadership teams in schools.

As pedagogical leadership is ambiguous, it becomes a creative adventure in clarifying what is important and learning how to see the new reality. Exploring pedagogical leadership as an administrative team would be stimulating and creative work focused on student intellectual development, academic success, and well-being. As Leo (2014) stated, "The pupils' learning and development are at the heart of pedagogical leadership" (p. 463).

The review of literature reflected additional questions and concerns related to pedagogical leadership. Male and Palaiologou (2015) stated:

- leadership should be context dependent not model dependent

- leadership and pedagogy – the two terms together – are ambiguous and unexamined

- leadership – there is no one right way of acting – "models"

- leadership cannot take center stage in the process, unless the term pedagogy is understood and how it is enacted with educational organizations,

- leadership behaviors and practices should be shaped by pedagogy, rather than the other way as current dominant leadership theories tend to claim.

The questions and concerns will be addressed in the following section as gaps and next steps are identified in the literature.

Pedagogical Leadership: Next Steps and Gaps

Even with questions and concerns regarding pedagogical leadership, the literature is consistent in its call for advancing the ideas contained in pedagogical leadership, making it a form of leadership worth pursuing. Male and Palaiologou (2015) have acknowledged their own questions but have also stated a desire to examine the construct of pedagogical leadership more fully to create an understanding of the dual relationship of pedagogical leadership with teaching and learning, avoiding an interpretation that is "too simplistic for the 21st century" (p 215). Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) have contended that they are committed to further exploration of pedagogical leadership. They presented some possibilities for next steps:

- to be productive, teachers must experience principals' pedagogical leadership as a learning experience instead of them being governed or scrutinized - surveillance

- to engage teachers in conversations with other teachers so that individual learning becomes organizational learning

- to identify the impact on how teachers and their work is affected by the quality of pedagogical leadership actions. (p. 866)

Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) stated, "There is no one best pedagogical leadership practice–pedagogical leadership, due to its complexity, is a qualitative concept that can include both the novice and experienced leader" (p.866). The challenge for principals is to evolve as pedagogical leaders, based on experiences and new knowledge, needs of the school, goals, and results. They indicated that understanding how leaders affect others requires detailed studies of both principals' learning and how they act in their daily work. This "calls for more empirical studies related to principals' pedagogical leadership" (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014, p. 866). They further

emphasised that learning is key—not just for students but for teachers and principals. Male and Palaiologou (2015) stated,

> We are all of the firm opinion, based on research that such a leadership approach should be encouraged through the construct of pedagogical leadership—while not forgetting the importance of being accountable to the wider educational community, as well as the local one. (p. 227)

In reviewing these concerns, questions have surfaced that related to the tentativeness of pedagogical leadership and have spurred the authors' desires for further research rather than limiting exploration.

Pedagogical Leadership: Closing

The conversation around pedagogical leadership is ongoing and, as Male and Palaiologou (2015) stated, "This dialogue will never be complete in any discussion of pedagogy……there is no final point of permanent and perfect equilibrium" (p. 228). Thinking about this statement and the proposed research to follow, I am reminded that the process of leadership is ever evolving and in a state of disequilibrium. Male and Palaiologou made an additional point, that trying to finalize theoretical models of pedagogy may even "entail the danger of limiting practice rather than developing practices which expound alternate ways of doing things with children and to the enrichment of pedagogy" (p. 228). "Pedagogical leadership is a work in progress" (Male & Palaiologou, 2015, p. 229).

As I reviewed the literature on pedagogical leadership, it became clear that it was the leadership approach most closely aligned with relational trust, as building relationships for greater leadership participation requires trust so that practitioners can challenge practice and take risks without fear of reprisal or reprimand (Murray & McDowall Clark, 2013).

Thus, we are more than ever convinced that teacher leaders and their principals must

deliberate and strategize together for the provision of optimum arrangements and

opportunities that lead pedagogical enhancement through a school wide approach.

Moreover, teacher leaders and principals must work mutualistically developing a culture

of relational trust and hope with an agreed school vision for leading pedagogical

enhancement. (Conway & Andrews, 2015, p. 137)

Relational Trust

Robinson (2010) indicated that

effective instructional leadership probably requires leaders to be knowledgeable about how

to align administrative procedures and processes to import learning outcomes, to be highly

skilled in using their knowledge to solve the myriad of problems that arise in the course of

improving learning and teaching in their own contexts, and to use their knowledge, their

problem-solving ability and their interpersonal skills in ways that build relational trust in

their school community. (p. 21)

Leaders benefit from effective problem-solving skills and processes. Robinson (2020)

found that leaders "need help with how to integrate relationship building with problem solving in

the context of their own emotionally laden on-the-job- problems" (p. 19). To trust is to be

vulnerable. Robinson (2007) stated, "In the context of schooling, relational trust involves a

willingness to be vulnerable to another party because one has confidence that he or she will

fulfill the obligations and expectations relevant to the shared task of educating children" (p. 18).

An environment of relational trust and vulnerability provides opportunity to enhance teacher

practice. While Robinson (2010) indicated that the relational trust is a significant capability

impacting both student and teacher learning within a school, her research remains unclear as to how principals go about creating a culture of relational trust within their schools.

Building leadership capabilities involves creating conditions so the relevant capabilities can be exercised and developed (Robinson, 2010). With these conditions in place, leadership teams can learn and practice. Learning alone is not enough to lead intentionally and effectively with the capabilities in mind. Robinson's empirical findings (2010) demonstrated that the study of relational trust provided "the most complete set of evidence about the links between leadership capability and student outcomes" (p. 6). Robinson stated that on "conceptual grounds, alone, a strong case can be made for a leadership capability in the area of relationships" (p.15). The first concept reflects that the importance of relationships is evident from the fact that leadership is, by definition, a social process; qualities of relationships integrated into descriptions of task performance is the second concept (2010).

Relational trust is an essential element within a leadership model (Robinson, 2011). Bryk and Schneider (2002), in their 3-year longitudinal study, found that leaders build relational trust by modeling and expecting the four qualities on which it is based: respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity. Robinson (2011) proposed that leaders model these four qualities and earn trust by valuing and listening to the ideas of others, being open to influence, caring about staff members' personal and professional lives, dealing with people who undermine the group's efforts, and making decisions and taking action that advances the best interests of children. As a school principal, these four qualities are invaluable to me in creating an environment of relational trust. It is important to be intentional in developing these qualities and to have the mindset of focusing on them in every situation, in every meeting, and in every interaction with all stake holders.

Walker et al. (2010) and Kutsyuruba et al. (2016) suggested that understanding trust dynamics in schools is vital, and that the instrumental role in fostering trust in schools lies in the scope of school administrators' everyday activity. In schools, opportunities to develop relational trust present themselves all day long. With a focus on developing relational trust, leaders will consistently act on those opportunities rather than letting them pass by. The process of trust-building is a complex process "requiring energy, time, consistency, and persistence on the part of the school leader" (Walker et al., 2010, p. 43).

Developing skills that assist in creating an environment of relational trust requires practice, intentionality, and reflection. By creating a culture of relational trust with all leaders and all organizational members, moving forward with common purpose and direction can be the focus of the work. Being a leader of teacher practice involves initiating change in practice. Trust can become an agency of change through building trusting relationships (Murray & McDowell Clark, 2013). Within an environment of relational trust, a positive attitude toward innovation and risk and enhanced professional commitment becomes more developed and creates a healthy environment where we can develop and implement pedagogical leadership.

Staff members' appreciation of relational trust is represented by Sosik and Dionne's (1997) description of trust-building as the "process of establishing respect and instilling faith into followers based on integrity, honesty and openness" (p 16); however, the authors did not use the term relational trust. They stated that leaders establish an atmosphere of trust by their daily actions: knowing the concerns of employees, knowing what motivates employees, and knowing the necessary conditions for employees to operate at levels of maximum effectiveness. Commitment is intentional when one dedicates the time that is required to know both the people and the conditions.

As Walker et al. (2010) noted, the principal needs to be trustworthy and model trustworthy behavior by following and enforcing school-wide values in his or her decision-making. For a principal, the importance and value of modelling in every aspect of the role is essential. Modelling the school-wide values in decision making reflects the integrity of the principal and contributes to the development of relational trust. By being mindful, as well as modelling, leaders will be more effective in creating an environment of relational trust, which is one of the necessary conditions for professional learning (Cranston, 2011). A healthy environment that is focused on professional learning is led well by pedagogical leadership focused on the core business of teaching and learning.

Robinson (2011) indicated that leadership is about tackling the work that builds trust, "through learning and through making progress together" (p. 43). Inherent within Robinson's claim is the need to tackle the work collectively. When leaders create conditions for teachers and leaders to learn together, more opportunity is provided for improved student performance (Robinson, 2011). "Effective professional learning is a collective rather than individual endeavor because the work of teaching all students to success is a collective endeavor" (Robinson, p. 106). As Robinson determined, there are three reasons supporting this statement. The first is that student learning in their previous years of schooling is the most powerful predictor of their future improved academic performance, which makes it critically important for teachers to work together. Students achieve with the collective effort of teachers. The second reason is that it is challenging for teachers to critique their own practice. With a well-functioning professional learning community, a more in-depth collective analysis of practice can be facilitated (Robinson, 2011). The third reason is that with a higher coherence of the instructional program, teacher professional learning opportunities are likely to be more productive, which increases teacher

confidence and as a result, teachers "taking more responsibility for students learning and well-being" (Robinson, p. 107). Building a higher coherence of program is a collective endeavor. With a lower coherence, it is difficult for teachers to understand one another's practice because they do not have a shared language (Robinson, 2011). "Effective teacher learning is a collective endeavor that embraces every person who has responsibility for the instructional area under development (Robinson, 2011). As leaders tackle the work collectively in creating conditions for collaborative professional learning, there are more opportunities to improve student performance and to build relational trust between teachers and leaders.

"Effective leaders are great communicators and must be good listeners" (Crippen, 2005, p. 6). Collaborative leadership and decision making involves careful listening, examination of the strengths and challenges of the decisions, respect, personal regard, integrity, and the opportunity for feedback from all stakeholders, with concrete plans in place to assess and adjust. During this process, emotions are involved. As Beatty (2011) suggested, emotions have finally made their way onto the agenda. Beatty discussed the ground -breaking work of Hargreaves and acknowledged that when emotions are visible, isolation and insulation can be avoided and progress can be made. It is through the tough work that relational trust is developed. The tough work requires vision: that is, intentionality. The purpose must be crystal clear, or the question exists, "Why are we doing the tough work?" With intentionality and relational trust, we do not need to ask staff members to buy in. They want in.

Bhindi and Duignan (1997) pointed out that leaders in the new century will need to be more sensitive and caring in their attitudes and relationships, and more adaptable and flexible in their practices, if they are to release the potential and tap the diversity of talents of those who work with them. Staff members and students fill the building with talent and potential, and the

leader has the joy of tapping into the diversity of those talents. Through pedagogical leadership and relational trust, the potential in people is recognized and the talent is brought to life. The key element is intentionality. The talent and potential make the most difference when the model is in place and the vision is transparent. Everyone knows in which direction to send his or her energy. Bhindi and Duignan noted that leaders earn their allegiance through authentic actions and interactions in trusting relationships. Such leaders help nurture, inspire, and empower others. Relational trust and intentionality are essential elements in achieving goals.

Cranston (2011) stated that relational trust requires increased focus on and visibility of the adult social relationships in school, and that it has to be built and sustained to be active. Principals need to continually nurture trust, and this takes time, commitment, and effective communication. It is apparent that a conscious effort and intentionality are required to create relational trust.

Leithwood and Louis (2011) found that principals' behavior is more important than the levels of trust principals evoke. Behavior and levels of trust are empirically part of a bundle that is difficult to unentangle. Trust alone, without effective leadership to support it, may be of little consequence for students, but their data suggested that teachers' relationships with each other and their trust in the principal cannot be easily disaggregated. In this critique from Leithwood and Louis of a focus on trust bundled with effective leadership, a pedagogical leadership approach supports their thinking. By leading with a focus on teaching and learning, trust and pedagogical leadership are linked together and therefore the focus on the work on trust is held by learning.

Understanding trust in professional relationships and fostering healthy cultures of trust in school environments is vital (Blau, 1986; Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Merton, 1957; Scanlan,

2012). It is the vital work that needs to be intentional, and a component of the intentionality is caring, an enabling relational condition of trust (Louis et al., 2016). Findings demonstrate "significant positive relationships among caring principal leadership, student academic support and teachers' sense of collective responsibility" (p. 310). With an awareness and understanding of the value of trust and caring, the effectiveness of developing and implementing a pedagogical leadership model will be enhanced. A combination of leadership with a focus on the core business of teaching and learning and a commitment to creating trusting and caring relationships increases student achievement. "Studies have long found that it is the combination of strong academic press and strong academic and social support that benefit students most in their engagement in school, in their academic success, and in their personal well-being" (Lee & Smith, 1999, p. 311).

The difficult challenge for school leadership is learning how to cultivate and manage communities of teaching and learning within pedagogical leadership and embody a balance of press and support (2016). Ancess (2000) referred to this as a condition of nurture and rigor. As a leader, I believe so strongly in the balance of nurture and rigor for teachers and students. With an intentional focus on creating a trusting and caring environment within an environment of academic rigor, students and teachers will feel cared for and successful in their learning.

To support leaders, Louis et al. (2016) developed a conceptual framework that defines caring as a quality of social relationships with several core elements:

- Attentiveness and authentic knowledge of others – grounded in empathy – students aware if teachers are paying attention to them

- Motivational displacement – care for others in a selfless way

- Situationality – students experience by cultivation of their own interest and passions

(Noddings, 2005)

- Mutuality – caring roles are not fixed

- Authenticity – caring requires openness, transparency and genuineness (Noddings, 1991)

Walker et al. (2010) shared a special description of schools that deserves celebration. They indicated that "schools are mysteries to be embraced and wonderfully complicated and intricate settings where the addition of each unique person exponentially and beautifully complexifies the life-world of those the school environment hosts" (p. 24). "Trust acts as an antitoxin, a health-giving ingredient for good will, excellent working conditions, and enhanced learning experiences" (Walker et al., 2010, p. 24). "Trusting relationships, once established, are reasonably robust and despite being fragile and prone to breaking, may be enduring in nature and subject to hope of restoration and renewal" (Walker et al., 2011, p. 491). With these statements in mind, an approach to effective leadership would embrace leading to constantly nurture the trustworthy relationships and environment, maintaining a focus on the core business of developing teacher practice and enhancing student learning, while being careful to not take the well-established culture of trust for granted. Schools are complicated, and they host the individuality of each unique member. As each person is introduced into the environment, special attention is required to care for the person as well as the culture of trust.

Table 3

Summary Table—Relational Trust

	Why?	Beliefs
Byrk and Schneider – (2002)	Understanding trust in professional relationships and fostering healthy cultures of trust in school environments is vital.	- Respect - Personal Regard - Competence - Integrity

Robinson (2011) Student-Centered Leadership	"Leaders might understand the theory of student–centered leadership, but if they cannot develop trust among leaders, teachers, parents, and students they will have great difficulty practicing it" (Robinson, 2011, p. 17).	- valuing and listening to the ideas of others - being open to influence - caring about staff members' personal and professional lives - dealing with people who undermine the group's efforts - making decisions and taking action that advances the best interests of children
Sosik and Dionne (1997)	To establish respect and instill faith into followers.	- Integrity - Honesty - Openness
Bhindi and Duignan (1997)	To earn allegiance and trusting relationships.	- Authentic Actions and Interactions - Sensitive and caring in attitude and relationships
Cranston (2011)	Emphasizes that relational trust creates the conditions for professional learning.	- Increased focus on visibility of adult social relationships - Needs to be built and sustained to be active and to create conditions for relational trust
Leithwood and Louis (2011)	Trust alone, without instructional and shared leadership to support it, may be of little consequence for students, but their data suggested that teachers' relationships with each other and their trust in the principal cannot be easily disaggregated.	- Principal behavior is more important than the levels of trust principals evoke - Behavior and trust are bundled together
Louis, Murphy, Smylie (2016)	What caring leadership does?	- Five Core Components of Caring - Attentiveness - Motivational displacement

Exploratory Analysis	• Engages in vision of being a caring school • Engages school community in self-assessments related to caring • Shapes school organizational structure through supportive structures and social relationships • Addresses the immediate needs of students, teachers, and families – may also promote longer term outcomes of: • Belonging • Engagement • Personal Sense of well-Being • Academic success • Caring at play all of the time.	➢ Situationality ➢ Mutuality ➢ Authenticity • Authentic knowledge and understanding of the cared for • Caring actions motivated by advancing success and personal well-being of the cared for
Walker (2010)	• Trust dynamics are vital • Trust acts as an antitoxin, health-giving ingredient for good will, excellent working conditions and enhanced learning experiences • Enduring in nature and subject to hope and restoration and renewal	• Lies in the scope of the administrators' everyday activity • Complex process requires energy, time, consistency, and persistence and empowerment • Administrator needs to be trustworthy and model trustworthy behavior by following and enforcing school wide values in decision making

Developing relationships is critical in building relational trust as a pedagogical leader. For teachers to share and critique their practices with one another and their leaders, relational trust is an essential element of the process. Thompson (1998, as cited in Louis et al., 2016) noted that

"as important as caring seems to be, its meaning in schools is vague, ambiguous, unsettled and weakly explicated" (p. 312). Further study will assist me in developing a less vague, ambiguous, and unsettled understanding and a contextual understanding of the contributing value of relational trust to pedagogical leadership.

Success and wellbeing of both teachers and students in schools requires caring leadership (Louis et al., 2016). "While the work is exploratory, it points in promising directions for further theory building, research and development of leadership practice" (p. 311), and this is an open door for continued exploration. There are relatively few educational studies that have completed an in-depth study of caring among formal leaders (Louis et.al, 2016). Given the indirect relationship to student achievement through academic support that caring leadership demonstrates, further research is important for the academic success and well-being of students (Louis et al., 2016). Louis et al. also stated "another enabling relational condition of caring is trust, which creates a sense of dependability in long-term relationships and integrity in those of shorter duration" (p. 314 – 315). Building long term relational trust is "the type of trust that is essential for doing the hard work of improving teaching ad learning" (Robinson, 2011, p.17). Trust is a condition of caring. This study seeks to address the gap within the research literature on pedagogical leadership and relational trust.

Conceptual Framework

To assist in answering my research question of how relational trust is developed within pedagogical leadership in an elementary school, I formulated a conceptual framework, which evolved from the synthesis of the literature I reviewed, to visually represent my proposed inquiry and to create a guide for the literature review. The conceptual framework outlines the relationship between relational trust and teachers' positive attitude toward innovation, risk, and

professional commitment through pedagogical leadership. The conceptual framework also illustrates that as the teachers' attitudes and commitment are enhanced, the students' improved academic and positive social outcomes may be impacted. The leadership capability, relational trust, and the dimensions of pedagogical leadership are the focus of shared and collaborative learning within the school leadership team. The focus of my inquiry, anchored in Bronfenbrenner's social-ecological theory, is relational trust through pedagogical leadership. This consists of four determinants: interpersonally respectful, personal regard for others, competent in role, and personal integrity (Robinson, 2011).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
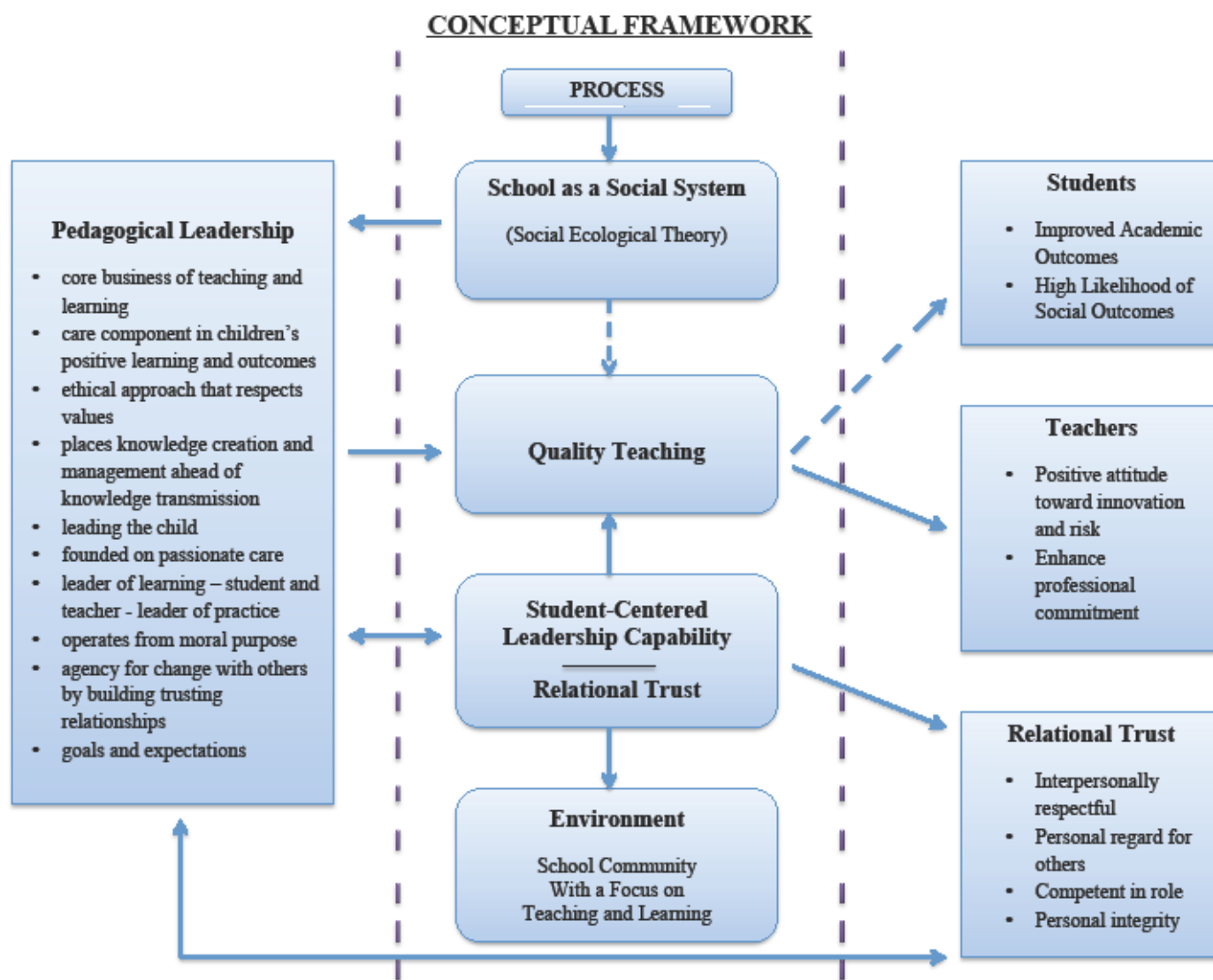
The process of creating a conceptual framework was a valuable part of my inquiry based on my research problem and question, which I previously indicated was also a frame for my literature review and guided my research. It "serves as the superstructure for the work" (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017, p. 9).

Literature Review Summary

Understanding the development of relational trust within pedagogical leadership was the focus of this inquiry, which required a critical review of current literature. My interpretations of

the literature were woven throughout the review, informing my understanding of the research and how that research contributed to the creation of the conceptual framework for the study. The critical review explored educational leadership, student-centered and pedagogical leadership, as well as the development of relational trust within leadership.

The review of literature on educational leadership provided an understanding that further research is needed on leadership, to continue the ongoing conversation, so that stronger links are created with pedagogy, assessment, and student learning (Robinson, 2006). As pedagogical leadership is focused on the core business of teaching and learning, researching pedagogical leadership is an important next step.

Reviewing the literature of student-centered leadership included a representation and description of Robinson's (2011) leadership capabilities and dimensions. Robinson (2011) provided an understanding that "relationships are central to success on all the dimensions," emphasizing that, as a leader, developing relational trust through the work is essential (p. 15).

The review of pedagogical leadership literature addressed questions related to understandings, beliefs, approaches, concerns, gaps, and next steps. In summarizing this review, the common theme in understanding pedagogical leadership was represented as a focus on teacher learning and practice as well as student learning, identifying the development of trusting relationships as integral in pedagogical leadership. Leaders learning together, developed by creating conditions for learning and capacity building, was identified as an essential reason and effective approach for pedagogical leadership (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014; Fullan, 2013; Sergiovanni, 1998). Finally, questions surfaced that related to the tentativeness of pedagogical leadership (Leo, 2014; Male & Palaiologou, 2015). The questions spurred the desire for further research rather than limiting exploration (Arlestig & Tornsen, 2014; Brandon et al., 2015;

Conway & Andrews, 2015; Fullan, 2013; Hattie, 2012; Leo, 2014; Male & Palaiologou, 2015; Murray & McDowall Clark, 2013; Robinson et al., 2008; Webb, 2005; Wu, 2017). As Male and Palaiologou, (2015) remarked, pedagogical leadership is an ongoing conversation.

Exploring literature related to relational trust in leadership was the final step, which provided an understanding that developing caring relationships is critical in building relational trust as a pedagogical leader. For teachers to share and critique their practices with one another and with their leaders, relational trust is an essential element of the process. Given the indirect relationship to student achievement through academic support that caring leadership demonstrates, further research is important for the academic success and well-being of students (Louis et al., 2016; Timperley, 2011).

The ongoing conversation of pedagogical leadership, the core business of teaching and learning, with a focus on relational trust is intriguing to me. Thinking about creating the conditions for professional learning and capacity building for leaders to learn together will assist in developing a culture of relational trust, where teachers share practice. Identifying the "how" is the next question. Timperley (2011) stated, "A key leadership mindset is creating a learning-oriented design in schools that reflects the complexity required to create appropriate conditions, structures, and rhythms for professional learning" (p. 93). This study will focus on understanding the rhythm between relational trust and pedagogical leadership. I look forward to tuning into the rhythms of professional learning that involve bringing the theory and practice together, "…knowing that this is not the work of one leader" (Timperley, 2011, pp. 94-95). "Leadership is more like the patterns of influence distributed across many players" (Timperley, 2011, pp. 94-95). "Research dating back almost 70 years" (Leithwood et. al, 2004, p.5) observed that "neither

superintendents nor principals can do the whole leadership task by themselves. Successful

leaders develop and count on contributions from many others" (p.5)

Smylie and Bennet, (2005, as cited in Robinson, 2010) stated, "our understanding of

effective school leadership practice has grown tremendously in recent years……. however, our

understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for school leaders to be

effective is much less well developed" (p. 141). Enactment of leadership learning is key, and

requires an understanding of how to enact (Smylie & Bennett). As Robinson (2010) stated,

"Evidence about effective leadership practices is not the same as evidence about the capabilities

that leaders need to confidently engage in those practices" (p. 2). The question is, how do leaders

engage and enact? My inquiry focussed on the development of relational trust across the formal

and informal leaders of the school, within a context of pedagogical leadership.

Chapter 3: Research Approach

The purpose of this qualitative practical action research study was to understand how relational trust was developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. Walker, et al. (2010) suggested that understanding trust dynamics in schools is vital, and that the instrumental role in fostering trust in schools lies within the scope of school administrators' everyday activities. It is important to explore the everyday activities of administrators and to think more intentionally about how relational trust is developed within a school environment through pedagogical leadership, the focus of this study.

Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach for this study and describes the value of the methodology of action research. Throughout the chapter, I follow a thread that connects my rationale to my epistemological stance of constructivism, connects constructivism to my theoretical perspective of social – ecological theory, and then stitches my explanation of the research setting and sample selection to my description of the data collection methods and data analysis processes. I use the conceptual framework as a guide. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness are also highlighted, and an explanation of the limitations and delimitations of the study close the chapter.

Rationale for using Qualitative Research

Qualitative research values the perspectives of the research participant and "delves into the essence of the topic" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 36). To better understand how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school, this study emphasized the participants' perspectives. My study of relational trust was designed as qualitative research, to capture that essence of these perspectives and of the topic. It was a journey that required trust within the research design as well as exploring the question of relational trust. Thus, the study

lent itself to advancing knowledge and understanding through a process of gradual discovery through several iterations and by requiring the participants' perspectives and voices. As qualitative research emphasizes exploration, discovery, and description, it was a logical design choice for the question of this study on how to develop relational trust (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The design was open, emergent, flexible, and creative—with the goal of generating ideas (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). With a qualitative research design, the researcher and the participants adopt an insider point of view, reflecting on their own voices as well as acknowledging personal values and experiences and how these values and experiences contribute to the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The insider point of view was essential to my study of understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership.

Creswell (2015) identified three factors that were important to me in selecting the most appropriate research approach, quantitative or qualitative. The first factor is matching the approach to the research problem, the second is fitting the research report to the audience, and the third is relating the approach to personal experience and training (Creswell, 2015). Determining how relational trust was developed required extensive exploration to develop a deep understanding. The research report was prepared with an audience of educational leaders in mind, which met the criteria for Creswell's second factor. The third factor was matching my own personal experience and training to the approach. I have been a school principal for 20 years. My experience as a principal situated me to address the question of how to develop relational trust in an elementary school. These three factors added to the rationale of selecting a qualitative research approach for my study.

From my epistemological stance of constructivism, the purpose of this study was to construct meaning (Scales, 2013). An understanding of the development of relational trust, from

the perspectives of the participants as they actively engaged with each other and with me, was

constructed as we learned, planned, practiced, observed, and reflected on how to develop

relational trust through pedagogical leadership. Crotty's (1998) statement that "different people

may construct meaning in different ways even in relation to the same phenomenon" (p. 9) is a

reminder that, within a constructivist point of view, interpretations of events may vary; therefore,

I needed to be open to alternative interpretations of events as they unfolded. Bloomberg and

Volpe (2012) suggested that the only way a researcher can achieve the understanding of the

participants' perspectives and meanings is for the researcher to become involved in the reality of

the participants and to interact with them in meaningful ways. This was an exciting part of the

research. Through interaction, meaning was constructed. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) explained

that the central assumption of constructivism is that reality is being socially constructed. This

was reflected in the process of this research study, as the participants had opportunity to work

together, share their personal experiences, and create multiple meanings from their reflections. I

value the constructivist researchers' role being that of passionate participant (Guba & Lincoln,

1998; Lincoln & Guba 2000). My theoretical perspective, social-ecological theory, guided my

research design.

Rationale for Action Research Methodology

Creswell (2015) defined practical action research as

a design in action research in which educators study a specific school situation with a view

toward improving practice. This form of action research focuses on a small-scale research

project, narrowly focussed on a specific problem or issue and undertaken by individual

teachers or teams within a school or school district. (p. 620)

Hinchey (2008) also described practical action research as research focused on improving practice by identifying a specific classroom problem and working toward implementing a specific change strategy. For my study, with a close connection to Creswell's (2015), Hinchey's (2008), and Kemmis et al. (2014) definitions of practical action research, I organized the rationale for action research methodology into the categories of the heart, model, and fit of action research.

The Heart of Action Research

I was inspired by Kemmis et al. (2014) and their description of the purpose of practical action research, which is "guided by an interest in educating or enlightening practitioners so they can act more wisely and prudently" (p. 14). Their definition clearly aligned with the purpose of my study, relational trust through pedagogical leadership. I was energized by my study because I believed I was enlightened throughout the process and gradually developed a new wisdom toward my practice. Kemmis et al. identified two additional approaches to action research: technical and critical. Technical action research is "guided by an interest in improving control over outcomes" and critical action research is "guided by an interest in emancipating people and groups from irrationality, and injustice" (Kemmis et al., p. 14).

Practical action research is an effective methodology to explore my question related to understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership. I wanted to learn more about leadership because I had so many questions and, knowing that questions are at the heart of action research, I was inspired to implement a practical action research methodology (McNiff, 2013). Hinchey (2008) suggested that action research is crucially different from traditional research efforts, because the researcher is not an outsider. The researcher is an insider, such as a citizen of a school or other community, who explores improvements in areas that they

think are important. An action research process allows the opportunity for an insider to conduct an inquiry. Knowing that action research is described as suitable for any person who wishes to improve performance, it makes sense that the researcher can be the person who is passionate about the project (Lesha, 2014). As action research is also usually driven by the practitioner's personal judgements in decisions to act for good, the opportunity to facilitate a research project with heart is evident in action research (Lesha, 2014). I was motivated by my desire to improve my own practice and I facilitated my research project with passion and heart.

Action research is also about finding ways to encourage change (McNiff, 2013, 2017). I value the premise of action research, which is that I change myself. I will not set a goal of trying to change other people; sustainable change happens from within (McNiff, 2013). I have learned so clearly over the years that personal reflection is a valuable skill to develop and grow, both within this profession and in promoting change in other areas. I am inspired to reflect on my own practice, during this research work—an inquiry by the self, into the self (McNiff, 2013, 2017). I am committed to the research involving a critique of my own practice. I chose relational trust through pedagogical leadership as my research topic because I wanted to continue learning about effective leadership models and because, as a practitioner researcher, I wanted to complete on-the-job, practice-based research that focussed on my own leadership practice (McNiff, 2013, 2017). It was important that, as an educator, I intentionally identified the problems of practice that guided my inquiry and my learning, and that these in turn guided my practice. With this process in place, I was dedicated to engaging in critical self-reflective practice, initiating research on myself with my colleagues as participants (McNiff, 2013, 2017). Before I started, reflection was instrumental. It was important to accept the responsibility of ensuring that my own life was in order before I made judgements about other people who honestly critique their

practice (McNiff, 2013, 2017). I wanted to offer explanations for what I was doing and hold

myself accountable for my contributions, with a view of contributing to good order (McNiff,

2013, 2017). In a commitment to good order, I found the heart of action research.

The Model of Action Research

Kemmis (2010) stated, "Action research concerns action, and transforming people's

practices (as well as their understandings of their practices and the conditions under which they

practise)" (p. 417). This exploration of relational trust through pedagogical leadership involved

continual reflection, assessment, and adjustment. Lesha (2014) described action research as a

spiral process that includes problem investigation, taking action, and fact-finding about the result

of action. This spiral process is an appropriate model for the exploration of the development of

relational trust. The action is not only to apply knowledge, but to produce new knowledge.

Action research was a valuable approach for this study because the three primary features—

collaboration, mutual education, and acting on results—developed from basic questions that

were relevant to my research (Macaulay et al.,1999) made them more reliable. Hinchey (2008)

described the action research as

> conducted by those inside the community, pursues improvement or better understanding in
>
> some area the researcher considers important, involves systematic inquiry, which includes
>
> information gathering, analysis and reflection, leads to an action plan, which frequently
>
> generates a new cycle to the process (p. 4).

I wanted to study my own local practices, involve team-based inquiry, and focus on leadership.

It was important to me to work closely with the formal and informal leaders on our staff

who were also interested and engaged as participants in the research process. This included

recognizing what was effective in developing relational trust and building on strengths, as well

as understanding what needed attention and taking action to improve it, to everyone's benefit (McNiff, 2013). When we learn together as a team of professionals, people are energized, which results in a culture of commitment to student learning and to adult learning. It is a cascading model that has a ripple effect, beginning with leadership learning impacting teachers' professional learning, which then impacts teacher practice and student learning. I also wanted to be a committed and authentic participant in the process, demonstrating my integrity rather than staying in the role of armchair philosopher (McNiff, 2013).

The Fit of Action Research

As Lesha (2014) observed, action research reveals in its nature characteristics of "circle within circle" processes. Action research is very suitable for education, as its main purpose is to help teachers as researchers solve their teaching problems "in action." Lesha (2014) stated that the process of action research allows teachers and leaders to learn about their teaching while they improve their teaching, because action research is a cyclical process.

Willing participants involved in the study were to be dedicated to the learning, understanding that the process was about helping other people to think for themselves and to realize their humanity in doing so (McNiff, 2013). I wanted to create the "symmetrical, reciprocal relationship between the practitioner and others involved in and affected by the practice" (Kemmis et al., 2015, p. 15). I wanted to value the others' voices even though I hoped there was a sense the project was self-directed (Kemmis et al., 2015).

I believed that our teachers were energized by this belief, inspired to help others, and would learn that action research "is not a thing in itself and that the term implies a process of people interacting together and learning with and from one another in order to understand their practices and situations, and to take purposeful action to improve them" (McNiff, 2013, p. 25).

Lesha (2014) stated that action research is a means of improving student achievement through more effective teaching practices and administration of schools. Action research seeks to answer questions and solve problems that arise from daily life and puts findings into immediate practice (McKay, 1992; Twine & Martinek, 1992). These two statements supported the process of action research in my project. McNiff (2013) stated that action research becomes a process of generating knowledge in action for action, that it puts ideas into practice, and that practice becomes the creation of new knowledge. The plan for the research project was to create new knowledge and knowledge of practice. To completely understand the action research process and the fit with the research project, a through line was required. When the data was collected and compiled, the readers needed a through line so that they could see from where they had come, how each step relates to and is grounded in previous steps, and how the end links with the beginning (McNiff, 2013).

Critiques of Action Research

Although the model of action research is an appropriate fit for the inquiry of developing relational trust through pedagogical leadership, there are criticisms from educational researchers. Action research has been considered ambiguous because "there is no singular approach or shared model underlying the many projects that parade under its banner" (van Manen, 1990, p. 152). McTaggart (1994) countered this criticism, stating, "Action research is not a 'method' or a 'procedure' but a series of commitments to observe and problematize through practice the principles for conducting social enquiry" (p. 315). Noffke (2009) contended,

> Action research offers a way to understand and thereby use action research as a means
> not solely for knowledge generation (which is a form of research it entails), but for
> personal and professional development (for which as a form of learning it is used), and

for contributions to social justice (which its articulation to social movements and social change demonstrates). Across its varied forms, action research is a set of commitments (a methodology, in Harding's (1987) sense of the term), rather than a set of techniques for research (a method). It also embodies various epistemologies, varied ways of establishing its knowledge claims. (p. 21)

Another challenge to action research came shortly after Lewin (1946, 1952) published papers describing action research as a proceeding in spiral steps. This spiral created some initial confusion, leading Becker (1967) to ask the question in relation to action research, "Whose side are we on?" (p. 11). David (2002) countered, "Academics might be more bold, and suggest we are on our own side" (p 11). The "notion of detached truth was thrown into doubt" (David, 2002, p. 11), and some questioned whether researchers can detach themselves from the inquiry or not. David's concern was that this form of research seeks to be democratic and opposes a "professional expert model" (p. 12). Noffke (2009) built upon David's (2002) argument, indicating that action research encompasses the professional, personal, and political dimensions of research rather than positioning researchers on one side and participants on the other side of the research debate.

Reflecting on the critique of action research, the strengths may still be regarded as more important and significant than the weaknesses, particularly when evaluated against other research approaches and paradigms (McKay & Marshall, 2001). Thinking about action research as two interlinked and interactive cycles may be more helpful and enlightening for researchers, with one cycle focused on the problem-solving interest and one cycle focused on the research (McKay & Marshall, 2001). This conceptualization provides clarity and allows for better planning, evaluation, and monitoring of the action research process. The interconnected cycles may also

improve the rigor because the process requires researchers to pay more considered attention to their research interests and responsibilities. Action research is not just like consultancy, which has been an additional concern (McKay & Marshall, 2001). Instead, the process "facilitates researchers in being much more explicit about the reflection and learning process that seems to be part of the essence of action research" (McKay & Marshall, 2001, p. 57).

With the critique and this reflection in mind, action research was still the best approach for this study as the strengths of action research outweigh the weaknesses (McKay & Marshall, 2001). It was important to be aware of the concerns when initiating an action research study, so that the criticisms could be addressed.

Research Setting

The elementary school I selected for this study was a large school of Kindergarten to Grade 4 students, of whom approximately three quarters were English Language Learners. The school was located within a large urban school district, in Western Canada, and the school staff consisted of approximately 40 teachers and 15 support staff members. The 40 professionals included an administrative team of three teacher leaders, one assistant principal, and me, the principal of the school. Our staff opened the school, celebrating our school community of a diverse, multi-ethnic mix of cultures with approximately 30 different languages represented.

Before Research Study. Each year, I inquired about leadership learning with the staff, and the teachers of this school identified their desires and interests in learning about leadership. During the two-year period 2015–2017, with a large number of teachers expressing an interest, reflections and responses indicated there was significant interest in learning about leadership roles and models. I was inspired by the teachers' desire to learn more about the leadership that formed the basis for a more deliberate, more intentional focus of study framed by this research

inquiry. In the first year, 19 professional staff members began meeting to learn more about school leadership, the group consisting of five formal administrative leaders and 14 teacher leaders, and in the second year, there were 13 members, with the same number of formal leaders.

Eight leadership learning sessions were scheduled throughout each year to explore our understandings and new learning related to leadership. Through questions, reflective journals, resources such as books and articles, leadership competencies documents, skills, and experiences, as well as reflective conversations and stories, learning was facilitated. The process was energizing and healthy for the school culture, as we had the goal of student achievement, engagement, and well-being in mind. We were in our second year, and I took the opportunity to transition the school-based leadership learning sessions into action research, exploring the question "How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school?"

During the Research Study. According to action research process, the next stages were planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis et al., 2014). The cycle of this action research project was ongoing, as participants continued to learn more about relational trust through pedagogical leadership. As we learned more, we become aware of how much we had yet to learn. As the first cycle closed, more questions were generated for the following cycle, as I continued to reflect on my leadership practice. I continued to assess and adjust, as I learned the value of relational trust.

With the leadership learning sessions model in place, this research study was site specific and was "defined by and intimately linked to one or more locations" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). "A basic tenet of qualitative research is that each research setting is unique in its own

mix of people and contextual factors" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). For this action research study, the setting was unique, and the specific site was one school.

Research Participants

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) noted how determining who will participate is a key decision for the researcher. For the purposes of my unique, site-specific study, I used a purposeful research sample (Patton, 1990, 2001; Creswell, 2015). In this study of understanding how relational trust was developed through pedagogical leadership, the participants were engaged in and committed to the exploration. Their knowledge, experiences, and reflections were required for the next steps to be determined. The method of purposeful sampling chosen for this inquiry was homogenous. This method selects a small, homogenous group of participants and is useful for investigating a group or groups in depth (Patton, 1990).

The participants in this study were a select group of teachers from within the leadership learning sessions I held in the school during the lunch hour and after school. My supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen, attended one of the meetings and introduced the study to the group of teachers in the leadership session. The criteria, timeline, and process of the study were described (See Appendix A) and an opportunity to ask questions was provided. A copy of "Study Description for Participants" (See Appendix B) was also provided at the meeting. The second step was for participants to commit to the study by writing an expression of interest. After the meeting, 10 participants submitted an expression of interest to my supervisor. My supervisor collected the consent forms and notified each of the participants via email within a week of the meeting. The self-selected participants were informed by my supervisor, through a letter of invitation (See Appendix B), of the specific purpose and design of the research process and the data collection methods. An informed consent form (See Appendix C) was included with the letter of invitation,

and participants were able to email the signed consent form to Dr. Friesen. My supervisor communicated with the participants regarding components of the research from this point forward.

The research could only continue with these participants being purposefully selected from the group of teachers who participated in the leadership learning sessions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) wrote that the logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases. All teachers actively participated in the leadership learning sessions and had a voice in the learning. This research study included 10 participants in Cycle 1 and seven participants in Cycle 2, self-selected from our leaders, formal and informal, who participated in our leadership learning sessions throughout the year and who offered to participate in this study. The commitment to purposeful sampling also provided voice to individuals who typically might not be heard, and this provided another layer to the study (Creswell, 2015). With this dedication from the participants, the focus was to create insight and to understand the phenomenon (2012). Participants provided the richness of the study.

While all teachers within the school who had an interest in leadership were invited to attend the leadership learning sessions and all those who attended the sessions were invited to participate in this study, not all individuals chose to participate. Participants remained anonymous to me. I was aware of the number of participants but not the names. With more teachers attending the leadership learning sessions than participants in the study, I did not know which teachers were study participants and I am still unaware of who participated in the study.

I designed the learning sessions with all teachers in the leadership sessions, listening to and learning from the teachers. Their conversations, questions, and reflections guided me in planning and facilitating each of the leadership learning sessions. Each session was

approximately one hour in length. A typical leadership learning session agenda is illustrated in the following chart.

Table 4

A Typical Leadership Learning Session Agenda

Agenda Item	Time
Responding to Homework	10 Minutes
New Learning – Literature and Research	15 Minutes
Visual Journal Reflection	10 Minutes
Conversations	20 Minutes
Gem – Inspiration – Video – Quote	5 Minutes

As I had two roles, school principal and participant researcher, my supervisor also had a role in the process. So that no one would feel coerced to participate, the letter of initial contact was from my supervisor. It was anticipated that with this strategy teachers would feel less pressure to participate. A process was created to protect the identity of participants who had given informed consent. As each cycle of research was completed, the data was collected by my supervisor, Dr. Friesen.

Planning and Conducting Action Research

This research study was conducted during the 2018–2019 school year, after ethics approval from both the University of Calgary and the school district was received. With action research considered to be a "powerful yet cyclical framework of research, reflection, and action," the plan was to incorporate two cycles during the research period (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The study was ongoing throughout the year, involving the participants in responding to how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership.

Figure 3

Action Research – Practical Approach – Process and Timeline

Action Research – Practical Approach – Process and Timeline
2018 - 2019

September October November December 2018	→	November December January February 2018-2019	→	March April May 2019	→	June July August 2019
Cycle One Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect		Cycle One Data Collection and Analysis		Cycle Two Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect		Cycle Two Data Collection and Analysis
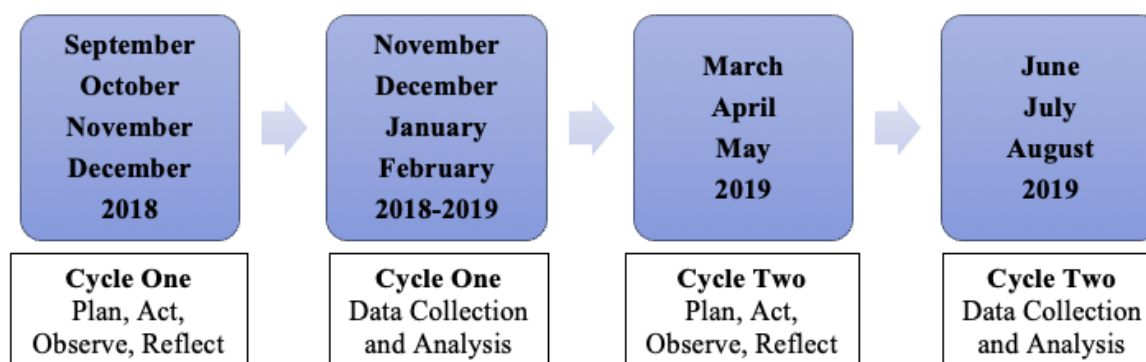
Data collected for this action research project supported triangulation and increased the

credibility and trustworthiness of the project and provided an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon under study as well (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Hinchey, 2008). It included

documents: namely, participant researcher field notes, and Cycle 1 survey responses and Cycle 2

survey responses (Creswell, 2015). Planning, agendas, and summaries from the leadership

learning sessions were also a source of data throughout the study. Reflective journals and stories

can provide a rich source of information that will document participant learning and growth. I

wanted to listen to stories that helped us to think more wisely about ourselves and our own

practice, and that unfolded the value of seeing anew (Walker, 2007).

The collection of data was ongoing throughout the study. Guiding questions and prompts

(See Appendix D) were provided in advance, offering time for reflection and preparation for

survey responses. An additional data collection approach in qualitative research is designing

questions for open-ended responses (Creswell, 2015). The participants had the opportunity to

respond to open-ended questions related to their understanding of the development of relational

trust through pedagogical leadership during the leadership learning sessions and in the survey

responses. The steps taken to preserve confidentiality and the anonymity of participants to safeguard data are described in the "Ethical Considerations" section of this chapter.

During my practical action research inquiry, I had three roles: participant researcher, principal, and author. As a participant researcher, I facilitated and participated in the leadership learning sessions. As a principal, I was living my practical action research inquiry of developing relational trust through pedagogical leadership in my own school. As I learned from the Cycles 1 and 2 survey responses and data, I immediately shared results with the staff and implemented new actions into my practice. As an author, I documented and wrote about each phase of my research inquiry.

Researcher Role

My rationale for this study originated from my own desire, as a principal, to ensure quality teaching by leading teacher learning and development, as represented in the conceptual framework. I was inspired by Kemmis et al. (2014) and their description of the purpose of practical action research, which is "guided by an interest in educating or enlightening practitioners so they can act more wisely and prudently" (p. 14). Kemmis (2014) contended that action research aims at changing three things: "'practitioners' practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practice" (p. 463). I have always believed that teachers' desire to improve their own practice becomes more genuine when they are working in a trusting environment. This study explored how I, an elementary school principal, developed relational trust with a group of teachers through a series of professional learning sessions. My practical action research study examined the understandings I developed about my practice and explored the conditions under which relational trust was built and the impact relational trust had on teacher practice.

My study was set in a Kindergarten to Grade 4 school with approximately 700 students. I am the principal of this school. It is located in a large urban school district, in one of the most ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse areas of that district. The inquiry included 10 study participants who were leaders, or individuals aspiring to be leaders, in formal and informal roles during Cycle 1, and seven participants during Cycle 2. This group participated in leadership learning sessions throughout the year, which I led. As both the principal of the school and the researcher, I facilitated two cycles of practical action research and gathered data from my participant researcher field notes, my leadership learning sessions reflective journal, and Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 surveys, in response to the over-arching question that frames this inquiry: How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school?

Field Notes as Participant Researcher. My participant researcher field notes included my observations and thoughts throughout the study. I wrote my notes when reflecting on the whole research process and when meeting with my supervisor. I documented conversations and questions.

Reflective Journal - Leadership Learning Sessions. My leadership learning sessions reflective journal included, specifically, my planning, agendas and summaries for the sessions and my reflections and responses of the sessions. After each session, I documented my thoughts, observations, questions, and the group conversation. I planned the next session in my journal, guided by my questions and the conversation.

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Surveys. The Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 surveys included open-ended questions and prompts designed and inspired by my conceptual framework. The questions were organized into three areas: relational trust, pedagogical leadership, and leadership learning

sessions. For each question, the participants were asked to respond to how leadership was demonstrated and to how the leadership practice could be enhanced.

Field Notes: Myself as Participant Researcher

Creswell (2015) explained that observation, as a data collection method, is a process of initiating and gathering open-ended, first-hand reflections by observing people and places in the research site. In this study, I was a participant and as a participant researcher I collected data as an observer of my own practice. The data evolved as I initiated the action research process of plan, act, observe, and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Creswell (2015) cautioned that a disadvantage to observations as data collection is that the observer may have limited access to sites and situations and may have difficulty in developing rapport with the participants. In this study, I had the advantage of working at the site and reflecting on my own practice. Observation is a well-accepted form of qualitative data collection.

Reflective Journal - Leadership Learning Sessions

During the leadership learning sessions, opportunities for conversations and discussions were facilitated. The leadership learning session planning, agendas, and researcher reflections, documented in my journal, were also a source of data. The conversations often went beyond the agenda, as teachers shared their own stories and experiences. The planned agenda was always just to initiate conversation.

Participant Cycle 1 Survey and Participant Cycle 2 Survey

At the close of each of the two action research cycles, participants completed a survey that included 11 questions and 20 prompts designed to guide responses and reflections related to understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership (See Appendix D). Byrk and Schneider's (2002) qualities of relational trust, which are identified by Robinson

(2011) as determinants of relational trust, were embedded in the design of the survey questions. The first part of the survey requested participants to respond to how leadership demonstrated relational trust with staff and how leadership could enhance relational trust with staff, based on the four qualities of interpersonally respectful, personal regard, competent in role, and personal integrity. The next part of the survey reflected quality teaching in the conceptual framework, requesting participants to reflect on their own teaching practice by responding to their own positive attitude toward innovation and risk and to the enhancement of their own professional commitment. The third part of the survey requested participants to respond to how leadership demonstrated pedagogical leadership with staff and how leadership could enhance pedagogical leadership with staff, based on components of pedagogical leadership, core business of teaching and learning, care component of children's positive outcomes, student learning, teacher practice, and goals and expectations. The last part of the survey requested participants to respond to how the leadership learning sessions impacted their ability to enhance the innovation and risk in their teaching and/or leadership practices and how the sessions impacted their professional commitment in their teaching and/or leadership practices. Teachers' visual journals surfaced in the survey responses. My study included three journals. The first was my field notes as the participant researcher, the second was my reflective journal for the planning of the leadership learning sessions, and the third was the visual journals that the participants referenced. Visual journals are a physical journal, similar to a sketch book, in which teachers identify their professional growth plans and professional practice journey. The visual journals create space to develop relationships and cycles of feedback.

Data Analysis

From data collection, I developed a thoughtful plan of data analysis and worked through it step by step, maintaining my time schedule, patience, and faith, as these are the most important factors in data analysis (Hinchey, 2008). Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) described the process of data analysis as beginning with a plan that can manage the large amount of data and "reducing it in a meaningful way" (p. 112). I searched for significant patterns and themes with the goal of constructing a framework that captured the essence of how relational trust was developed through pedagogical leadership (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). With patterns and themes identified, I organized the patterns with categories of my conceptual framework in mind, which became the "centerpiece in managing data" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 112). The following chart identifies my research question, data type, data source and method of analysis.

Table 5

Research Method: Research Question, Data Collection and Analysis Coherence

Primary Research Question: How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in elementary school?

Research Question:	Data Type:	Data Source:	Method of Analysis:
How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in elementary school?	Action Research – Practical

Participant Researcher Field Notes

Participant Researcher Observations and Reflections of Leadership Learning Sessions

Planning Agendas And Summaries

Cycle 1 Survey Responses

Cycle 2 Survey Responses | One Participant Researcher

Cycle 1 10 Self Selected Participants, past and present, from Leadership Learning Sessions

Cycle 2 7 Self Selected Participants, past and present, from Leadership Learning Sessions | Search for significant patterns with the goal of constructing a framework that will capture the essence of how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

With patterns identified, begin to organize the patterns into categories of the Conceptual Framework, which will become the "centerpiece in managing data" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 112).

I generally followed the classic and sequential analytical moves described by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014):
- Assigned color codes and themes to my field notes, journal and Cycle 1 and 2 survey responses
- Sorted and sifted through color coded materials to identify similar phrases and relationships between patterns and themes,
- Isolated patterns and processes and commonalities and differences and took them out into the field in the next wave of data collection
- Noted reflections in journals
- Gradually elaborated a small set of assertions, propositions, and generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database
- Compared generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge.

Other guides I kept in mind are as follows:
- coding with color, so that individual pieces of data belong to a particular category
- assigning initial codes to relevant quotes – namely, open coding
- processing open coding to a final coding schema
- coding all teachers as "Teacher" for confidentiality through Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Surveys
- sifting calmly through the chaos of raw data, looking for patterns and themes
- writing statements about the information contained in the data
- writing summaries, while looking for possible emerging patterns that inform analysis
- looking for contradictions in data
- theorizing: that is, developing interpretations of findings and explaining what I believe the findings mean (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). |

I continued to develop an organized data analysis plan throughout the process by manually

incorporating a variety of strategies with colored coding, tallying, and emotion coding and I

shared the data analysis steps throughout the process to enhance transparency. I began the first

cycle coding analysis process by reading through my field notes, reflective journal, and all

participant responses, searching for similar terms and phrases. As I read, I color-coded the terms

and phrases that were related to one another, so that individual pieces of data belonged to a

particular category. The next step in the data analysis was to sort and sift through the highlighted

colors that surfaced most often in the data, to identify similar phrases and relationships between

the patterns. I reviewed the participant responses numerous times, looking for the responses that

connected to one another and tallying the colors. During the second cycle coding process, the

themes were derived through the process of identifying the colors that surfaced most

significantly. I facilitated the same process for both descriptive analysis and emotion coding.

Miles et al. (2014) described emotion coding as "emotions recalled or experienced by the

participant or inferred by the researcher about the participant" (p. 75). With emotion coding, I

highlighted the terms and phrases that related to emotions and assigned color codes to the

emotions, identifying similar phrases and relationships. The emotions that surfaced most

significantly were highlighted within the themes identified in the descriptive coding. Seven

examples of my color coding and emotion coding processes from the Cycle 1 survey and Cycle 2

survey participant responses are included in Appendix E. I also kept additional valuable

strategies in mind during data analysis. The available data, such as leadership learning session

planning reflections, were written after each session. Preliminary analysis was valuable in the

overall action research project. I adopted the practice of early analysis, "interweaving data

collection and analysis from the very start" (Miles et al., 2014, p.70). I also focussed on

interrogating the data, moving from describing data to asking questions, as this was a way of making sense of the data (Hinchey, 2008). As I worked through the analysis process, I reminded myself that that my focus was not to prove my hypothesis beyond a reasonable doubt. During the practical action research process, knowledge was socially constructed, based on a number of readings and was not just a search for the right answers (Hinchey, 2008). I also built in a peer debriefing process. I shared preliminary data analysis and interpretation with my supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen, to determine if she found the researcher's analysis credible or convincing, as I know that peer debriefing strengthens the trustworthiness of a study (Hinchey, 2008). The data from the action research process was presented in narrative form, including some tables and graphs. I know that during the journey of the collection and analysis of data, a path forward gradually appears (Hinchey, 2008).

As Hinchey (2008) stated, with all the information provided from the research process, "this is what I know now and this is how I know it" (p. 101). I thought this was a very good place to start. During this action stage, I reflected on what I knew and asked myself, what the logical next step seemed to be. I determined what in the data was important, what the data meant, and what should happen next (Hinchey, 2008). When analyzing data, I reported multiple perspectives and contrary findings.

The participant responses that I included in my data analysis were documented as "teacher," opposed to assigning fictitious names, to ensure confidentiality while facilitating the study in my own school. With the two action research cycle surveys completed at different times and with a different number of participants, I was not able to track the specific responses to participants from one survey to the other. In the final steps of reporting, I shared findings honestly and provided the general themes and actions with the participants and the whole staff. I

wanted to share the general themes and findings of my study and my action plan so the staff would know the actions that I had determined for myself in my pedagogical leadership role. Proper planning for data handling is important to ensure the integrity of the research. All participant data will be stored in my own locked filing cabinet for five years, at which time it will be destroyed in a manner that safeguards privacy and confidentiality. I disclosed who will profit from the research and gave credit to the participants. This list of ethical considerations was just the beginning of the process. The depth to which ethics needs to be considered in a school setting is much more complex.

Ethical Considerations

In considering ethics for this action research project, I followed Creswell's (2014) approach. Prior to conducting the study, I sought approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB). This study also required the approval of the research from the school district within which the research took place. As a requirement of ethics approval, I completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE) on October 8, 2017.

I was aware of real and perceived power imbalances in this practical action research project. There were ambiguities, the most obvious and complex one being the imbalance of power, given my roles as both principal and participant researcher. I believed that the more aware I was of this complexity, the more intentional I was about acknowledging the imbalance of power through ongoing communication and building trust throughout the process. The participants were teachers and leaders who had taught at the school for one to 10 years. We have been developing a culture of professional learning since we opened the doors of our new school. Most of the teachers know me well as their principal, and they know that I am committed to their

learning as well as my own. They have already acknowledged how grateful they are for the learning opportunity of the leadership learning sessions. I know I am always in the role of principal, but I do believe that in the context of the research I proposed, the focus is on learning to enhance relational trust through pedagogical leadership. I appreciate the comment that "untangling these roles can present knotty challenges" (SAGE, 2009, p. 256) when the researcher also plays another professional role in the research setting. I addressed the knotty challenges and untangled the roles by speaking to all participants of the leadership learning sessions at the beginning. I also value this comment:

> The power and the interpersonal complexity of the insider role do not necessarily create an ethical threat. In fact, the bonds of caring, responsibility and social commitment that engage action researchers with other stakeholders may be the most appropriate basis of ethical decision making. (SAGE, 2009, p. 257)

I do believe in the bonds of caring, responsibility, and social commitment; and I knew I would have to work harder to ensure those bonds were maintained because I had the double challenge of being both a researcher and a principal. I believe we have already created a culture of professional respect and integrity in our school, and that there is a strong desire for learning. The hope is that the passion for learning and improving practice will outweigh the sensitivities that surface from the positions of an insider of action research and of a principal.

As well as embracing the beliefs referenced in this section relating to power imbalance, I also specifically addressed the issue of power imbalance, with five additional key points, as the principal of the school being examined. First, I was clear in my explanation of the study that the leadership learning sessions were optional. These were sessions to which all staff members were invited and attended on their own time. As the leadership learning sessions were not a

professional requirement, there was no expectation from the principal for teachers to attend. The optional participation contributed to creating an environment with a tone of collaborative leader learning rather than an environment with a tone of power. Second, the participant participation for the research was also optional. There were no expectations from the principal for the teachers to participate in the study. This was possible because there were more teachers in the leadership learning sessions than the number of participants required for the study. In no way did any participants feel coerced to participate in the inquiry. Whether teachers chose to participate or not would in no way negatively affect their position, current or future, in the school or in the organization. The third key point was that utilizing practical action research methodology enabled me to engage in researching and studying relational trust as a result of the leadership learning sessions. Fourth, throughout the process, I respected potential power imbalances by focusing on the purpose. I reminded participants of the importance of accurately responding, emphasizing that the intent of the study was to gain insight into developing relational trust through pedagogical leadership. I avoided leading questions and I ensured my own neutrality when generating and analysing data within this study. Finally, when I engaged in peer debriefing, I ensured that the peer, my supervisor, Dr. Friesen, was someone outside of the school, to ensure confidentiality. I assigned each participant as teacher, so that individuals could not be identified. It was my ethical obligation to protect their information. It was my hope that the teachers would be energized by their professional learning and would appreciate the opportunity to participate in the study.

Additionally, the norms of qualitative research allow for the ethical researcher who is involved with participants, and who affects and is affected by events in the research setting: however, those relationships are limited, kept in check by anonymity and informed consent

(SAGE, 2009, p. 255). With the involvement of my supervisor, Dr. Friesen, I ensured that informed consent was gathered, and that anonymity was promised as we worked together throughout this research project. As part of the informed consent process, I notified all participants that they had the right, without consequence, to withdraw their participation in the study at any time during the study, with all data generated through their contributions removed from the study. I kept in mind the ethical question: "Do the research methods support or interfere with my primary professional role?" (SAGE, 2009, p. 258). By keeping this question constantly in mind, I remained focused on my two different roles and responsibilities. I was accountable and responsible to all participants and, if I publish or present my work, I will incorporate the "voices of participants whose backgrounds differ from mine" (SAGE, 2009, 264). I embraced the belief that an ethic of caring in doing action research should support rather than compromise our relationships (SAGE, 2009). I believe that with caring and respect, "action research should enhance the personal, covenant relationships that connect the researcher and other participants for their mutual benefit" (p. 264). Throughout this action research project, I was intentional in continuing to build the culture of caring respect and professional learning. Giving participants a real voice equalizes the power, and this was my goal in preparing participants for their role (Hinchey, 2008).

Trustworthiness: Giving Participants Real Voice

The application of the following four factors of action research shapes the necessary integrity of the research: research partnering, researcher's bias, standardized methods, and alternative explanations (Levin, 2012). Together, these factors build rigor. I was very fortunate in our school setting and research site in regard to research partnering. We had three teacher leaders enrolled in Master's degree programs at the University of Calgary and one teacher / leader

enrolled in a doctoral program. These four people joined our leadership learning sessions. Being

involved in their own research projects, they had an in-depth understanding of the processes, and

were an invaluable resource in making sense of experiences (Levin, 2012). We were aware of the

roles that everyone had, and the value their partnership contributed to the rigor of the action

research. Within my own researcher's bias, I predicted potential problems (Levin, 2012). As I

was in the dual role of principal of the research site and of research participant, I knew problems

would surface and I knew I was definitely biased. I understood that developing an alternate

explanation was a formula for creating a critical distance for the researcher (Levin, 2012). This

was important, since as the participant / observer in the research, I required a critical distance.

An alternate explanation supported me in establishing a critical distance. Research partnering,

researcher's bias, and alternate explanations shaped the integrity of this action research project

and established rigor and trustworthiness. Also, with these four factors, research partnering,

researcher's bias, standardized methods, and alternate explanations, that enhance rigor in place,

reliable and valid conclusions were stronger (Levin, 2012).

Trustworthiness, in the form of credibility, dependability, transferability, and

confirmability were attended to in this study.

Credibility

Credibility is established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation,

triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. Each of the

credibility criteria is described in the context of my study.

Prolonged Engagement

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) noted the value of a prolonged involvement in the field, as

it adds a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Credibility was added to

my study as the principal on site and as a participant, with my full engagement and involvement with the participants and the site through the duration of the study. I had a deep understanding of the action research process as I planned, acted, observed and reflected on daily practice. With prolonged engagement, I had the opportunity to build trust (Creswell, 2003).

Persistent Observation

During my research, decisions were made about what was most salient and relevant to the purpose of the study and of interest for focus (Creswell, 2003). With persistent observation, checks for misinformation that may have stemmed from distortions introduced by the researcher or the participants were ongoing (Creswell, 2003). My opportunity to work with people in my own school, day in and day out, for long periods of time, provided validation and vitality of the study.

Triangulation

By comparing sources of data and data collection methods through triangulation, credibility was also ensured throughout the study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). With the multiple sources of data —participant researcher field notes and leadership learning sessions reflective journal, Cycle 1 survey responses and Cycle 2 survey responses—perceptions and feelings of participants were well documented and well understood.

Peer Debriefing

During the research process, preliminary data was shared with my supervisor, Dr. Friesen, to determine whether my analysis was credible or convincing (Hinchey, 2008). Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) discussed how this additional step of peer debriefing and asking questions helped the researcher to examine assumptions and enhance accuracy. With a peer debriefing process in place, the trustworthiness of the study is strengthened (Hinchey, 2008).

Negative Case Analysis

Hinchey (2008) described negative case analysis "as searching the data for instances that do not fit or that contradict emerging findings; discussion of negative cases strengthens the trustworthiness of the study" (p. 99). Throughout the study, I actively sought disconfirmation of what I thought was true and I asked the questions, "Do any data oppose this conclusion, or are any inconsistent with this conclusion?" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 304). I dedicated a specific layer of analysis, by reading through the data from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 and searching for instances that did not fit. In Cycle 2 of my study, the data analysis of the survey responses identified one participant who expressed a concern about "the principal's own personal regard, self-care, and personal exhaustion affecting passion and patience" (teacher). This data did not fit and was inconsistent with the conclusion. Although the response was not representative of a common theme from the study, it did engender reflection on the reasons for one person's perspective. This reflection on this negative case analysis is included in Chapter 5: Cycle 2 - Actions, Reflections, and Findings.

Member Checking

Credibility was also ensured by discussing contrary information if it occurred, and by making use of member checks and peer-debriefing as required. There was a need for this step, and peer-debriefing was incorporated during the analysis of data. Working with my supervisor, Dr. Friesen, helped me to examine my assumptions and consider alternate ways of looking at the data. Keeping these factors in mind throughout the study ensured credibility and enhanced the trustworthiness of the study.

Dependability

In qualitative research, tracking the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret data assists in determining the dependability of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To ensure transparency, all data can be available for review by an identified college (2012). If there is contrary information, an identified colleague can be invited to be part of collecting and analyzing, so consistency of the interpretation of data can be checked. This limits the potential of one researcher's interpretation being biased. These steps in tracking the processes and procedures will increase the study's dependability. All aspects of the described data collection and analysis were followed throughout the study, ensuring the integrity of the action research process.

Transferability

Although it was not expected that qualitative research findings would be transferred to other settings, it was a goal that other colleagues would reflect on the study and gain insight into their own practices. With the richness of the reflections and stories and the detailed descriptions of observations, I am hopeful that other settings might benefit from the data collection, analysis, and action research process. From the setting context provided, readers may be able to identify their similar settings and transfer lessons learned (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). With the variety of data, I believe colleagues can interpret the data and the analysis in ways that will benefit their own practice, professional learning, and settings.

Confirmability

In qualitative research, identifying confirmability within the study provides confidence to readers. Knowing that the findings are the result of the research and "not the outcome of the biases and subjectivity of the researcher" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 126) increases confirmability. As a researcher, clarifying methods for the reader to trace the data back to the

origins also enhances credibility of the study. Working backwards, the readers can follow the thread of the participants' survey responses and observations notes from the findings.

<div align="center">**Study Limitations and Delimitations**</div>

Limitations

Limitations of a study are described as the "conditions that may weaken the study," so it was important to identify the potential limitations and how they would be addressed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 114). The commitment of all participants was a challenge, a limitation. Even though people were interested and dedicated, with full time teaching and administrative assignments, and the possibility of staff changes, it was a challenge to maintain the consistency of the participants. I knew intentions would be good and participants would be enthusiastic about the learning sessions, but it just might be difficult for participants to find the time for the ongoing leadership sessions. It transpired that I was without consistent participants during the time of the whole inquiry and the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 surveys, and so I could not track the same participants from Survey 1 to Survey 2. Transfers, promotions, leave of absence, and personal choice could have all factored into the number of responses for the second action research cycle and the Cycle 2 Survey. This data was essential to the study, so it was important to be proactive and find ways to deal with these limitations by providing clear expectations about the commitment at the beginning of the research process. An additional limitation in this study was my own relationship with the participants, as their principal, which I addressed in the ethics section of this paper.

Delimitations

During the process of the study, the researcher controls the delimitations for the purpose of providing the researcher with the opportunity to narrow the scope of the research (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2012). This research project focussed on how leadership learning sessions are a context within which relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership. Participants were educators who were interested in the research topic, since it was likely seen as related to their own leadership professional learning and growth. It was not intended to study or evaluate an individual participant's leadership ability or effectiveness. The intent was to move together as a whole. There was also no intention to exclude any staff members. At the beginning of the year, all staff members were invited to participate in the leadership learning sessions. The research participants were self-selected from this group of educators. Delimiting the scope of the research with a single site, the researcher as principal, and purposefully selected participants were also addressed in the sections "Research Setting" and "Research Sample" of this chapter.

Summary

Chapter 3 started with the rationale for qualitative research and the intended research methodology—practical action research. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) stated:

The goal of action research is, through systematic questioning and feedback, to open "new communicative spaces" (Reason and Bradbury, 2008) so that people may increase the effectiveness and meaningfulness of their work…. The action research provides a simple yet powerful cyclical framework —research, reflection, action —that enables people to commence on a shared and productive process of inquiry in a stepwise fashion and to build greater detail into procedures as the complexity of issues increases. (p. 34)

With a qualitative research design, the researcher and the participants adopt an insider point of view, reflecting on their own voices as well as acknowledging personal values and experiences and how they contribute to the study (2012). The insider point of view is essential to understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership. From the

description of the research context and sample in this chapter, it is clear that this study was most appropriate for a selected and unique site and with a purposeful selection of participants who bring a richness to the study. The chapter continued with the data collection methods and data analysis sections, and I explained that the data collected for this action research study would support triangulation and increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the project, as well as provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Hinchey, 2008, Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). When the patterns were identified, they were organized into the categories of the conceptual framework, which becomes the "centerpiece in managing data" (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 112). This centerpiece truly became the center of the process which was facilitated with integrity. Integrity ensures rigor.

The chapter closed with ethical considerations, trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations, noting the sensitivity of my roles as principal, as participant, and as researcher. I believed the passion for learning and improving practice would outweigh the sensitivities that surfaced from the positions of an insider of action research and of a principal. The study was woven through the participants' voices to honour trustworthiness. My hope is that, from this study, knowledge will be constructed in how to develop relational trust through pedagogical leadership. As Hinchey (2008) stated, action researchers find unexpected joy in the telling of their stories. I cannot wait to tell our stories!

Chapter 4: Findings from Cycle 1

The purpose of this practical action research study was to explore how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. Specifically, I sought to understand how an intentional focus on building relational trust through the everyday practices and activities of a principal is developed in a school environment.

Chapter 4 begins with the presentation of the themes and findings from Cycle 1 of the study. The findings from Cycle 1 were used to guide Cycle 2 of this study. The themes and findings from Cycle 2 are presented in Chapter 5.

Themes - Findings from Cycle 1

Five themes emerged from analyzing the three data sources, field notes, the researcher's journal, and the Cycle 1 survey. The findings are presented under each theme. All participant responses were analyzed guided by the conceptual framework. The five themes that emerged in Cycle 1 are:

- Theme 1: Honouring the Whole Person – Professional and Personal Well-Being

- Theme 2: Honouring Voice

- Theme 3: Honouring Leadership in Learning – Innovation and Risk

- Theme 4: Honouring Transparency

- Theme 5: Honouring Pedagogical Leadership – Knowing Myself as a Leader

The 11 findings of these five themes are illustrated in Table 6, followed by a description of the findings and themes.

Table 6:

Findings and Themes from Cycle 1

Research Question **How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school?**		
Theme 1: Honouring the Whole Person – Professional and Personal Well-Being		
Findings		
Relational trust is developed when I respect and care for teachers' professional and personal well-being. I cultivated well-being through the commitment of time to learn about the teachers and through the demonstration of integrity. I got to know the staff professionally and personally. Participants indicated the principal knew them personally and professionally.	Relational Trust is developed when I create a leadership learning model that provides me with the opportunity to participate in meaningful and sensitive conversations, between the lines of the session agenda that reflect teachers' personal and professional conversations.	
Theme 2: Honouring Voice		
Findings		
Relational trust is developed when I intentionally design decision-making processes to ensure all staff members have the opportunity to provide input into the decision- making process.	Relational trust is developed when I create transparent processes and demonstrate a commitment to being open.	Relational trust is developed when I intentionally listen to teacher voices, with care and heart, resulting in really knowing the teacher professionally and personally. When I am listening with an empathetic understanding and sensitivity, teachers feel understood.
Theme 3: Honouring Leadership in Learning – Innovation and Risk		
Finding		
Relational trust is developed when I commit to creating successful leaders of learning from both students and teachers. I practice my commitment through intentional planning for professional learning of student learning and of teacher practice to encourage innovation and risk.		

Theme 4: Honouring Transparency		
Findings		
Relational trust is developed when I ensure transparency of processes and accountability to the greatest extent possible. When I practice transparency by being predictable, credible, accountable and truthful in the work, with a goal of reaching high standards of integrity, relational trust is enhanced.	Relational trust is developed when I ensure transparent expectations of teachers. I practice transparent expectations through consistent and clear communication and defining clear and consistent expectations.	Relational trust is developed when I am willing to be vulnerable. I practice vulnerability by being open, sharing, and encouraging others to take risks.

Theme 5: Honouring Pedagogical Leadership – Knowing Myself as a Leader	
Findings	
Relational trust is developed when I provide pedagogical leadership learning opportunities to empower all formal and informal leaders. I action learning opportunities by creating a model of leadership learning that builds leadership capacity in the school.	Relational trust is developed when I provide pedagogical leadership learning opportunities for school-based leaders to develop their own understanding of who they are as leaders.

The cycles, timelines, overarching questions, topics, and the research, guiding documents, and literature woven throughout the leadership sessions are illustrated in Figure 4. The leadership learning sessions were designed around the question, who am I as a leader and how do I build relational trust. Through reading the literature, writing reflections and participating in conversations, relational trust, integrity, decision making processes, vulnerability, and consensus process and protocols surfaced as the main focussed content of the leadership learning sessions during Cycle 1, with many other literature-inspired conversations contributing to the sessions.

Figure 4

Cycle 1 Activities

Leadership Learning Sessions
Timeline: Cycle One
(August – December 2018)
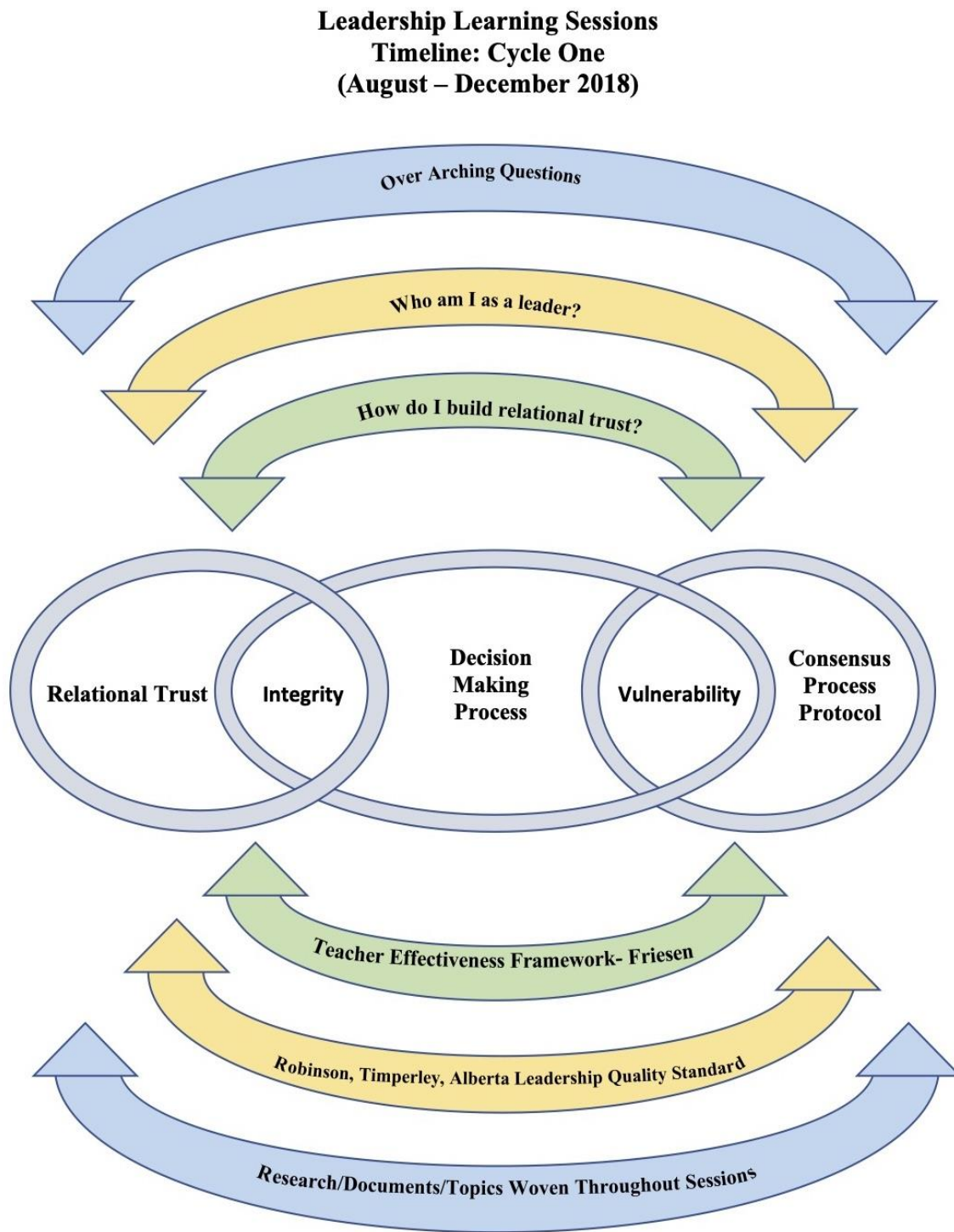
The following is a discussion of the five common themes, with evidence including details to support and explain each finding. The findings were built from the problem, research question, and research design. The data analysis strategies were guided, in part, by the first and second cycle coding processes, descriptive and emotion coding, described by Miles et al. (2014). With the ongoing cycles of action research, I was able to analyze some data from my field notes, reflective journal, and the first survey concurrently with my data collection, as strongly advised by Miles et al. (2014). This approach makes analysis, "an ongoing lively enterprise that contributes to the energizing process of fieldwork" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 70). After Cycle 1, my data analysis helped me to create the next steps for my second cycle. The interview questions were already organized by the study's conceptual framework. As data was coded for themes without the use of a computer program, an additional data check was completed by my supervisor, Dr. Friesen, to ensure findings were supported by the data and truly reflected participant voice.

The findings are presented in each of the themes in narrative form, using direct quotations to better describe and understand participant perspectives. In describing each theme, participant voices must be heard, while narrative data are connected and synthesized through explanatory text. The study's focus was on how to build relational trust through pedagogical leadership. The five themes are described, and the analysis represents the leadership learning sessions, my field notes, and the Cycle 1 survey.

Theme 1: Honouring the Whole Person – Professional and Personal Well-Being – How?

A dominant theme emerged from the analysis of my researcher's journal and the leadership learning sessions, my field notes, and the Cycle 1 survey, one of honouring the whole person, professionally and personally.

All participants spoke to the whole person aspect of creating trusting relationships. In terms of their own well-being, it was apparent that the participants valued the principal knowing them personally as well as professionally. In response to the question, "How does a principal know all staff members personally and professionally?" and reflecting a common message from most participants, one teacher stated:

> As a principal of a very large staff, our principal makes **time** for each adult — she will never say she does not have **time**, she makes **time** for everyone—as a supervisor, our principal takes **time** to get to know her staff through the work — our principal cares about the "whole" person, not just the teacher; she cares about the adult outside of school, both personally and professionally. (teacher)[2]

It was apparent from the responses that the participants valued the time that I, their principal, dedicated to them in getting to know them on a personal level. Participants appreciated that their lives outside the school were recognized and valued, and this added to the development of relational trust. Two additional comments, reflecting those of most participants, highlighted the value of being known: "There is a sense that people come first at our school. There is a real attempt to understand the complexity of our personal lives and support the need for some flexibility" (teacher); and "It's the idea that we are all people with lives, responsibilities, stresses and obligations outside of work and it's an honest-to-goodness understanding of that" (teacher). Some participants identified a concern about time: "I know that one concern has been how busy the leadership team is, and it can sometimes be difficult to arrange a meeting" (teacher).

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[2] All participant quotes, in this study, are labelled as (teacher) because the study participants were unknown to the researcher participant.

A common message of value and integrity was well summarized by one participant: "I feel as long as the practice continues to value, with integrity, the thoughts, professional conduct, values, ideas and also the personal side of each staff member, it will create a trusting environment" (teacher). Examining the question of how relational trust is developed, another participant comment summarized the highlighting of integrity as essential in the development of relational trust:

> The leadership practice **shows and models integrity daily**. Never is a negative word spoken about a staff member, student, parent, or any other stakeholder. The professionalism is always on **display and modelled for all**. Even more so, the sharing done by the leader at this school is so often **so personal and so reflective** but remains professional at all times. The integrity is so important and is such a huge part of the trust and respect that is evident within the school. (teacher)

Here, it shows that trust is to be demonstrated and led by the leader first.

As noted in my researcher's journal, "The value of the principal knowing teachers personally and professionally was brought to life during the leadership learning sessions." In my journal, I identified the value of the informal conversations that surfaced between the lines of the agenda items. As I noted in my researcher's journal, "The agenda items at our leadership learning sessions triggered and inspired further conversation. Teachers connected the learning to their own personal and professional lives, which brought much more depth and meaning to the discussions." Just providing time for teachers to think about their own leadership roles and careers, to reflect in their visual journals, and to talk and make connection became precious time that everyone valued. At every session, I would remind teachers that these sessions were for them to learn about themselves and that it was their own time. I congratulated them at the

beginning of each session for finding time in their busy schedules to attend. The directions of our sessions were led by the conversations. I documented, "As I listened to the teachers talk, I heard them express how much that they valued the time together and to have the opportunity for me, as their principal, to get to know them better as teachers, people and leaders." They spoke of having "principal time." I took great value from this comment, understanding that people just wanted to have time together and to have an opportunity for the principal to know them personally and professionally. I documented, "how important it is for people to feel that they are known by the principal and that I need to consistently remind myself of that importance." I remember feeling the same way when I was a full-time classroom teacher. I wanted the principal to know who I was as well. I wanted the principal to know the depth to which I focussed on and developed my practice, as well as knowing who I am as a person. In my researcher's journal, I noted, "Some teachers talked about the challenge of a large school and getting to know the principal. Some teachers who had come from smaller schools found it especially challenging and missed their relationship that they had with their previous principal." These responses were also indicative of a trusting school culture that promotes building positive relationships among staff.

The learning and conversations were valued highly by the teachers, but we struggled to find enough time to schedule our leadership learning sessions. I suggested Saturdays, in jest, and some of them actually said they would attend on Saturdays. It truly was a time that we could learn and know ourselves as leaders and know one another personally and professionally. After many sessions, reflected in my journal, teachers commented that at the end of the school day, they felt too tired to attend a session, but by the end of the time together they expressed how they were energized and inspired. I always felt the same way. There was a sense of caring for one

another as relational trust was developed. As Wu (2017) suggested, pedagogical leadership is different from the rest because its specific focus is on the care component of learning. As a pedagogical leader, the care component for learning can be extended and linked to teacher professional learning as well. I noted in my journal how much I valued the time to get to know teachers in an invitational, relaxed learning environment, and that through this process I knew that I was building relational trust, which was evident when, as stated in my researcher's journal, "Teachers would say, in this dome of silence, I would like to share." The teachers were willing to share delicate situations and ask for suggestions for follow up. I reflected in my field notes:

> These sessions were good for me too. I did cherish the time with the teachers and how I could also relax in this learning environment. I was comfortable in sharing stories of things that have gone well and not so well for me as a school principal, for their learning. I spoke more personally. It was a safe and comfortable place.

Based on the depth of the conversations that I experienced, during our leadership learning sessions, I noted in my journal, "The leadership learning sessions became much more than I had ever expected." The analysis of the entries in my researcher's journal suggested that after Cycle 1, the theme of whole person well-being strongly emerged. This information intrigued me and led to the development of my actions, which will be discussed in the Action section of Chapter 5.

With the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership as the focus of the study, I designed the leadership learning sessions by weaving in Robinson's (2011) leadership dimensions and capabilities to ensure high-quality teaching and learning throughout the sessions. The teachers each volunteered to learn about and share with the group one of the five dimensions—establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, ensuring quality teaching, leading teacher learning, and development and ensuring an orderly and safe

environment—and the three capabilities—and they are applying relevant knowledge, solving complex problems, and building relational trust. As a group of learners and leaders, we took a closer look at relational trust. As noted in my field notes, "The teachers were interested in pursuing and identifying how they could each develop relational trust with the teachers with whom they were working and also how, as a principal of a large school, I could develop a tone of relational trust in the whole school." To get us started, I shared my writing on relational trust from my Chapter 2 literature review as our new learning. With our focus on Robinson's (2011) determinants of relational trust—interpersonally respectful, personal regard for others, competent in the role, and personal integrity—we continued to connect our future sessions and learning to relational trust.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I respect and care for teachers' professional and personal well-being. I cultivated well-being through the commitment of time to learn about the teachers and through the demonstration of integrity. I got to know the staff professionally and personally. Caring for well-being connects well to pedagogical leadership with the specific focus on the care component of learning (Wu, 2017).

Finding. Relational Trust is developed when I create a leadership learning model that provides me with an opportunity to participate in meaningful and sensitive conversations between the lines of the session agenda that reflect teachers' personal and professional lives.

While documenting emotions during the analysis process, a strong sense of feeling valued and listened to was apparent when participants were known both professionally and personally. I am inspired, with these emotions surfacing so strongly, to making a dedicated effort to finding time for people. As a leader, it is worth my time. In reflecting on teacher responses related to well-being—the value of being known and being cared for personally as well as

professionally—the analysis process also identified how much teachers valued their voices being heard.

Theme 2: Honouring Voice – How?

Honouring voice was a second theme that emerged from the analysis. One teacher's reflection, which was representative of the common theme from the other participants, captured how teacher voice, through the process of decision making, can be honoured and respected by principals.

> The principal ensures that **every** staff member has **a voice in decision making**—she creates **transparent processes** and models a high level of **respect for all**—within the process, she welcomes questions and **follows up** with well-thought-out researched responses as well, she leads and consistently lives by **"assess and adjust."** After making a decision, she will schedule a **follow up** meeting to gather thoughts / observations and then adjust the item, whether it is a schedule or a model, and tweak it to make it better. (teacher)

The analysis of my researcher's field notes contained reflections on the value of protocols and processes when designing decision-making processes and inspired the planning of the next leadership learning session. Teacher leaders discussed how "it was very helpful to have a protocol in place because all three of them knew they were leading their teams with consistency." I noted that the teachers stated their appreciation of the opportunities to observe my facilitation of the protocols with different teacher teams during the school year. The protocols respect and ensure all voices have input into the decision-making process, and also provide everyone an opportunity to focus on listening. During the leadership learning sessions, teachers provided positive feedback on the protocols and valued the discussion, which included

the how, the why, and the possibilities of each step of the protocol. I shared that the purpose of

each protocol is to reach consensus. In my field notes, I reflected on the value of reviewing these

protocols carefully with the goal of teaching them to others. I noted that examining my own

protocols, the identified steps and expectations in the decision-making process, reviewing my

facilitation processes and preparing to teach them, helped me to improve my own practice in

becoming more intentional in providing opportunities for voice. With each experience, I

continually revise my school based decision-making protocol, which leads to the assess and

adjust practice of which a participant spoke. To assess and adjust is such a valuable part of the

decision-making process, demonstrating the importance of flexibility and of honouring teacher

voice and feedback (See Appendix G – School Based Decision-Making Model - Protocol).

In honouring voice, the development of respect was also noted, as reflected in the

following participant comment: "By allowing all teachers to voice their opinions, have a say, and

participate in the decision-making process, respect is shown to all" (teacher).

To address the question of how to honour voice, a participant highlighted the

opportunities that are provided to contribute their perspectives.

All staff are consistently treated with respect, kindness, compassion, and fairness. Staff

are invited to and provided with many opportunities to contribute their perspectives and

ideas, to voice their questions and concerns during staff meetings, professional

development sessions and monthly Community Coordinators to name a few. (teacher)

In honouring voice, the value of designing decision-making processes to ensure all voices

have input into the decision-making process was identified in the analysis. As well as the

processes in place to include the voices and to provide opportunity for opinions to be voiced,

intentional listening was also highlighted in the participant responses.

In developing relational trust, most participant responses acknowledged the value of time and transparency. One participant's reflection from the survey noted the commitment of leadership in taking the time to listen to both the individual and the collective staff.

The admin team at … always took the time to listen to my individual concerns and concerns of the collective staff. Important decisions were always discussed with the staff and information regarding the needs for a decision or new implementation were always transparent. (teacher)

Along with the value of listening, an appreciation of listening to all individuals with care and heart also emerged, as acknowledged in one participant's response.

Each staff member's views and considerations are taken into consideration. Leadership frequently uses the idea of "Are you happy with this?", "Can you live with this?" Things like this sound minor, but it's not often that everyone is taken into consideration. (teacher)

This statement provides an example of how voice can be honoured. Determining what is best for students is the purpose of listening with heart and honouring voice. "In every interaction, she listens and makes decisions that align with her beliefs. She really does think about what is best for students and this guides and grounds her work." (teacher)

Listening to all voices is an emotional investment requiring a genuine openness from the leader. As Crippen (2005) stated, "Educators must take time to reflect upon their practice and through their personal listening/hearing they make effective decisions for/with students" (p. 6). Ensuring all voices are heard means that the decision-making process cannot be about the leader or the leader's agenda. As I noted in my researcher's journal, "This topic surfaced in the leadership learning sessions frequently, understanding that leadership is not about me, and

inspired very personal and emotional conversations." I shared with the group that when facilitating authentic processes, the leader has to be open to the conversations and the potential outcome. If the leader has a predetermined agenda, there is no purpose in facilitating a process. With openness comes vulnerability. I shared that when I facilitate the decision-making process, I ensure that the process is transparent and that everyone has a clear understanding. I must genuinely present myself as being open to possibilities. It takes courage to be open during decision-making processes because the path is uncertain, which can leave one open to injury or celebration even though the process is clear and transparent. This is the vulnerable and authentic side of leadership, which I will speak to in more detail under the theme of transparency. Vulnerability requires strength. The decision, in the end, may not be my first choice. I can be honest and state that it is not my first choice, but that I can live with it, which is what I ask of every other participant. I am always feeling nervous and vulnerable during the process, but because I believe so strongly in the transparent process, I am willing to open myself up to the unknown. Emotions do surface, but with a strong protocol, the emotions are welcomed and managed because they are honoured during the process. The emotional investment reflects passion from the participants and from the leader.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I intentionally design decision-making processes to ensure all staff members have the opportunity to provide input into the decision-making process.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I create transparent processes and demonstrate a commitment to being open.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I intentionally listen to teacher voices with care and heart, thus really knowing the teacher professionally and personally. When I listened with an empathetic understanding and sensitivity, teachers felt understood.

While documenting emotions during the analysis, a strong sense of gratitude and feeling appreciated was apparent as teachers described their experiences of having a voice and being listened to with care and heart. I am inspired, with these emotions surfacing so strongly, to making a dedicated effort in creating an intentional plan for truly listening. Knowing how grateful people are, I want people to feel like they are the only ones who matter when I am listening to them. As well as honouring voice, the analysis process also highlighted student and teacher learning in building relational trust.

Theme 3: Honouring Leadership in Learning: Students and Teachers—How?

Students – Honouring Leadership in Learning. Honouring learning for students and teachers was the next theme that emerged from the analysis of my three data sources, and it was reflected in all participants' responses as they spoke of this aspect of creating trusting relationships. One teacher's reflection, representative of the common learning theme, noted how focussing on what is best for students contributes to the development of relational trust.

> Our principal always thinks and asks herself "What is best for students?" to guide decisions. Even if a complex model takes more time and might not be the first choice for teachers, if it is what is best for students and has a positive impact for children's learning, she will stand by the decision. (teacher)

In understanding how relational trust is developed by committing to a belief that prioritizes student learning and reflects pedagogical leader, the participants valued the creation of learning environments that personalize learning for all students. A participant stated:

Our school does a fantastic job at creating learning environments in which every student can feel success. Whether it is through carefully chosen student placements, extra adult support from EA students, parents, literacy teachers and even time with administration, the leadership team ensures that every student is given the opportunity to learn in ways that best match their abilities so they can in turn feel successful. (teacher)

In the development of relational trust, teachers also appreciated leadership participating in student learning in the classroom. "Leadership spends time in each classroom with classroom teachers modelling student-centered learning and connecting with students from the beginning of a project to the end." (teacher)

In creating trusting relationships, most participants acknowledged the value of designing learning with a focus on student learning needs, to intellectually engage students. With multiple choices and multiple entry points, students commit to their own learning and become empowered as leaders of their own learning, as one participant acknowledged.

Students are being given more ways and responsibilities in demonstrating how they are learning and in what they are learning. When students feel as though they are part of the learning process, I believe that allows them to take more leadership of their learning." (teacher)

As students become leaders of their own learning, they know and understand what they are learning, as this participant's response reflected.

I think there is always a focus on leadership within education, within what students are learning. The idea of students knowing what they are learning, why they are learning it, and what they will be able to do with what they have learned is always present. Not only that, but students will be able to share why they have learned, and this allows for the

creation of student leadership. Students enjoy becoming leaders and using their

knowledge to teach others and support them in learning new things." (teacher)

Teachers - Honouring Leadership in Learning - Innovation and Risk

Within the theme of knowing myself as a leader, I designed the leadership learning

sessions with time for teachers to process new learning and to reflect in their visual journals on

their own formal and informal leadership practices. During the sessions, the teachers identified

their own leadership qualities and connected them to the Provincial Leadership Quality Standard,

indicating the influences of the exosystem on the mesosystem.   With the added connection to the

Leadership Quality Standard, the reflection time contributed to building their skills and

knowledge, preparing them for future leadership. As the teachers came to know themselves as

leaders, they identified their strengths and their areas for growth. I noted in my researcher's

journal, "The teachers were grateful and valued the professional learning opportunity to create

their own visual journals of their leadership journey." With the learning, the willingness to take

risks was developed, and this was a common message in the following three participants'

responses.

> The confidence I developed in myself through these sessions really helped change my
>
> career and my willingness to put myself out there as a leader. Not only have they inspired
>
> me to move forward in that aspect of my professional practice, they have also really
>
> helped remind me of what I love about teaching and why I am doing what I am doing.
>
> (teacher)
>
> These sessions gave me **some new confidence** to move forward with my leadership and
>
> to take some risks while I continue **to find myself as a leader**. (teacher)

They have provided a framework for who I am as an educator and as a leader—because I
have had the time to **reflect on who I am as a leader**, I can confidently take risks and
lead others the same way. (teacher)

As documented in my field notes, I reflected on the participant's recognition of risk
taking: "This was a pleasant surprise during the study." I noted that it was "energizing and
inspiring to know that as the teachers learned about leadership, themselves, and relational trust,
they were willing to take more risks in their practice." As well as the recognition of teachers as
leaders and risk takers during the leadership learning sessions, the analysis of the data sources
reflected the value of teacher learning in building relational trust. Two teachers' reflections,
which were representative of honouring teacher learning, reflected on the common theme of
student and teacher learning.

The focus of the school is on teaching and learning, and not just for students. The
leadership practice at this school makes it clear that professional learning is valued and
will be provided as much as possible. Additionally, time is provided to focus on the best
teaching practices and how teachers can work together to support each other in this
teaching. I cannot stress how beneficial the time is. Even more important is that teachers
know they are not in this work alone. They see their leadership involved in the learning
and bringing that learning back to them. (teacher)

Professional learning opportunities, including the careful scheduling of our professional
development days to ensure that we have opportunities to learn skills such as how to help
students with learning challenges meet their goals or opportunities to look at what
knowledge and skills we need to improve learning outcomes for students. (teacher)

Another participant shared the support of teacher practice and specifically connected it to fostering relationships.

I feel that the **leadership at my school demonstrates leadership of teacher practice** in that teachers are always provided with support so that, like students, they can feel successful with what they are doing in their classroom. The support is given in such a sense way that it fosters positive relationships and is done in a way that all parties are learning from each other; therefore, **everyone feels as though they are a leader in their own practice**. (teacher)

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I commit to creating successful leaders of learning in both students and teachers. I commit to learning through intentional planning for professional learning of student learning and of teacher practice to encourage innovation and risk.

While documenting emotions during the coding process, a strong sense of feeling inspired and confident was apparent in the theme of Honouring Leadership in Learning. I am energized, with these emotions surfacing so strongly, to continue validating teachers' learning. Knowing that I can contribute to teachers' confidence and inspiration has a great impact on me. I want to continue the work. As well as honouring leadership of student and teacher learning in building relational trust, the analysis process also highlighted a theme of transparency.

Theme 4: Honouring Transparency – How?

Honouring transparency was the fourth theme that emerged from the analysis of my three data sources and was reflected in participants' responses as they spoke of accountability in the context of developing relational trust. As I reflected in my researcher's journal, I articulated, "In my experience, I have come to learn that if I consistently establish protocols and facilitate

processes, my leadership practise becomes more transparent." My goal is that, with transparency, teachers have all the required information to participate in decision-making processes. As I noted in my researcher's journal, "When I think about transparency as a noun, I think of clear and predictable processes. When I think about being transparent, as a verb, I think about being open to conversations, feedback, and input." I believe that transparency leads to openness between teachers and leaders. Two participants' reflections were representative of the transparency theme.

"I think as long as employees are continually held accountable for their actions and asked to reach high standards of integrity themselves, integrity will continue to grow throughout the school" (teacher).

I feel as though sometimes expectations aren't always there for all teachers and that just as much focus should be put on the expectations of living the goals and reflecting on practice for all teaches in order to keep everyone accountable for always providing the most successful learning environments for all students. Honest reflections are key!" (teacher)

I noted that with the openness and honesty of the responses, I felt committed to act. I thought more about transparency as a noun, and about establishing clear and predictable processes not only in decision making but also in relation to accountability.

The theme of transparency emerged as the participants identified the value of honesty and truthfulness in their responses. Two examples were "Our principal is predictable, credible, and truthful" (teacher) and "Teachers are not always held accountable for improving their practice in a way that show leadership for student learning" (teacher).

In my researcher field notes, I asked myself questions about transparency, accountability, and the participants' responses. As I documented further in my researcher notes, I reflected, "I was not surprised regarding the teacher practice accountability responses, but I was concerned with the degree to which these participant comments surfaced." I noted, "I was worried that the participants felt like teacher practice accountability was not being addressed by the leader." Ensuring quality teaching is important work that I take very seriously, and it requires a respectful and confidential approach to the work with the teacher. I was wrestling with my questions in my journal.

In consultation with my supervisor, Dr. Friesen, the questions guided me toward turning the topic back to the teachers and facilitating a leadership learning session with these questions from my journal in mind:

- How does a leader deal with teacher practice accountability concerns in a confidential manner?

- What impact do teacher practice accountability concerns have on the staff?

- How does a leader develop integrity when dealing with confidential teacher practice issues?

In my researcher journal, I noted that "A powerful conversation evolved as the topic of accountability and confidentiality was addressed during the leadership learning sessions." I documented, "The opportunity to listen to the teachers describe how they felt in these situations and then to hypothetically discuss how, as leaders themselves, they would answer the questions, was enlightening." Some teachers shared that they had been frustrated and impacted in some situations because they wondered if anything was being done. Their conversation led them to an understanding that to lead with integrity, confidentiality had to be honoured. I reflected in my

journal that their responses came from passion and professional commitment. I also reflected that

by then having the opportunity to share what I have learned during my 20 years as a principal,

developing my basic beliefs in how I approach accountability and confidentiality was also very

powerful. I noted, "By sharing very personal learning, I was building relational trust." I shared

some of the struggles that I have had, as a principal, with teacher practice and accountability. I

explained to the group that I learned to trust the remediation process and treat each teacher with

the utmost care and respect, while focussing on the goal of successful teacher practice. I

explained that this was challenging and emotional work, especially when the teacher was not

successful. My intentional focus on leading with integrity, respect, and so importantly,

confidentiality, supported me through the process. I also shared that some of this tough work had

positive outcomes even when the teacher was not successful. Sometimes, the process led

teachers to an understanding that the teaching profession was not a match for them. Part of the

work was helping them to find new pathways. During the leadership learning sessions, I trusted

the teachers with my personal and emotional stories. I reflected that the power of the

conversation came from the honesty of the responses, both from the teachers and from me, and

that relational trust was strengthened due to the depth of the personal responses.

Our conversation led to Robinson's (2011) Open to Learning Conversations, which I

planned for a leadership learning session. The timing was perfect. The formal teacher leaders had

recently attended a system professional learning session on Open to Learning Conversations. I

asked them to take the lead and to facilitate the next leadership learning session at our school. I

noted, "I was impressed with how much everyone, the formal and informal leaders, valued this

session." They talked about how they could transfer their learning and practice into their

professional lives and their personal lives. I continued to note in my journal and to emphasize

with the teachers that "the focus of the process was to develop relational trust." Processes reinforce predictability. The topic of Open to Learning Conversations continued to surface throughout our leadership learning sessions.

The responses also highlighted being vulnerable, and it inspired an ongoing topic of discussion at the leadership learning sessions that now fits well with the theme of transparency. Reflecting a common message from all participants, one participant stated, "We are exposed to vulnerability and stories during the leadership sessions that help us to be vulnerable ourselves" (teacher).

In my researcher's field notes, I reflected on the value of showing my own vulnerability and of sharing situations past and present when I demonstrated vulnerability in my own leadership role. Participants shared that they valued hearing the stories and the personal experiences. It was a powerful leadership learning session, filled with honesty and emotion, as other stories and situations of vulnerability were shared from a wide variety of contexts. The topic of vulnerability also surfaced during many of the ongoing leadership learning conversations. I reflected in my journal that the value and transparency of vulnerability in leadership was acknowledged in building relational trust.

 The participants also valued leadership predictability and alignment, enhancing transparency. This modelled leadership integrity and supported teachers in taking risks. One participant, whose response represented the common theme of transparency, stated:

> Our school principal's values, words, and actions are consistently aligned. Her actions, words are grounded in and guided by her beliefs. Actions and decisions are often predictable because of this strong and consistent alignment. This offers a level of comfort within and among teachers in our school because they know which direction we are

headed and how we are going to get there. Teachers never have to worry about hasty, careless changes in approach or decision. This enables us to focus on our students, our program, and our classroom. The integrity modelled and lived contributes to a safe and caring environment that encourages teachers to take risks in their professional learning and practice." (teacher)

A common message of transparency was well summarized by one participant comment highlighting the value in knowing, understanding, and having clear expectations of the work.

"'One goal is a goal'. We are supported to stay focussed on one goal at a time. We are encouraged to stay focussed on our school development plan, TPGP, and our professional learning groups by keeping them in alignment" (teacher).

During a leadership learning session, the value of our through circle surfaced (See Appendix F). I was grateful to know that it was of benefit for teachers' goal planning. My original intention was to create a plan to help teachers align their professional learning goals, which came to be our through line / circle. Our through circle includes all of our guiding documents and guides teachers in creating a path with their professional goals that is in alignment with all the provincial, system, and school requirements and expectations, with keeping "one goal is a goal" in mind (Schlechty, 1997). With this process, teachers felt focussed rather than overwhelmed, and could see themselves in the provincial, system, and school work.

Student learning is in the center of the through circle. Reflecting a common message from most participants, one stated: "One hundred percent of the time, our principal always reverts back to what is best for students" (teacher). I noted, "It is important for teachers to have consistent and transparent expectations."

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I ensure transparency of processes and accountability to the greatest extent possible. I practice transparency by being predictable, credible, accountable, and truthful in the work. With a goal of reaching high standards of integrity, relational trust is enhanced.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I ensure transparent expectations of teachers. I practice transparency through consistent and clear communication and defining clear and consistent expectations.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I am willing to be vulnerable. I practice vulnerability by being open, sharing, and encouraging others to take risks.

While documenting emotions during the coding process of the transparency theme, a blend of emotions surfaced—of suggestions, security, and risk taking. I am thrilled that risk-taking surfaced so strongly in the theme of transparency. I am inspired because, as my research question is about building relational trust, I need to find a way for teachers to trust enough to take risks. Within the theme of transparency, the feelings of risk taking began to surface. I also reflected on the tone of suggestions that surfaced in the emotions within the transparency theme. In reflecting on teacher responses related to the value of transparency in leadership, the analysis process also identified the value of pedagogical leadership as a common theme.

Theme 5: Honouring Pedagogical Leadership –How?

Leadership Learning Sessions. As I discussed professional learning goals with all teachers, I learned that there were teachers interested in leadership roles. As I listened, I was inspired. I asked myself, as the principal, how I could support these teachers in their leadership learning journey. As described in the Research Setting and Research Participants sections of Chapter 3, I decided to offer after school leadership learning sessions and was pleasantly surprised with the

response. All teachers were invited to participate, and approximately 14 teachers expressed an interest in exploring their roles as informal or formal leaders. Seven years later, the sessions continue with new staff members who are exploring leadership.

I designed the theme of the sessions based on the question, "Who am I as a leader?" Through literature, stories, research, visual journals, experience, videos, and conversations, teachers reflected on knowing themselves as leaders. During the leadership learning sessions (approximately eight scheduled each year), teachers gradually developed their own beliefs about leadership and became more grounded in their beliefs in the process of answering the question, "Who am I as a leader?" As I noted in my researcher's journal, "The teachers shared that the sessions were energizing and inspiring." I reflected that I felt the same way. I found energy as I planned for and facilitated the leadership learning sessions.

The teachers valued the learning. During my study year, one teacher reflected a common message in this statement on the survey.

Through stories, quotes, and discussions, we have explored the characteristics and qualities that make a leader effective, and come to know, appreciate, and foster our own individual leadership characteristics and qualities, while creating a collective, shared understanding of what leadership looks like in our school. (teacher)

As I listened to and learned from the teachers, I designed and facilitated the leadership learning sessions, with their conversations, questions and reflections in mind.

A common message of impact was well summarized by one participant comment.

The LL sessions have impacted me in a way that has me always thinking about what kind of leader I want to be and how I can go about building foundations for being a strong leader with relational trust that I so value in my own leader. (teacher)

Honouring Pedagogical Leadership — Knowing Myself as a Leader

Honouring pedagogical leadership was the final theme that emerged from the analysis. One participant's reflection, representative of the common theme, captured the feelings about the participants' own growth as leaders.

> Our use of professional literature (specifically the work of Robinson and Timperley) has had an impact on my understanding and enactment of leadership practice, as the discussions and readings have helped me to understand the leadership values and beliefs of our school district, and appreciate how these values and beliefs shaped the structures and policies implemented within our school district. Such discussions and readings have expanded my view of leadership beyond our school to a more global perspective and have grounded the practices enacted in our school in the literature." (teacher)

I noted in my researcher journal a story that was shared by one of our teacher leaders, who had decided to apply for a teacher leader position at another school. "In preparation for her interview, she decided to review her learning and reflections from her visual journal. As she worked through her journal, she realized that she was already prepared. With the learning she had experienced through our leadership learning sessions about pedagogical leadership and knowing herself as a leader, she discovered that she was well prepared and confident for her interview. She was proud to share with the group that she took her visual journal to the interview as her artifact, and it guided her through a number of her responses. She knew who she was as a leader." The teacher's discovery was inspiring. We were also proud when we learned that she was the successful candidate for the teacher leader position. In my notes, I reflected on the value of offering the leadership learning sessions in our school, as our new leaders prepare for their future roles.

I shared my Chapter 2 literature review on pedagogical leadership with the leadership learning group for further discussion. As the teachers learned, they gained confidence. Two teachers' reflections, representative of the theme, spoke of trust and empowerment.

The leadership practice at my school demonstrates competence with me in that it has given me more responsibilities this year in my role to make decisions based on my own professional judgements. I am being more trusted to put into practice the professional development I'm learning at leadership sessions and then being given the opportunity to reflect on the decisions that I am making to see if they align with who I feel I am as a leader. (teacher)

"While at … , I was always provided with opportunities to lead and to develop my capacity. I was modelled how to effective work with other staff members, which I felt has prepared me for future leadership roles" (teacher).

I noted in my researcher journal, "I was grateful teachers valued the leadership learning sessions and I was inspired to continue." When a session ended with an energizing conversation, one of the teachers asked, "Do the other teachers really know what we do here?" These kinds of comments helped me to understand the importance of finding the time to learn with our leaders.

Another common reflection from the participants was that pedagogical leadership is guided by the Teaching Effectiveness Framework (TEF). One participant stated:

The Teaching Effectiveness Framework is a living document within our school. It is not just discussed but used regularly and authentically as a core document guiding our professional growth, learning, and practice. With the TEF as a guiding document, teachers are provided time and space (visual journal) to reflect on teaching and learning, set professional goals, and reflect on our practice. The school principal visits classrooms,

taking notes of how the TEF is lived and practiced within our classrooms and programs, and celebrates the work of teachers and the learning of students by reflecting and responding in our visual journals. The entries serve as feedback that teachers can then reflect on and use to improve their practice. Staff are actively involved in the creation of our School Development Plan. Goals are thoughtfully generated based on evidence of student learning across the grades, gathered through multiple sources. (teacher)

In my field notes, I documented that "this was a clear example that was identified of how to honour teacher learning through pedagogical leadership." This statement was also indicative of the ways the exosystem interacted with the mesosytem. I noted, "Evident in the data was the degree to which the participants valued the time and opportunity provided for their own professional learning as a contributing factor in building relational trust."

With a focus on pedagogical leadership, there are many leaders in the building, as the following participant recognized.

There is a lot of opportunity for teachers to work together, to collaborate, to lead each other. This is done through professional learning/presenting, staff being supported in attending conferences and bringing back their knowledge and even just general work done through PLCs and everyday practice. Teachers are always encouraged to share and create opportunities for others to learn from them. (teacher)

 The value of sharing knowledge and leading learning was evident in the responses, including a participant response that acknowledged the value of school leaders modelling their commitment to their own ongoing learning as well: "Leadership regularly seeks learning opportunities, and make changes to improve their capacity to organize and lead." (teacher).

The value of learning about leadership was represented by a final participant response: "These sessions provided me with opportunities to think deeply about how I am conducting myself as a leader. Using literature grounded in research helped me to reflect on areas of strength and areas for growth" (teacher). Teacher growth is deeply rooted in student growth.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I provide pedagogical leadership learning opportunities to empower all formal and informal leaders. I action learning opportunities by creating a model of leadership learning that builds leadership capacity in the school.

Finding. Relational trust is developed when I provide pedagogical leadership learning opportunities for school-based leaders to develop their own understanding of who they are as leaders.

While documenting emotions during the coding process, a strong sense of feeling valued and grateful was apparent, acknowledged by the words the participants used expressing their emotions and perspectives. An increased confidence in taking risks in the participants' own leadership roles was the strongest feeling represented in the analysis process. With increased confidence and risk taking surfacing so strongly in another theme, I am truly inspired to continue the work of pedagogical leadership learning during the second cycle of action research.

Summary

On my journey of my practical action research study's data analysis, five themes surfaced and 11 findings emerged, summarized at the beginning of Chapter 4 and described throughout the chapter. The discovery of each of the themes and findings has inspired me to do the work. In the spirit of practical action research, I am enlightened so that I can act more wisely and prudently (Kemmis, 2014, p 14). While exploring my research question, "How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school?" and through the writing

process, I uncovered the depth of the findings and the meaning they have for me. This led to the development of my action plan described in Chapter 5. As the next chapter unfolds, my action plan, my reflections, and my additional findings arising from my actions are woven through the context of the five themes presented in Chapter 4.

- Theme 1: Honouring the Whole Person – Professional and Personal Well-Being

- Theme 2: Honouring Voice

- Theme 3: Honouring Leadership in Learning – Innovation and Risk

- Theme 4: Honouring Transparency

- Theme 5: Honouring Pedagogical Leadership – Knowing Myself as a Leader

The longer I spend on my journey and the writing process, the more I am uncovering insight into my research question. I am valuing the analysis of my three data sources, participant researcher field notes, leadership learning sessions reflective journal, the participant surveys, a holistic triangulated picture of my study, and the writing process itself because they are leading me in directions that I was not expecting to travel. The more patience I have, the further I travel on my journey.

Chapter 5: Cycle 2—Actions, Reflections, and Findings

In Cycle 2, the leadership learning sessions continued from January to June 2019. A variety of leadership topics that were planned for discussion and other topics that surfaced from the discussions are reflected in the Cycle 2 diagram (Figure 5). The cycles, timelines, overarching questions, topics, and the research, guiding documents, and literature woven throughout the leadership sessions are illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 5

Leadership Learning Cycles: Cycle 2

Leadership Learning Sessions

Timeline: Cycle Two

(January – June 2019)

Over Arching Questions

Who am I as a leader?

How do I build relational trust?

Accountability

Integrity

Open to Learning Conversations

Vulnerability

Pedagogical Leadership

Teacher Effectiveness Framework- Friesen

Robinson, Timperley, Alberta Leadership Quality Standard

Research/Documents/Topics Woven Throughout Sessions

Context

The findings from Cycle 1 guided the development of my second research cycle and were expressed through an action plan based on the findings from Cycle 1. I shared the findings and the common themes from my analysis and my follow-up action plan with the leadership learning session members as well as the whole staff. I wanted everyone to know the actions I was taking to improve my own practice in building relational trust through pedagogical leadership. In this chapter, I will share my findings from the analysis of Cycle 2. To provide insight into these findings, I will share my action plan and my learnings. The themes from Cycle 2 remained in the analysis of Cycle 2; however, the actions that were taken to further promote insight into what was required to build relational trust deepened.

In this chapter, I detail the actions, my learnings from the actions, and the new findings that were evident through a deductive analysis of the data. Analysis of data for Cycle 2 consisted of my analysis of the data from the second survey, my reflections specific to the leadership learning sessions, and my research journal. Throughout this chapter, the concept of diffraction, of reading "insights through one another" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 742), is utilized. In this way, the findings from Cycle 1, the actions I undertook, and my reflections on my actions have provided insights through one another allowing me to think, act, and learn with data.

I have designed a chart that summarizes the themes, actions, learnings, and Cycle 2 findings. The chart is organized by the research question and followed by the theme. To assist in the reading of the actions, learnings, and Cycle 2 findings, I also have included the findings from Cycle 1, which are listed in the first column of the chart, followed by the actions connected to the findings. The third column lists the learnings from the actions and the final column lists the

findings from Cycle 2, with the strategies of how to develop relational trust through pedagogical leadership.

Developing Relational Trust Through Pedagogical Leadership

Research Question: How is relational trust developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school?

Honouring the Whole Person—Professional and Personal Well-Being

I have always valued the professional and personal well-being of staff members and focussed on how, as a principal, I can enhance people's well-being. I expected that the teachers would also value my commitment. I was pleasantly surprised, though, when Honouring the Whole Person, with the most acknowledgment in the participants' responses, surfaced as the strongest theme of my study.

Table 7

A Summary of the Key Findings, Actions, and Learnings - Honouring the Whole Person

Theme 1: Honouring the Whole Person - Professional and Personal Well-Being			
Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2		Cycle 2 Findings - *How?
	Actions	Learnings	
Relational trust is developed when I respect and care for teachers' professional and personal well-being. I cultivated this through the commitment of time to learn about the teachers' professional and personal well-being and through the demonstration of integrity. I got to know the staff professionally and personally.	Commit to prioritized time by being more mindful and intentional, knowing the whole person, personal and professional well–being, making time for all 55 staff members	I developed a new understanding of the degree to which honouring people's personal and professional well-being is valued.	Relational trust is developed when the principal commits to knowing the staff personally and professionally through: ◦ Prioritizing time to come to know staff members personally and professionally ◦ Providing ongoing cycles of feedback based on classroom
	Dedicate more quality time to visual journals by writing during class time and outside of class time	"To increase my writing time, I started writing in some teacher journals,	

Relational Trust is developed when I create a leadership learning model that provides me with an opportunity for meaningful and sensitive conversations, between the lines of the session agenda, reflecting teachers' personal and professional lives.	– know professional person – provide feedback.	outside of classroom time."	observations through visual journals ◦ Scheduling regular and frequent open to learning conversations with staff members ◦ Developing a clear purpose for classroom observations and a regular cycle of observation and feedback ◦ Listening carefully to the stories and experiences that were shared, between the lines of the leadership learning session agendas, which provided as much value to the topic as the professional learning conversation. ◦ Providing space for the personal and sensitive conversations, during the leadership learning sessions, teachers found themselves in the leadership reflections and found value in the learning.
	Go beyond visual journals by implementing short classroom visits more frequently and being more visible.	I focused on developing a clear purpose and frequency for my classroom visits.	
	Listen carefully, during leadership learning sessions, to initiate, provide space for, and weave in opportunity for conversations reflecting personal stories and experiences, connected to the professional learning.	The stories and experiences that were shared, between the lines of the session agenda, provided as much value to the topic as the professional learning conversation. When I provided space for personal and sensitive conversations, teachers were able to find themselves in the leadership reflection and find value in the learning.	A principal's intentional commitment to the actions that honoured the whole person was acknowledged and appreciated by teachers as contributing to their professional and personal well-being.

*"How?" is the label I assigned, understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership.

I learned through Cycle 1 of this research that the ways in which I honoured personal and professional well-being and cultivated care through how I dedicated my time and facilitated a leadership learning model was important (Table 8). Drawing upon these findings and my field notes, I created my action plan for Cycle 2 for the theme of Honouring the Whole Person – Professional and Personal Well-Being.

As I noted in my researcher journal, "This theme is very important to me and I was grateful that it emerged so strongly in the data." I was inspired to work on my action plan, beginning with integrity. Robinson's (2011) fourth determinant of trust is integrity. "Teachers make judgements about whether their leaders walk the talk, keep their word, and resolve difficult conflicts in a principled and even-handed manner" (Robinson, 2011, pp. 35-36). Bryk and Schneider (2002) commented, "Integrity demands resolutions that reaffirm the primary principles of the institution. In the context of schooling, when all is said and done, actions must be understood as advancing the best interests of children." (Byrk & Schneider, 2002, cited in Robinson, p.26)

Within my action plan, I kept these words close to me as I reflected on my own integrity in my leadership role. To focus on building relational trust, "I wanted to create an intentional plan of my commitment to time," I noted in my researcher's journal. In every step of my action plan, to honour integrity, "I reminded myself to walk the talk, keep my word and resolve problems in a principled manner, with a consistent focus on what is best for students."

My Learnings

From my field notes, I created my action plan for the theme of Honouring the Whole Person – Professional and Personal Well-Being.

Table 8

Honouring the Whole Person – Action Plan

Action Plan			
1. Commit to prioritized time, by being more mindful and intentional to know the whole person, personal and professional well–being, making time for all 55 staff members	2. Dedicate more quality time to visual journals by writing during class time and outside of class time – know professional person – provide feedback	3. Go beyond visual journals by implementing short classroom visits more frequently and being more visible. In this way I was also able to connect the mesosystem learning with the microsystem of the socio-ecological framework.	4. Listen carefully, during leadership learning sessions, to initiate, provide space for, and weave in opportunity for conversations reflecting personal stories and experiences, connected to the professional learning

Learnings—How?

Action One Learnings. In my researcher journal, I reflected, "Honouring Whole Person was the strongest theme that surfaced from the data analysis." I developed a new understanding of the degree to which honouring people's personal and professional well-being is valued. During Cycle 2 of my research study, I became mindful of finding more moments in each day to connect with people in a personal way, including teachers, support staff, lunchroom supervisors, and caretaking staff. As noted in my researcher journal, "I became much more intentional in finding the time in my day." Learning the degree to which honouring the whole person was valued, from the data analysis, inspired me to not only continue but to make an even more dedicated effort to connect with people professionally and personally. I tried to increase my visibility. I kept mental note of my visibility in each wing of the building and at different times of the day to be more available for people. Knowing the connections were valued, I wanted to dedicate more time.

Two participant responses representative of the well-being theme described how knowing the whole person is honoured.

I feel valued and appreciated and am treated with respect, kindness, and compassion — principal is genuinely caring, compassionate, and empathetic — principal is usually visible and present and available to meet with teachers to discuss both personal and professional matters — I feel acknowledged for my work within the school. (teacher)

"Leadership takes the time to understand me as a person, not just a teacher. There is an awareness that one's work is not the only thing going on in their lives" (teacher).

One participant expressed a concern about "the principal's own personal regard, self-care, and personal exhaustion affecting passion and patience" (teacher). Although this response was not representative of a common theme from the study, it did bring reflection on the reasons for one person's perspective. I was somewhat taken aback by this participant's comment. Upon reflection, I came to an understanding that all feedback is valued and true of something. The response was unsettling for me because my passion is what keeps me inspired and motivated, but I asked myself what I could learn from this participant. I heard and I listened very carefully. As I reflected, with my commitment to the development of relational trust, I wished that the teacher had spoken with me. What is true of the statement is that I obviously offended the teacher. It is my intention, when I make mistakes and when I offend, to have cultivated relational trust to the point where teachers would be willing to approach me. With my ongoing reflection, I realized how important my study is to me and how important it is to create the conditions for an environment of relational trust, so that teachers feel trusted in approaching the principal. I obviously had more learning to do to create the conditions where every teacher could approach

me regardless of how uncomfortable the conversation might be for both of us. I want teachers to know that I am open to learning conversations about my leadership.

Action Two Learning. During Cycle 2, I increased my commitment to writing in visual journals, providing teachers with feedback on their professional goals. I preferred writing in teacher journals while visiting their classrooms and sitting with the students. In my researcher's journal, I noted, "To increase my writing time, I started writing in some of the teachers' journals outside of classroom time." To track my writing entries for each teacher, I posted a staff list on my office wall to help guide my visits to all 30 classrooms. As well as responding to professional goals, the visual journals also provided me with an opportunity to know teachers more personally. As I noted in my researcher's journal, "Teachers included personal reflections in their journals, to which I could respond on a personal level as well. I found great value in taking time to read and respond." At the leadership learning sessions, I noted in my researcher's journal, "Teachers shared how much they appreciated and valued the comments and reflections that I wrote in journals. The positive responses inspired me to write more often." The journals also functioned as a dialogue between the principal and the teacher.

Action Three Learning. During a leadership learning session in Cycle 2, as I was sharing some of the work on my action plan, one teacher laughed when she commented that she suddenly felt like she was being evaluated. I reflected in my researcher's journal, "I was a little over-eager initially in trying to increase the frequency of my classroom visits." The honesty was appreciated as I was acting on my plan. I focussed on developing a clear purpose and frequency for my classroom visits.

Action Four Learning. The leadership learning sessions became much more than I anticipated. The stories and experiences that were shared between the lines of the session agenda

provided as much value to the topic as the professional learning conversation. By providing space for the personal and sensitive conversations, teachers were able to find themselves in the leadership reflections and discussions and find value in the learning, which contributed to their professional and personal well-being. I reflected in my journal, "I could see the teachers gaining knowledge and confidence in determining who they were as leaders because who they were as people was valued as well."

Findings—Specific Responses

Cycle 2 Findings. In developing relational trust, principals who honour the whole person's professional and personal well-being:

- Prioritize time to come to know staff members personally and professionally

- Provide ongoing cycles of feedback based on classroom observations through visual journals

- Schedule regular and frequent open-to-learning conversations with staff members

- Develop a clear purpose for classroom observations and a regular cycle of observation and feedback

- Listen carefully to the stories and experiences that were shared, between the lines of the leadership learning session agendas, which provide as much value to the topic as the professional learning conversation.

- Provide space for the personal conversations and leadership practice questions, as during the leadership learning sessions, teachers found themselves in the leadership reflections and found value in the learning.

A principal's intentional commitment to the actions that honour the whole person was acknowledged and appreciated by teachers as contributing to their professional and personal well-being (See Appendix E Data Collection Analysis).

A final response from a participant representative of the theme referenced the principal as a "servant leader committed to making a difference in the lives of students and teachers" (teacher). Caring for professional and personal well-being is serving. As Crippen (2005) referenced, the "Servant-Leader is servant first" (p.4).

The Cycle 2 Findings of Honouring Professional and Personal Well-Being are also closely linked to some of the Key Features of Pedagogical Leadership—an ethical approach that respects values, operates from moral purpose, founded on passionate care, and agency for change with others by building trusting relationships. As well as representing the value of being known both professionally and personally in contributing to well-being, the teachers also represented the value of their voices being heard.

Honouring Voice

Table 9

A Summary of the Key Findings, Actions, and Learnings - Honouring Voice

Theme 2: Honouring Voice			
Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2		Cycle 2 Findings - *How?
	Actions	Learnings	
Relational trust is developed when I intentionally design decision-making processes to ensure all staff members have the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process.	To honour voice by implementing and facilitating decision-making protocols and processes with the whole staff more frequently, to demonstrate transparency and openness.	People appreciated the predictability and consistency in decision making.	Relational trust is developed when the principal commits to honouring voice through: ◦ Intentionally and frequently designing and

Relational trust is developed when I create transparent processes and demonstrate a commitment to being open.

Relational trust is developed when I intentionally listen to teacher voices with care and heart, with the result that I really know the teacher professionally and personally. When I listened with an empathetic understanding and sensitivity, teachers felt understood. | To honour voice by dedicating time to share the reasons and the thinking behind each step of the processes and protocols with the teacher leaders in the school, to demonstrate transparency and openness. | I was able to begin sharing the decision-making process with the formal teacher leaders, as decision-making was required with the teaching models within their teams. | facilitating decision-making processes that ensure all voices have input. Teachers appreciate and need the consistency and predictability of the processes

◦ Openly sharing values and beliefs that form the basis of processes with teacher leaders

◦ Providing learning opportunities for teacher leaders to practice the facilitation of decision-making processes and providing feedback for them.

◦ Understanding that as a leadership team of five, we are not the decision-making body, we are the question-posing body and the questions lead to processes, listening, and informed decisions. With all leaders facilitating consistent processes, we present as a team of one voice.

◦ Finding additional ways to listen with care and |
| | To honour voice by providing opportunities for other leaders to practice the facilitation of the protocols and processes with their teams, and by providing feedback to them to demonstrate openness and transparency. | "Our teacher leaders appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the decision-making processes and to have opportunity to practice and receive feedback." | |
| | To honour voice by exploring additional ways to listen to all staff members. | Commitment to being more visible and available to meet with people, rather than communicating through email. | |

			heart, demonstrating empathy and sensitivity, and by preserving teachers' dignity. Committing to being more visible and available by printing emails in the evening and following up with conversations during the day. A principal's intentional commitment to the actions that honour voice was acknowledged and appreciated, in depth, by the teachers, as contributing to their feeling of being listened to.

* "How?" is the label I assigned, understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership.

I learned through Cycle 1 in of this research that the ways in which I honoured voice through the ways I prioritized and dedicated time was important (Table 9). Drawing upon these findings and my field notes, I created my action plan for Cycle 2 for the theme of Honouring Voice.

Voice in Decision Making

Table 10

Honouring Voice – Action Plan

Action Plan			
1. To honour voice by implementing and facilitating decision-	2. To honour voice by dedicating time to share the reasons and the thinking	3. To honour voice by providing opportunities for other	4. To honour voice by exploring additional ways to

making protocols and processes with the whole staff more frequently, to demonstrate transparency and openness.	behind each step of the processes and protocols with the other leaders in the school, to demonstrate transparency and openness.	leaders to practice the facilitation of the protocols and processes with their teams and, by providing feedback to them, to demonstrate openness and transparency.	listen to all staff members.

Learnings—How?

In my researcher journal, I documented my action learnings for the theme of Honouring Voice.

Action One Learnings. As I learned the degree to which people valued these processes during Cycle 2, I implemented them more frequently. I noted in my researcher journal, "People appreciated the predictability and consistency in decision-making processes, which gave me more confidence in maintaining the processes." Participant responses, which were representative of the theme, described how voice is honoured: "It consistently feels as though everyone's voice and opinion is factored into decisions. Things like common knowledge reflect a willingness by leadership to keep staff informed. It demonstrates a high level of care" (teacher); "The principal listens to the ideas of her staff" (teacher).

Action Two Learnings. In Cycle 2, I was able to begin this process with the formal teacher leaders, as decision-making was required with the teaching models within their teams.

Action Three Learnings. I was able to begin this process as the formal teacher leaders were interested in facilitating decision-making processes with their teams.

Throughout Cycle 2, I noted in my researcher's journal, "Our teacher leaders appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the decision-making processes and to have opportunity to practice and receive feedback." One teacher leader shared with me, "I have a lot to learn from

you about these processes." I reflected, "I am grateful for the teacher leader's recognition of the value of well-planned protocols for decision- making processes." I made note in my journal,

> I found my voice with the teacher leaders, when thinking about decision-making. I wanted to have an impact. I shared my belief that, as a leadership team of five, we are not the decision-making body first, we are the question-posing body first, and questions lead to processes.

Listening, Truly Listening —Heart

Action Four Learnings. During Cycle 2, I made a commitment to being more visible and available to meet with people, rather than communicating through email. If I received an email to which I thought it was better to respond in person, I printed the email in the evening and added it to my next day list to find a time for a conversation. I would also respond to the email, expressing my plan to follow up with a conversation. Staff members very often thanked me for my in-person time. Reflecting a common message from most participants, one participant stated:

> Our leader shows the utmost integrity in all regards. By listening to everyone in each and every situation and then handling people with consistent respect and honour, people feel as though they are being heard and then in turn trust is earned in a sincere way. (teacher)

The value of listening strongly emerged from the participant responses, and this inspired me to try to find additional ways to listen. I have included three more comments reflecting the common message that encouraged me in my actions: "She listens deeply to better understand and paraphrases" (teacher); "preserves teachers' dignity through conversation" (teacher); and, "She listens, listens and listens — she asks questions to better understand a situation, then asks questions to help understand our point of view on the situation" (teacher). These responses indicated support for my implemented actions to develop relational trust.

The data gathered and analyzed supported the actions implemented during Cycle 2, based on the findings from Cycle 1, in building relational trust.

Findings — How?

Cycle 2 Findings. In developing relational trust, principals who honour voice:

- Intentionally and frequently design and facilitate decision-making processes that ensure all voices have input. Teachers appreciate and need the consistency and predictability of the processes.

- Openly share values and beliefs that form the basis of processes with teacher leaders.

- Provide learning opportunities for teacher leaders to practice the facilitation of decision-making processes and provide feedback for them. Understanding that as a leadership team of five, we are not the decision-making body first, we are the question posing body first and questions lead to processes. With all leaders facilitating consistent processes, we present as a team of 1.

- Find additional ways to listen with care and heart, demonstrating empathy and sensitivity, and by preserving teachers' dignity. Commit to being more visible and available by printing emails in the evening and following up with conversations during the day.

Within the theme of honouring voice an additional finding surfaced, that of the depth of the appreciation of being listened to (See Appendix E Data Collection Analysis). The Cycle 2 Findings of Honouring Voice are also closely linked to some of the Key Features of Pedagogical Leadership – ethical approach that respects values, operates from moral purpose, places knowledge creation and management ahead of knowledge transmission. As well as representing

the value of their voices being heard, the teachers also represented the importance of the leader

honouring student and teacher learning.

Honouring Learning

Table 11

A Summary of the Key Findings, Actions, and Learnings - Honouring Learning

Cycle 1 Theme 3: Honouring Learning			
Teacher Learning			
Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2		Cycle 2 Findings - *How?
	Actions	Learnings	
Relational trust is developed when I commit to creating successful leaders of learning in both students and teachers. I practice my commitment through intentional planning for professional learning of student learning and of teacher practice to encourage innovation and risk.	To honour teacher learning by finding more time for Professional Learning Communities	I want to commit to scheduling more time for Professional Learning Communities	Relational Trust is developed when the principal commits to honouring learning through: ◦ Providing more time for teachers to participate in their own Professional Learning Communities ◦ Implementing a process for teachers to identify their own goals and professional learning plans, while meeting accountability standards and expectations. This is accomplished by supporting teachers through the process with the Through Circle (See Appendix F) of the provincial, system and school guiding documents. A principal's intentional commitment to the actions that honoured learning was acknowledged and
	To honour teacher learning by continuing to build relational trust to encourage risk-taking and innovation	Through personal regard for teachers, I am inspired to continue to lead teachers in their own learning through their visual journals and by honouring their goal setting connected to the Through Circle. (See Appendix F)	

			appreciated in depth by the teachers, as contributing to their feeling of ownership of their professional learning.

Student Learning			
Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2		Cycle 2
	Actions	Learnings	Findings *How?
Relational trust is developed when I commit to creating successful leaders of learning in both students and teachers. I practice this through intentional planning for professional learning of student learning and of teacher practice to encourage innovation and risk.	To honour student learning by continuing to instill belief —all decisions —what is best for student learning.	Focus on consistently demonstrating - actions match my beliefs. As noted in my researcher's journal, "I want to ensure that every decision that is made in our school is with the belief, what is best for student learning, in mind".	Relational trust, is developed when the principal commits to honouring student learning through ensuring that what is best for student learning guides all decision- making. A principal's intentional commitment to the action that honoured student learning was acknowledged and appreciated, in depth, by the teachers, as contributing to their feeling of the caring toward student learning.

* "How?" is the label I assigned, understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership?

I learned through Cycle 1 in of this research that the ways in which I honoured learning through the ways I committed to creating successful leaders of learning in both students and teachers was important (Table 13). Drawing upon these findings and my field notes, I created my action plan for Cycle 2 for the theme of Honouring Learning.

Table 12: *A Summary of the Key Findings, Actions, and Learnings - Honouring Learning –*

Teacher

Action Plan	
1. To honour teacher learning by finding more time for professional learning communities	2. To honour teacher learning by continuing to build relational trust to encourage risk taking and innovation

Learnings — How?

Action One Learning. As noted in my researcher's journal, "I want to commit to

scheduling more time for professional learning communities as another avenue for teacher

professional learning." Sharing this goal with the whole staff, which I did, helped me in making

PLCs a priority.

Action Two Learning. As noted in my researcher's journal, "Reading participant

responses helped me to understand how teachers feel supported in their own learning and

teaching." Three participant responses representative of the theme described how teacher

learning and practice are honoured.

> The principal provides very gentle coaching for me and helps guide my practice
>
> through check-ins, conversations, and by encouraging me to engage in system and local
>
> professional development. When I require redirection or support, I can be guaranteed that
>
> the conversations are about building my skills rather than making me feel punished or
>
> ashamed. (teacher)

"I feel a sense of trust and there is undoubtedly autonomy within my classroom and with my

job. It is assumed that I'm capable and competent" (teacher).

Teachers are given the freedom to teach in ways that suit them as individuals while at the same time following system guidelines. By allowing teachers to take the ownership or leadership of their own teaching, I feel like more effective teaching takes place. (teacher)

I reflected in my journal that our through circle (See Appendix F Through Circle) keeps us aligned with provincial, system, and school expectations and accountability standards for ongoing professional learning. Each teacher is requested to identify their through line in the shape of a circle, in their visual journals. Teachers document their professional growth plan and align it with provincial, system, and school expectations and standards. As noted in my researcher's journal, "I am encouraged to maintain and enhance this practice and to continue to guide teachers through the process." Goals are identified and in turn guide professional learning plans for each teacher. Two participant responses representative of the learning theme highlighted guiding documents and visual journals in the learning process:

"Use of and reference to the Teaching Effectiveness Framework: teachers are provided time and space (visual journal) to reflect on teaching and learning, set professional goals, and reflect on practice— informal classroom visits are increasing" (teacher).

I feel as though a focus on goals is achieved through our visual journals. The chance to actually write our goals down gives us the opportunity to really think about what we want to achieve, record it, try it, and reflect on it and make any necessary changes to improve our practice. (teacher)

Through personal regard for teachers, I am inspired to continue to lead teachers in their own learning through their visual journals, supporting them to make connections between the exosystem and the mesosystem, and by honouring their goal setting connected to the through

circle (See Appendix F). In support of teacher learning, one participant stated, "Focus on the professional development of teachers is a conduit to student achievement" (teacher).

Findings — How?

Cycle 2 Findings. In developing relational trust, principals who honour learning:

- Provide more time for teachers to participate in their own professional learning communities.

- Implement a process for teachers to identify their own goals and professional learning plans while meeting accountability standards and expectations. This was accomplished when I supported teachers through the process with the through circle (See Appendix F) of the provincial, system, and school guiding documents.

Within the theme of honouring teacher learning, an additional finding surfaced, that of honouring the depth of teachers' own leadership of their professional learning (See Appendix E Data Collection Method).

Honouring Learning — Student

My Learnings – How?

Table 13

Action
1. To honour student leaning by continuing to instill belief – all decisions – what is best for student learning

Action 1 Learning. Focus on consistently demonstrating that actions match my beliefs. As noted in my researcher's journal, "I want to ensure that every decision that is made in our school is keeping in mind the belief in what is best for student learning." My action was to keep this belief visible and consistent in all decision-making processes. Four participant responses representative of the learning theme highlighted the focus on student learning: "Principal

believes in, models and lives the Mission and Values: Students come first, and learning is our central purpose" (teacher). "All decisions are grounded in what is best for students and their learning" (teacher); "Student learning is a very clear priority for leadership" (teacher); "The principal will never tell someone they are wrong or "no". She easily guides us through the process of discovering what other perspectives could be involved, then bringing the situation back to what is best for students" (teacher).

Through pedagogical leadership, a care component for student learning is honoured. Three participant responses speak to the care in student learning. "Emphasis on making our school a safe and caring place for students to learn, where students feel a strong sense of belonging; this includes the tremendous care and time taken to support students in working through the problem-solving process" (teacher). "One component of the School Development Plan is the well-being of students" (teacher). "The focus on strength-based reporting and relationships are examples of the care component" (teacher). The participant responses connect well to Wu (2017), who suggested that pedagogical leadership is different from the rest because its specific focus is on the care component in children's positive learning outcomes.

I reflected in my journal, "I am encouraged by these responses. I believe, by these comments, participants are demonstrating their own value of ensuring student learning guides decision making in our school." With these responses in mind, I gained confidence in consistently articulating and leading with this belief.

Cycle 2 Finding. Relational trust is developed when principals ensure that what is best for student learning guides all decision making.

Within the theme of honouring student learning, an additional finding surfaced, that of depth of caring (emotion coding). The Cycle 2 Findings of Honouring Learning are also closely

linked to some of the Key Features of Pedagogical Leadership — core business of teaching and learning, care component in children's positive learning and outcomes, ethical approach that respects values, leading the child, founded on passionate care, leader of learning—student and teacher —leader of practice, operates from moral purpose, and goals and expectations. As well as representing the importance of the leader honouring student and teacher learning, teacher responses also represented the value of transparency in leadership.

Honouring Transparency

Table 14

A Summary of the Key Findings, Actions, and Learnings - Honouring Transparency

Theme Four: Honouring Transparency			
Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2		Cycle 2 Findings - *How?
	Actions	Learnings	
Relational trust is developed when I ensure transparency of processes and accountability to the greatest extent possible. I practice transparency by being predictable, credible, accountable, and truthful in the work, with a goal of reaching high standards of integrity.	To honour transparency by holding myself accountable – transparency.	"I discovered for myself that there are two kinds of accountability." There is accountability that is public, common knowledge, and accountability that is confidential."	Relational Trust is developed when the principal commits to honouring transparency through: ◦ Understanding and communicating the difference between public, common knowledge, accountability, and confidential accountability.
Relational trust is developed when I ensure transparent expectations of teachers. I practice this through consistent and clear communication and defining clear and consistent expectations.	To honour process by continuing to facilitate processes —makes me predictable.	"I continue to learn that every minute that I take to design meetings, whole staff, leadership, team and parent, is worth the time." With processes and protocols in place, staff feel more secure.	◦Creating a secure environment with predictable and consistent decision-making processes and meeting protocols in place
Relational trust is developed when I am willing to be vulnerable. I demonstrate vulnerability by being open, sharing, and encouraging others to take risks.	Continue to define clear and consistent expectations and	I continue to focus on a high standard of	◦ Establishing consistent expectations and implementing a consistent process in

	ensure that a follow up plan is in place for all expectations.	communication practices.
		
		   I determined that more thorough plans would improve the consistency of following up on expectations."
			the follow up of expectations
			
			  ◦ Modelling vulnerability by being honest and admitting to mistakes and then being willing to do the work over again, collaboratively.

	To have the courage to demonstrate honesty and vulnerability in my day-to-day practice.	I reflected on my action research process, for this study, and realized that "This is the greatest act of vulnerability in which I have engaged throughout my career."
		
		   I also reflected on honesty and
		   I reminded myself, that "When I make a mistake, I am very willing to be honest with the staff and to take the necessary steps to correct."
		
		   I learned that being vulnerable requires risk-taking and strength.
		
		   I have learned what teachers highly value and now my purpose is to share with other leaders.
		
		   I realized with a true commitment to transparency, integrity shines through.
		
		   I realized that the leadership learning session teachers were my gift for my own
			◦ Modelling vulnerability by opening up their own leadership practice for feedback, for the purpose of encouraging risk-taking vulnerability in others, so teachers are willing to open up their practices.
			
			   A principal's intentional commitment to the action that honoured transparency was acknowledged and appreciated, in depth, by the teachers, as contributing to their value of vulnerability.

		learning and for my study.	

* "How?" is the label I assigned, understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership?

Cycle 1 Findings. I learned through Cycle 1 in of this research that the ways in which I honoured transparency through the ways I demonstrated integrity by prioritizing processes, accountability and vulnerability was important (Table 13). Drawing upon these findings and my field notes, I created my action plan for Cycle 2 for the theme of Honouring Transparency.

Table 15

Honouring Transparency — Action Plan

Action Plan			
1. To honour transparency by holding myself accountable— transparency	2. To honour process by continuing to facilitate processes —makes me predictable	3. To continue to define clear and consistent expectations and ensure that a follow up plan is in place for all expectations	4. To have the courage to demonstrate honesty and vulnerability in my day-to-day practice

My Learnings – How?

Action One Learning. As I stated in my researcher's journal, "I discovered that there are two kinds of accountability." As I reflected on the finding that evolved in this theme, I initially thought that I needed to share more with staff to honour my action in holding myself accountable. When I focussed on my action, I realized that I could not share more with staff, due to confidentiality. I noted, "There is accountability that is public, common knowledge, and accountability that is confidential." An example of confidential accountability is teacher practice. As I worked through this action, I learned that I had to find a way to feel confident in holding myself accountable when dealing with an issue that I could not share with staff. It was hard when

I knew that staff were questioning teacher practice accountability for all teachers. I reflected in my researcher journal, "I have learned to be at peace with the times when my leadership role requires me to hold myself accountable confidentially rather than publicly, and in which I am demonstrating integrity only to myself."

Action Two Learning. As noted in my researcher's journal, "I continue to learn that every minute that I take to design meetings—whole staff, leadership, team, and parent— is worth the time." I reflected that with processes and protocols in place, staff feel more secure, as reflected in a participant's comment that represented a common theme:

Things are predictable and changes are not made hastily—actions and decisions are often predictable because of the strong and consistent alignment of values and beliefs and actions and words—decision making is generally transparent and decisions that impact whole school are usually brought forward to all staff, if and when time permits. (teacher)

Action Three Learning. I reflected in my researcher's journal. "Consistent expectations were being well communicated at staff meetings and during professional learning days and I need to continue to focus on a high standard of communication practices." I also noted in my researcher journal, "After examining the follow-up plans for some expectations, I determined that more thorough plans would improve the consistency of following up on expectations. I realized that at times, I was trusting that all expectations were being met."

Action Four Learning. In my researcher's journal, I reflected on my action research process for this study, and realized, "This is the greatest act of vulnerability in which I have engaged throughout my career." I have taken a great risk in sharing my practice with the leadership learning participants and in asking for feedback. I have felt incredibly vulnerable through this whole journey. Some feedback is encouraging and validating, some will help to

improve and enhance my practice, and some feedback is unsettling. There is some truth to all feedback. I have to respect and find the value in all layers of the feedback.

I noted in my journal, "Being vulnerable involves risk taking and requires strength." My deep belief in the process has kept me strong. I want feedback to improve my practice; I want teachers to know that, as their principal, I am consistently committed to improving my practice; and I want teachers to desire feedback to enhance their practice as well. I reflected, "The last thing I want in presenting the analysis of my research data is to sound self-indulgent. My purpose is to learn what teachers highly value and to share these findings with other leaders, to contribute to the body of educational research." I reflected,

> I am so very fortunate to have this opportunity to gather data from the leadership learning participants. I initiated these sessions 7 years ago to provide leadership learning opportunities for our aspiring leaders. In time, I realized this group was my gift, for my own learning. I did not realize at first that the participants for my study were sitting right in front of me. With our learning sessions, they had become more knowledgeable about leadership and about knowing themselves as leaders. If there were ever a group of participants with whom to share my practice and vulnerabilities, this was the group. I felt very grateful when I discovered the gift that was waiting for me.

I noted in my journal, "It takes courage to be vulnerable. My action plan is to model my vulnerability to encourage teachers to find their courage in being vulnerable themselves." Within an environment of relational trust, teachers will be more willing to take risks. I want teachers to have the courage to take risks in their practice, to be open to feedback, and to ask for feedback. In my researcher's journal, I noted that

I did the same thing when I was a classroom teacher. I created a teacher report card that I
asked students to complete. Again, I received feedback that was encouraging and
validating, feedback that was helpful to improve and enhance my practice, and feedback
that was unsettling. I learned then that there is some truth to all feedback and that I have
to respect and find the value in all layers of the feedback.

My research now is just my own very big report card completed by the research participants.

I also reflected on honesty as one of my actions for the theme of transparency. I
reminded myself, "When I make a mistake, I am very willing to be honest with the staff and to
take the necessary steps to correct." It is usually a hard thing to do, but again it models
vulnerability. I noted in my journal that I usually hear comments afterward from teachers, such
as, "It is good to know that you are human and my belief in your integrity has just grown." One
example in my journal reflected a discussion at a staff meeting, when I presented the plan for
team meetings including the frequency and length. I had a few very sleepless nights after that
and I was not sure why at first. I eventually realized that I was sleepless because I had not
followed my normal process. I did not include the teachers in the conversation. I informed
teachers rather than following my own school-based decision-making model. At the next
meeting, which seemed a long time away, I apologized and started over. Together, we created a
meeting plan that was more effective and represented all voices. I noted in my journal, "I know
with staff participation in the decision-making process, engagement would be enhanced." I was a
little emotional working through the apology part because I was disappointed in myself and my
initial leadership action. Once again, I received feedback appreciating the honesty, the apology,
and the vulnerability. A participant response, which was representative of the transparency
theme, described a personal response to the vulnerability of a leader.

The principal allows herself to be vulnerable and admits to her mistakes, which makes me feel safe in admitting my own errors. The principal allows me space to grow at my own pace. The principal trusts that I will do what I am expected (to) and she models consistent and trustworthy behaviors. (teacher)

My reflections in my journal highlighted our discussions of vulnerability that continued at our leadership learning sessions and how, we believed, being vulnerable as a leader does contribute to developing relational trust. Having real life examples to discuss was beneficial. "The teacher leaders began to develop an awareness and a confidence, in that there are times when being vulnerable reflects honesty and is effective modeling for others," as I noted in my researcher journal. I reflected, "I am discovering that with a true commitment to transparency, integrity shines through." One participant response reflected the common theme of transparency in reflecting on a transparent process: "The principal respects and supports the decisions I make. If she has questions, she uses the Open to Learning model to better understand the steps I am taking" (teacher).

Cycle 2 Findings. In developing relational trust, principals who honour transparency:

- understand and communicate the difference between public, common knowledge, accountability, and confidential accountability.

- create a secure environment with predictable and consistent decision-making processes and meeting protocols in place.

- establish consistent expectations and implement a consistent process in the follow up of expectations.

- model vulnerability by being honest and admitting to mistakes and then being willing to do the work over again, collaboratively.

- model vulnerability by opening up their own leadership practice for feedback, for the purpose of encouraging risk-taking vulnerability in others, so teachers are willing to open up their practices.

Within the theme of transparency, an additional finding surfaced - that of depth of vulnerability (See Appendix E Data Analysis Collection). The Cycle 2 Findings of Honouring Transparency are also closely linked to some of the Key Features of Pedagogical Leadership— core business of teaching and learning, ethical approach that respects values, founded on passionate care, leader of learning— student and teacher —— leader of practice, operates from moral purpose, agency for change with others by building trusting relationships, and goals and expectations. As well as representing the value of transparency in leadership, the teachers' responses also represented the value of pedagogical leadership learning.

Honouring Pedagogical Leadership

Table 16

A Summary of the Key Findings, Actions, and Learnings - Honouring Pedagogical Leadership

Theme Five: Honouring Pedagogical Leadership			
Cycle 1 Findings	Cycle 2		Cycle 2 Findings – *How?
	Actions	Learnings	
Relational trust is developed when I provide pedagogical leadership learning opportunities to empower all formal and informal leaders. I action learning opportunities by creating a model of leadership learning that builds leadership capacity in the school.	Plan additional leadership learning sessions—ensure all teachers know they are welcome to join.	Energized in planning the leadership learning sessions, very strong response in the theme of pedagogical leadership surfaced from the participants, that of risk taking.	Relational trust is developed when the principal commits to honouring pedagogical leadership through: ◦ Creating a model that offers the opportunity for leadership learning for all teachers, in a self-

Relational trust is developed when I provide pedagogical leadership learning opportunities for school-based leaders to develop their own understanding of who they are as leaders. As noted in my researcher journal, "the leadership learning sessions became much more than I expected. With this type of model in place, I have additional opportunity to know more teachers personally and professionally, enhancing relational trust.	Continue to focus on the theme: Who am I as a leader?	Inspired to provide more leadership sessions with more flexibility in scheduled times Providing the leadership learning sessions created opportunities for participants to learn who they are as leaders.	discovery process of who they are as leaders. As a result, the sessions were impactful in building relational trust through professional learning, which in turn enhanced participants' willingness to take risks. It was the learning that developed relational trust, which lead to risk taking, which then leads to innovation. A principal's intentional commitment to the action that honoured pedagogical leadership was acknowledged and appreciated, in depth, by the teachers, as contributing to their willingness to take risks.

* "How?" is the label I assigned, understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership.

Cycle 1 Findings. I learned through Cycle 1 in of this research that the ways in which I honoured pedagogical leadership through the ways I created a leadership learning model of self-discovery was important (Table 15). Drawing upon these findings and my field notes, I created my action plan for Cycle 2 for the theme of Honouring Pedagogical Leadership.

Table 17

Honouring Pedagogical Leadership – Action Plan

Action Plan	
1. Plan additional leadership learning sessions—ensure all teachers know they are welcome to join.	2. Continue to focus on the theme—who am I as a leader?

My Learnings – How?

From my field notes, I created my action plan for the theme of Pedagogical Leadership.

Action One Learning. During Cycle 2, I noted in my researcher journal, "I am even more energized in planning the leadership learning sessions after reading the participant responses and completing the data analysis from Cycle 1." In Cycle 2, a very strong response on the theme of pedagogical leadership surfaced from the participants, that of risk taking. Participant responses representative of the theme described how the leadership learning sessions enhanced relational trust and risk taking,

> The leadership learning sessions have impacted me in that they have given me the
>
> courage to know that I can take risks, fail, try again, and that it is OK for all those steps to
>
> occur as that is how we learn. Knowing that if I fail it is OK has encouraged me to take
>
> more risks in teaching and learning. (teacher)
>
> Through reflections, they have provided a foundation of beliefs for me to base my
>
> practice on. When you have a foundation to stand on, I believe you are more likely to
>
> take risks because these risks will only be taken when your beliefs support them.
>
> (teacher)
>
> These sessions have shown me beautiful opportunities that can occur when one is
>
> committed to leading, learning, and always growing in their practice. The skills I have
>
> learned have not only enhanced my professional life but also my personal life too. The

fear of failing is still there; however, it is a little less scary because if one is committed to always learning and improving their practices the learning is returned a hundred times over. Being in the company of trusting leaders and peers has played a huge role in wanting to be fully committed to my teaching and leading. (teacher)

With these kinds of positive responses, I was inspired to provide more leadership sessions with more flexibility in scheduled times, to ensure all teachers knew that the invitation was extended to everyone and to ensure all teachers had a clear understanding of the content of the sessions.

Action Two Learning. Providing the leadership learning sessions created opportunities for participants to learn who they are as leaders.

Through stories, quotes, and discussions, we have explored the characteristics and qualities that make a leader effective, and have come to know, appreciate, and foster our own individual leadership characteristics, qualities, and vison, while creating a collective, shared understanding of what leadership looks like in our school. (teacher);

"The environment of relational trust has most definitely allowed me to discover who I am as a teacher and a leader" (teacher).

"The leadership sessions have been a source of inspiration and a powerful motivator for exploring and assuming leadership opportunities" (teacher);

"I think the focus on pedagogy in our sessions has helped me to appreciate the importance of pedagogical leadership" (teacher).

As I noted in my researcher's journal, "I was thrilled. It was a pleasant surprise." Based on the data analysis of the number of responses valuing the leadership learning sessions, the leadership learning had a significant impact on building relational trust through professional

learning, which in turn enhanced participants' willingness to take risks. It was the learning that developed relational trust, leading in turn to risk taking and then to innovation.

Cycle 2 Finding. In developing relational trust, principals who honour pedagogical leadership:

- create a model that offers the opportunity for leadership learning for all teachers, in a self-discovery process of who they are as leaders.

Within the theme of pedagogical leadership, an additional finding surfaced —that of the depth of risk taking through emotion coding, understanding that pedagogical leadership learning has an impact on relational trust, which in turn enhanced participants' willingness to take risks.

Summary

The findings from Cycle 1 and my field journal guided the development of my action plan. I shared the findings and the common themes from my analysis and my follow-up action plan with the leadership learning session members as well as the whole staff. I wanted everyone to know the actions I was taking to improve my own practice in building relational trust through pedagogical leadership. In this chapter, the description of Cycle 2, I shared my action plan, my learnings, and additional findings arising from my actions in the context of the five themes that emerged from the analysis of my three data sources, participant researcher field notes, journal reflections from the leadership learning sessions, and the second survey.

- Honouring the Whole Person—Professional and Personal Well- Being
- Honouring Voice
- Honouring Leadership in Learning— Innovation and Risk
- Honouring Transparency
- Honouring Pedagogical Leadership—Knowing Myself as a Leader

Additionally, the Cycle 2 actions, learnings, and findings were presented in a narrative form, using quotes to provide an opportunity to better understand the reality of the research participants and the researcher. A Chapter 5 visual summary represents the findings of Cycle 2.

Figure 6

Visual Summary Cycle 2 Findings
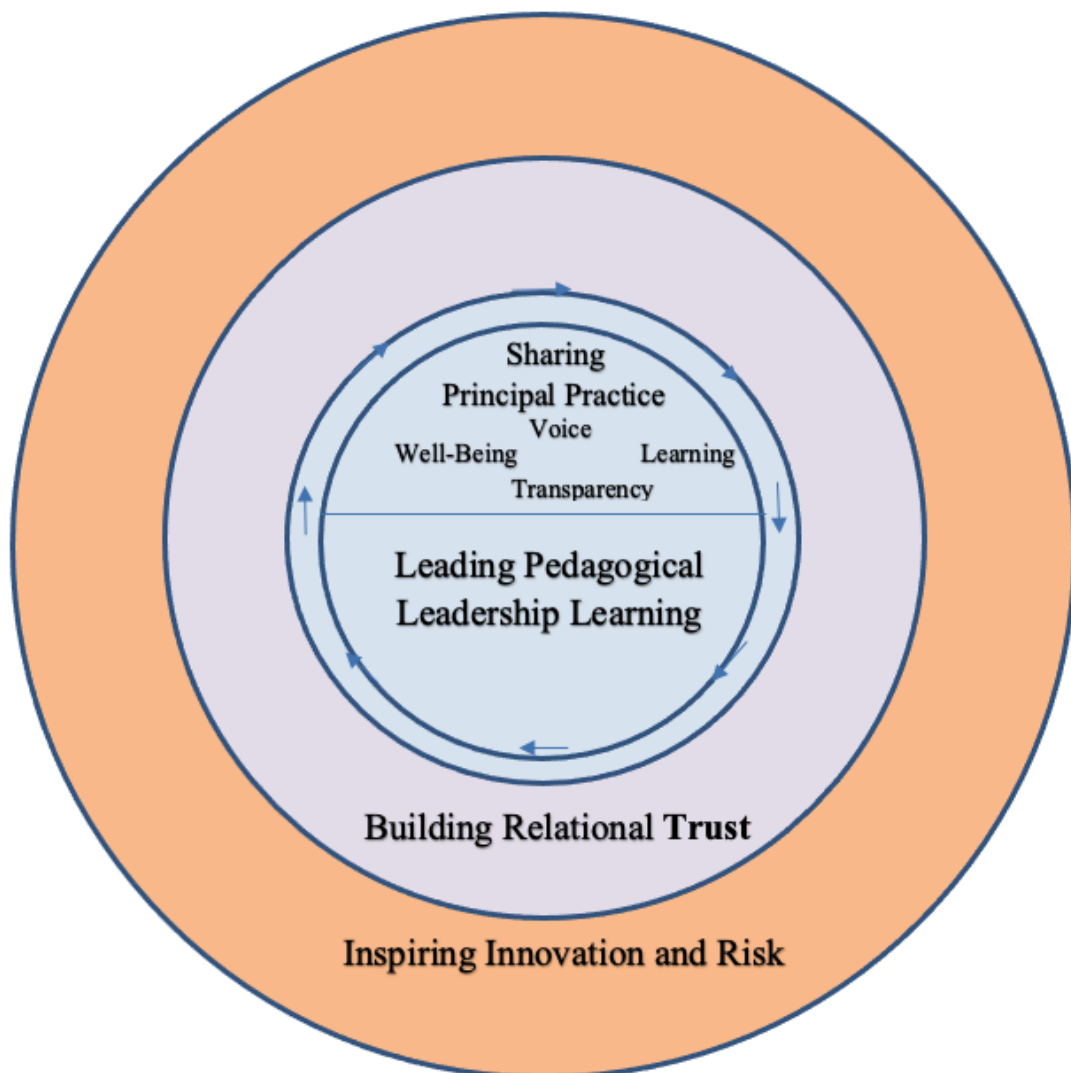
While this chapter presented actions, learnings, and findings of Cycle 2 of the action research study, the purpose of the next chapter is to discuss the findings in relation to the existing literature, pursuing the question," How does a principal develop relational trust through pedagogical leadership?"

Chapter 6: Discussion

Rhythm of Returning to the Literature Review

The purpose of this action research study was to determine how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. Understanding trust in professional relationships and fostering healthy cultures of trust in school environments is vital (Blau, 1986, Byrk & Schneider, 2002: Meerton, 1957, Scanla, 2012). It was hoped that a better understanding of how principals develop relational trust within a school would become evident through two iterative cycles of action.

For this research, I used naturalistic inquiry within a two-cycle practical action study to collect qualitative data by posing open-ended questions through an online questionnaire, hosting regular leadership learning sessions for interested staff, and reflecting on my actions. Participants in this study were composed of self-selected teachers and administrators who participated in the regular leadership learning sessions. There were 10 participants in Cycle 1 of the study and seven participants in Cycle 2. The data were coded and analyzed after each of the cycles and organized first by the research question and then by themes guided by the conceptual framework depicted in Chapter 2.

The previous two chapters presented the findings of the study by organizing data from my three data sources, participant/researcher field notes, leadership learning sessions reflective journal, and the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 participant surveys into themes. The purpose of this chapter is to provide interpretative insights into the findings. This chapter is an attempt to create a layered synthesis that takes into consideration the literature reviewed in the second chapter of this dissertation. The implications and interpretations of the findings from this research are

intended to contribute to an understanding of how principals undertake the work of developing relational trust in a school.

I have organized the findings of my study into five analytic categories, and I have maintained the rhythm of connecting to the existing literature and my conceptual framework. This involved interpreting the authors' relational trust determinants in respect to the study findings, weaving the themes into the literature, creating movement, and returning to the question—full circle. In exploring the question of how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school, I am reminded of the value of relational trust, about which Walker stated: "Trust acts as an antitoxin, a health-giving ingredient for good will, excellent working conditions, and enhanced learning experiences" (Walker et al., 2010, p. 491).

Rhythm of Connecting the Study Findings with the Existing Literature on Relational Trust Determinants: Interpretive Insights

The findings, organized into themes that emerged from the analysis of my study, connect to Byrk and Schneider's (2002) qualities of relational trust, which are identified by Robinson (2011) as determinants of relational trust. Leaders build relational trust by modeling and expecting the four qualities on which it is based: respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In Table 18, from left to right, I have organized the five themes from the findings, the four qualities/determinants (which were embedded in the survey design and dominant in the deductive analytic process), and literature from Robinson (2011) on how trust is earned, to identify the connections. From left to right, the themes from the findings are listed in the first column connecting to the relational trust determinants in the second column and the third column identifies the determinants that were intentionally embedded into the survey

design and dominant in the analysis process. The last column lists how Robinson (2011)

describes trust is earned in connection with the specific determinants.

Table 18

Literature and Findings Connection

Themes Emerging from Findings	Relational Trust Determinants—Bryk and Schneider (2002); Robinson (2011)	Determinants Embedded in the Survey Design and Dominant in the Analysis Process	How Trust is Earned—Robinson (2011)
Theme 1: Honouring Professional and Personal Well-Being	Personal Regard for Others—caring	Personal Regard, Integrity, Interpersonal Respect	Caring about others' personal and professional lives
Theme 2: Honouring Voice	Interpersonally Respectful—-listening — value— open	Personal Regard, Integrity, and Interpersonal Respect	Valuing and listening and open to influence Decision Making
Theme 3: Honouring Learning—Student and Teacher	Competence in Role	Competence and the Pedagogical Leadership Elements—student learning, core business of teaching and learning, and care component of children's positive leaning and the consequences of high relational trust—innovation and risk and professional commitment	Taking action that advances the best interests of children
Theme 4: Honouring Transparency	Personal Integrity—Transparency	Integrity, Personal Regard, Interpersonal Respect, and the Pedagogical Leadership Elements —Goals and Expectations and Student Learning	Dealing with people who undermine Personal Integrity—resolving conflict
Theme 5: Honouring Pedagogical Leadership	Competent — Empowerment	Core Business of Teaching and Learning and Teacher Practice	Relational Trust Determinants—Competence and Interpersonal Respect

Returning to the literature provided an opportunity to connect the findings and the themes from the study to the researchers in the field. Returning to the discussion of the literature, themes, and actions, created a rhythm, defined as a strong regular repeated pattern of movements (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). I valued the opportunity to move back and forth to the literature and the themes of the study.

Rhythm of Weaving the Themes into the Literature—Interpretive Insights: Honouring the Whole Person⸺Personal and Professional Well-Being

Prioritized Time — Conversations —Visual Journals

I have always wondered how much teachers want to be known personally as well as professionally. My question was answered when the data identified the well-being of teachers both professionally and personally as the most dominant theme of the study in developing relational trust. Findings from this study confirmed the claims of Bhindi and Duignan (1997), Bryk and Schneider (2002), Louis et al. (2016), Noddings (2005), and Robinson (2011) in stating that leaders need to be caring, sensitive, and empathetic in their attitudes and relationships. The value of caring for teachers, both professionally and personally, was vividly seen in the participants' responses. This study reinforced the supposition that a principal's intentional commitment in caring for teachers makes a difference in building relational trust. The commitment requires time—prioritized time.

In clarifying how to prioritize time, the findings of the study indicated that dedicating time to writing in teachers' visual journals made a difference both professionally and personally. The visual journals created a space to design their through circles (See Appendix F), professional teaching goals aligned with the Provincial Teacher Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2013), District 3-Year Education Plan, professional learning communities, school development plan,

and the Teaching Effectiveness Framework (Friesen, 2009), assisting the teachers to make connections between the exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem of the socio-ecological model depicted in the theoretical framework. The visual journals also created the space for ongoing cycles of feedback, and connected to the teachers' through circles, providing an opportunity for Robinson's (2011) professional open-to-learning conversations. On a personal level, teachers started including more of their own stories in their journals, using pictures, reflections, and artifacts that were special to them. By taking a few minutes to read journals, I found the joy in my day as I learned more about the teachers personally and professionally. Initially, I was trying to find time to write. I learned that I needed to find the time to read as well. As the teachers became more personal in their journals, my responses also became more personal, and together we developed a culture of relational trust.

To demonstrate the degree to which, as a principal, I valued visual journals, I promised myself that I would find time during professional learning days for teachers to reflect in their journals, sometimes professionally and sometimes personally. For example, I begin each school year with a picture book that has a special message. I provide time for teachers to reflect, ask questions and to write, personally and professionally, as they connect with the book and the message. The room is always very quiet, and more time is usually required than what I have allotted. It is invaluable time. Teachers know that I will be reading their thoughts eventually, so they write what they are comfortable sharing, and again, I respond.

Through the visual journals, we learn about each other personally and professionally, as represented in the findings, and we contribute to developing a culture of relational trust. My goal is to continue and to enhance the journal writing process and value the importance of different forms of communication. Now knowing, from the findings of the study, the degree to which the

teachers value the process, I am determined to prioritize my time to read and to write,

demonstrating my deep sense of care for teachers' professional and personal well-being in

creating the balance of press and support (Louis et al., 2016), and a condition of nurture and rigor

(Ancess, 2000).

One teacher's story touched my heart. The teacher committed to her visual journal with

passion and with a desire to learn. She was also a very skilled writer and a talented artist. With

each entry, she wrote from the heart and created a work of art. I always wanted more time with

her visual journal. One day, she shared with me that she was going to present her daughter, who

was a university student in the Faculty of Education, with her visual journal as a gift for her as a

beginning teacher. I believe that for a new teacher, the visual journal would be a beautiful gift.

The experienced teacher's reflections about her professional and personal learning were so

insightful. She definitely made her journal her own. Sharing the journey with her daughter will

be precious. This kind of story keeps me incredibly inspired and dedicated, to continuing the

visual journal process with heart.

Prioritized Time—Conversations—One-on-One

As reported in the findings, the participants valued and appreciated the care of one-on-

one conversations with the principal. The participant responses highlighted that, through the

private conversations, they realized the principal knew and cared about their lives outside of

school. Caring for staff members' personal and professional lives contributes to the development

of relational trust and adds to the literature of Bhindi & Duignan (1997), Louis et al. (2016), and

Robinson (2011). One way to contribute to the care is by principals prioritizing their time to

listen to teachers, one-on-one. Noddings (2005) discussed how caring requires openness,

transparency, and genuineness. One-on-one interactions provide an opportunity for genuine conversations.

Prioritized Time—Conversations—Leadership Learning Sessions

Findings from this study confirmed that the teachers who participated in the leadership learning sessions valued the opportunity to be listened to by the principal, both professionally and personally. Initially, I thought our sessions would be professional conversations based on literature, research, and experiences. They became much more. There was an interesting dynamic in our leadership learning sessions between teachers who were pursuing formal education leadership roles and other teachers who wanted to learn more about leadership for their teaching and leading roles in their classrooms, in the school, and in their personal lives, in areas such as coaching, community, and family relationships. We were all so fortunate to have the opportunity to reflect on our leadership learning, as well as listen to the personal conversations that evolved as teachers shared their stories in relation to leadership. I learned to listen even more carefully, and I cherished these sessions. I learned so much about the teachers as they shared their triumphs and their vulnerabilities. I developed an authentic knowledge of the teachers, both professionally and personally, grounded in empathy and care (Louis et al., 2016). The sessions were an unexpected gift. My long-range plan for the leadership learning sessions constantly changed, with the conversations guiding the way. Through the emotion-coding analysis, the findings revealed that a principal's intentional commitment to the actions that honour the whole person is acknowledged and appreciated by teachers, as it contributes to their professional and personal well-being. The depth of the appreciation found professional and personal well-being to be the strongest theme of the study.

Findings from this study highlight the need for leaders to attend to developing relational trust by prioritizing their time to find ways to care for teachers' professional and personal well-being. Pedagogical leadership connects well to these findings, as leaders care for student and teacher learning, with its specific focus on the care component of learning (Wu, 2017). As leaders, we need to care for others in a selfless way (Louis et al., 2016). One selfless way is listening as we honour teachers' personal and professional well-being and as we honour voice.

Honouring Voice

Learning to Listen

"Trust cannot be taken for granted in schools, but rather must be consciously cultivated and sustained, first and foremost, by school leaders" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b, p. 350). Findings from Tschannen-Moran's study confirmed that school leaders need to engage in the serious work of cultivating a culture of trust in the school. School leaders cannot take such work for granted; rather, trust must be nurtured and sustained. One way to nurture is by listening. As a school leader, I learned the value of listening to all voices, whether one-on-one or when I was listening in a group of 350 principals. I learned to focus. I learned to listen. Findings from the study highlighted the importance of showing the speakers that their voice is being heard. Crippen (2005) noted the value of listening:

> Effective leaders are great communicators and must be good listeners, to themselves (through their inner voice) as well to others. Educators must take time to reflect upon their practice and through their personal listening / hearing they make effective decisions for / with students. (p.6)

Findings from Crippen's (2005) study highlighted the need for school leaders to listen to all the voices, including their own, to make decisions. Listening, reflecting, and acting are

valuable processes to follow every moment of every day. I know my decision-making is more effective when I slow the process down. I will listen and take time to reflect. I will often say to people that I want to think, involve the other stakeholders, and then meet again with a proposed action plan. Listening, reflecting, and acting need time and cannot be rushed, for effective decision making. As reported in the findings, when time is taken to listen not only to others but also to one's own inner voice, school leaders are guided to do the next right thing. Decision making is often part of the listening process. This study confirmed the value of decision-making processes and protocols that include all voices. The participant responses reflected the degree to which they valued their voices being heard in decision making. Pedagogical leadership, with its focus on the care component of learning, (Wu, 2017) connects well to honouring voice and caring to listen. This finding is supported by Kutsyuruba et al. (2016), who emphasized "the need for personal authenticity and truthfulness, especially in the relational matters and in complex leadership decision making" (p. 364).

Decision Making

In this study, the actions of listening to the voices were pursued by the school leader, through facilitating decision-making processes, sharing process beliefs with teacher leaders, providing opportunity for teacher leaders to practice, and exploring additional ways to listen to all staff members. The depth to which the participants acknowledged being valued and listened to with heart, empathy, and sensitivity in the development of relational trust was explored. The additional texturing into ways of listening supports Cooper's (2004) finding that "Effective leaders are those who act spontaneously with a true heart of compassion in caring for the person regardless of the consequences" (Kutsyuruba et al., p. 134).

The participants' responses provided the inspiration and encouragement needed for the principal to find the time to truly listen to everyone—students, parents, and staff. This is consistent with Timperley's statement (2011):

> Essentially, relational trust is forged through day-to-day social exchanges defined by respect through a genuine sense of listening to others, personal regard shown by a willingness of participants to extend themselves beyond what is formally required, and discernments about role competence that colleagues have the knowledge, skills and/or technical capacity to deliver on intentions and promises. (p. 148)

As the evidence presented in the findings demonstrates, Timperley's notion of genuine listening made a difference in developing relational trust with the participants in this study. The findings from this study highlight the need for leaders to attend to honouring voice through learning to listen with heart, empathy, and sympathy, and through facilitating the decision-making process and protocols that include all voices, with the end goal of impacting learning.

Honouring Learning

Teacher Learning

Findings from Honouring Learning revealed that relational trust is developed when I create a model for teachers' professional learning. My intentional commitment to the actions that honoured learning was acknowledged and appreciated in depth by the teachers, as it contributed to the feeling of ownership of their professional learning. The action goal in Cycle 2 was to dedicate more time for teachers to participate in their own professional learning communities. The leadership mindset, inspired by the goal, was to ensure the purpose of professional learning communities.

As the principal in this study, I focussed on developing the understanding of the through circle (See Appendix F). As teachers designed their own through circle in their visual journals, they identified professional learning goals while clearly committing to provincial, system, and school expectations and accountability standards. The goal was to support teachers in being accountable to the many requirements and standards, without them feeling overwhelmed. Alignment provided the focus and direction—one goal— so that learning through professional learning communities could then become energizing. The teachers were empowered and took ownership for their learning collectively, and this contributes to students' achievement (Robinson, 2011).

Designing the through circles in their visual journals created a space for professional learning, and a rhythm surfaced — the rhythm of teacher identification of goals, principal reflection, and teacher reflection— in a repeating pattern. The findings and actions of honouring teacher learning reflect Timperley's (2011) work, in that "a key leadership mindset is creating a learning-oriented design in schools that reflects the complexity required to create appropriate conditions, structures and rhythms for professional learning" (pg. 93). In this study, the participants' responses reflected the development of relational trust through their own professional learning and through being entrusted to take ownership of their professional learning.

Robinson (2011) indicated that leadership is about tackling the work that builds trust, "through learning and through making progress together" (p. 43). The findings in this study reinforced that the commitment to professional learning contributed to the development of relational trust and provided additional insight into how this occurs. This enlarges on the work of Robinson (2011), who noted that when leaders create conditions for teachers and leaders to learn

together, more opportunity is provided for improved student performance. With professional learning, teachers gain confidence and, as a result, teachers take more responsibility for student learning and well-being (Robinson, 2011). The findings from this study highlighted the need for leaders to attend to honouring learning by empowering students and teachers to be leaders of their own learning. This contributes to Kutsyuruba's et. al.'s (2016) finding that "trust has the ability to create a safe school environment where best teaching practices and professional learning, as well as student learning and achievement are a priority" (p. 366).

Student Learning

Timperley (2011) noted that "other authors have proposed that (while) relational trust in itself does not directly affect student learning, it does create the basic social fabric for improvement efforts" (p.148). From the emotion coding analysis, the participant responses revealed that relational trust was developed through a principal's intentional commitment to the action that honoured student learning. This was acknowledged and appreciated in how deeply the teachers indicated that it was this that contributed to their care toward student learning. While I appreciate that there might not be a direct relationship between relational trust and student learning, this study found there is an indirect relationship in addition to creation of the social fabric for improvement.

The findings suggested that to care about student learning is to ensure that every decision is filtered through a concern for what is best for students. This was the main action that evolved from the theme of student learning. During the study, I ensured that my action was visible when facilitating decision-making processes. I knew I could support every decision that was made when we consistently viewed it through the lens of what is best for student learning. Findings from this study highlighted the need for school leaders to attend to developing relational trust by

caring enough about student learning to base every decision-making process on that ethic of care woven into the social fabric of improvement efforts.

In the context of translating *Organizing Schools for Improvement* (Byrk, 2009) into accessible terms, Scanlan (2012) presented an image of essential supports, leadership, instructional guidance, professional capacity, learning climate, and parent /community relations as interlocking gears. "These gears must all work smoothly to turn the hub (the instructional triangle of teacher, student, and subject matter). Relational trust can be thought of as the grease allowing the gears to move smoothly" (Scanlan, 2012, p. 301). The predictability and consistency of basing decisions on what is best for students was appreciated by the teachers and was reflected in the participant responses. It contributes to the smooth movement of the gears. As well as the teacher and student learning climate being one of the interlocking gears, a principal's transparency of leadership is also a gear that contributes to the grease of relational trust.

Honouring Transparency

Processes and Accountability

Robinson (2011) stated, "Leaders might understand the theory of student-centered leadership, but if they cannot develop trust among leaders, teachers, parents, and students they will have great difficulty practicing it" (p. 17). Employing the findings from this study, I learned that relational trust was developed with the teachers by honouring transparency through the facilitation of consistent and predictable processes and by the commitment of demonstrating accountability transparency. The act of transparency is one way of contributing to Robinson's (2011) findings. The participant responses from the study demonstrated the degree to which they valued transparency in leadership.

As the principal in the study, I focussed on my actions that emerged from my findings and ensured that at the beginning of every meeting all teachers consistently had a clear understanding of the protocol that would be facilitated during the decision-making process. I always felt more confident when I had a clear protocol in place, and I too learned to trust the process. With a transparent process in place, we could always reach consensus.

The next step was modelling for teacher leaders. In a large school, with a number of teachers outside the classroom, new teaching models were designed each year. Facilitating the consensus process was the perfect opportunity to model for teacher leaders. With their roles in mind, teacher leaders were willing to practice the processes in their own team meetings when decision making was required. Walker (2010) discussed the value of being trustworthy and modelling trustworthy behaviors when following and enforcing school-wide values in decision making. As the study found, transparency contributed to developing trustworthy behaviors.

Public accountability also demonstrated transparency, and this was identified and appreciated in the participant responses. During the leadership learning sessions, an understanding developed of the need for confidential accountability as well, and it was honoured by the principal. The teachers were respectful of the need for confidentiality. For further learning, I dedicated a leadership learning session to a hypothetical situation based on the concerns of teacher practice. I asked the teachers to reflect on how, if they were the principal, they would follow up when knowing that other staff members had concerns. The conversation was a valuable learning opportunity, as teachers shared their thoughts and perspectives. Transparency requires action. Actions can look different if matters are public or confidential, but in both cases, it must honour integrity. Actions matter and are noticed. Behavior and trust are bundled together (Leithwood & Louis, 2011).

Vulnerability

As a leader, I have always believed that being vulnerable is important in modelling transparency in leadership. From my analysis of the emotion coding, I deepened my understanding of the degree to which vulnerability is valued. Given how strongly the depth of vulnerability surfaced from the participants, it is incumbent upon principals to consistently model vulnerability in their practice and to share their learning with the teachers. The findings not only validated my beliefs as the principal in this study, but they also elevated my beliefs. I now truly understand Robinson's (2007) discussion point, that "relational trust involves a willingness to be vulnerable to another party because one has confidence that he or she will fulfill the obligations and expectations relevant to the shared task of educating children" (p. 18).

Enhancing risk taking and teacher practice through relational trust is the goal. If leadership transparency and vulnerability contribute so significantly to the goal, then learning and practicing how is important. The findings identified in my study related to how predictable words and actions, consistent expectations, public and confidential accountability, and modelling vulnerability to encourage risk-taking vulnerability in others became a focus in my leadership practice.

I found during the study that making my practice visible also developed relational trust. My notes from the leadership learning sessions documented the degree to which the participants valued the transparency of my own leadership practice. As I shared my triumphs and vulnerabilities, I also shared that I was open to feedback. Taking a problem of my practice, past and current, we all learned together as we collaborated and discussed additional possibilities and solutions. During the leadership learning sessions, making my own practice visible and being open to the feedback process invited other teachers to share their own problems of practice. We

learned together that our examples of visible practice and feedback contributed to our vulnerability. The findings from the study reinforced how vulnerability contributed to relational trust. Kutsyuruba et al., (2016) defined the trust phenomenon as

> the extent to which one engages in reciprocal interaction and a relationship in such a way that there is a willingness to be vulnerable to another and to assume risk with positive expectations and a degree of confidence that the other party will possess some semblance of benevolence, care, competency, honesty, openness, reliability, respect, hope, and wisdom. (p. 345)

I opened my practice to the teachers during the leadership learning sessions, I became more trusting that my stories would be received with care and openness and the discussion contributions would be presented with care and respect. This action research study was the greatest act of vulnerability in my career and was also worth the risk. Making my principal practice visible in honouring all the themes of personal and professional well-being, voice, learning, transparency, and pedagogical leadership contributes to developing a culture of relational trust. Findings from this study highlight the need for principals to reflect on transparency and vulnerability in their own leadership practices. I was grateful that participants valued vulnerability, although I was somewhat surprised by the degree to which vulnerability was valued in day-to-day leadership practice.

Honouring Pedagogical Leadership

Leadership Learning Sessions

In respect to Honouring Pedagogical Leadership, the Cycle 2 findings revealed that relational trust is developed when the principal creates a professional learning model that offers the opportunity for leadership learning for all teachers in a self-discovery process of who they

are as leaders. From the relational trust that was developed, risk taking in practice was enhanced, as was vividly seen in the participant responses. The findings of this study provided additional insight into how this occurs, and are supported by an observation of Kutsyuruba et al. (2016):

> Trust is a construct that reflects hunger, need, and efforts to create and sustain social–emotional capital between people. Trust helps people to better perform everyday activities, to meaningfully engage with others, and to securely carry people in and through times of vulnerability and risk taking. (p. 368).

Initially, I thought the learning from the leadership learning sessions would enhance risk taking and, in turn, develop relational trust as teachers participated in a self-discovery process of who they were as leaders. From the participants' responses, I learned that it was the other way around. The participants' responses reflected that the leadership learning sessions enhanced the relational trust, which then led to risk taking. This finding is somewhat surprising. It calls into question a generally accepted notion about the order of developing relational trust. It highlights the need for school leaders to attend to professional learning first, as it was through the professional learning that relational trust developed. The participants' responses provided evidence that the development of relational trust enhanced their own risk taking.

Other principals might also hold the misconception that professional learning creates an environment of risk taking, which in turn builds relational trust. However, the findings in this study clearly showed that it was the relational trust built in the learning sessions that created an environment for risk taking. This highlights the need for principals to attend to teachers' professional learning to build relational trust. Risk taking will develop as the principal's commitment to pedagogical leadership is seen as an ongoing commitment to building relational trust. This finding is a contribution to the research literature on building relational trust.

Kutsyuruba, et al. (2016) stated, "People feel they can take a risk in an environment of trust by being more willing and able to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity, take calculated chances and share pertinent information, including our inner thoughts and feelings, when appropriate" (p. 347). The culture that Kutsyuruba et al. described is the culture school leaders need to create with staff and live in each day if they are to build relational trust. The commitment to building relational trust in order to create an environment where people feel they can take risks, live with ambiguity, and share their thoughts and feelings is worth the time required to engage in the work of relationship building.

Reflection

Arlestig and Tornsen (2014) claimed that not all principals will know how to act as pedagogical leaders. Providing the leadership learning sessions was one way to help beginning and future leaders learn. I found, as documented in my field notes, that teachers valued the sessions and learned more about pedagogical leadership and about themselves as pedagogical leaders. The evidence was seen through the teachers' written reflections in their visual journals and through the participants' survey responses.

As noted in the literature review, pedagogical leadership is defined as leaders of teacher learning (Brandon et al., 2014; Fullan, 2013, Robinson, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1998; Male & Palaiologou, 2015; Robinson, 2007; Sergiovanni, 1998, Tornsen & Arlestig, 2014). It is different from other forms of school leadership because of the specific focus on the care component of children's positive learning and outcomes (Murray & McDowall Clark, 2013, Wu, 2017). The evidence from the teachers' visual journals, which proved to be an invaluable vehicle for reflection and learning, showed that learning about pedagogical leadership evolved through shared readings, discussions, and experiences. We all developed an understanding of the three

main elements of pedagogical leadership: creating conditions for teaching and learning; leading learning and teaching; and linking the everyday work of teaching with organizational goals and results (Tornsen & Arlestig, 2014). Providing writing time was always a priority during the leadership learning sessions and reflected the journey of leadership self-discovery.

The literature review from this study was shared with the teachers, with a specific emphasis on Robinson's et al. (2008) perspective on the disconnection of leadership research and the core business of teaching and leaning. I highlighted to the teachers that this represented a gap in the literature. Robinson identified her next step as investigation of the literature on pedagogical leadership, so that she could determine whether the literature might provide a basis for establishing a relationship between leadership and teaching and learning. This question permeated each of the leadership learning sessions as all members of the group defined who they were as leaders. As I commented in my field notes, identifying myself as a pedagogical leader felt right in its connection to teaching and learning and with the care component as I pursued the question of how to develop relational trust. Together, the participants and I developed a common understanding of pedagogical leadership and began to use the common language in our conversations, which contributed to the one voice of the leadership team. This study found that all participants gained knowledge in learning how to act as pedagogical leaders. All participants in the leadership learning sessions tackled the work together to create conditions for teachers and leaders to learn together, thus enhancing more opportunities for improved student performance.

The Conceptual Framework developed for this study, anchored in social–ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), reflects the relationship between the pedagogical leadership team and the creation of a culture of relational trust among leaders and teachers. It creates the conditions—that is, the ecosystem in which the likelihood of a positive attitude toward

innovation and risk and professional commitment with teachers might emerge. Based on the

teachers' reflections, the participants' responses, and my own field notes, the ecosystem of a

positive attitude toward innovation and risk and professional commitment with teachers did

emerge. Robinson (2010) acknowledged leadership as a social process: "On conceptual grounds,

alone, a strong case can be made for a leadership capability in the area of relationships" (p.15).

The first concept reflects how the importance of relationships is evident, as leadership is a social

process, an ecosystem, which connects back to Bronfenbrenner's (1994) social ecological theory

and the microsystem. Leaders, through pedagogical leadership, also play a critical role in the

mesosystem, where the relations between leaders and teachers, and in return, relationship

between schools and home, play a huge role in determining student success. The qualities of

relationships integrated into descriptions of task performance are reflected in the second concept.

I continue to be inspired by our leadership learning sessions. By sharing my principal

practice, literature, research, stories, and conversations, I am reflecting and learning. Again, the

leadership learning sessions were worth every minute of my time and they kept my own

pedagogical leadership practice moving forward.

Rhythm of Creating Movement – Interpretive Insights

As referenced in the literature review, Male and Palaiologou (2012) stated, "Leaders

should aim to synchronize their actions with the collaborative, interactive nature of pedagogy"

(p. 17). Synchronizing actions and interactions reflects movement. In the discussions during our

leadership learning sessions, I frequently wove the theme of movement into the conversation,

describing how movement keeps my own leadership practice moving forward. Cutler (2014)

referenced a commonly accepted definition of leadership, that "the act of leading people involves

influencing them to undertake a course of action that contributes to an objective defined by the

leader: his or her vision" (p.1). By sharing the actions that evolved through the findings and field notes of my study with the whole staff, I was documenting my movement while building relational trust. Action reflects change and movement and connects to the understanding that the word "lead" derives from the Anglo-Saxon for a journey, a road, or a way (Cutler, 2014, p. 1). I have been on a journey with my leadership practice. As I learned, acted, and moved forward from the findings of this study, I moved "from one place to another, from one situation to another" (p.1). Male and Palaiologou (2012) indicated that pedagogy evolves over time and that leadership should evolve alongside and flow in a similar fashion, a match for pedagogical leadership. They also noted that "…other leadership approaches did not flow as well, such as learning-centered leadership, which appears static and may limit its focus to the outcomes and outputs, rather than absorbing the whole learning process" (p.17). The findings of this study revealed that the actions taken kept my leadership practice advancing in a constant flow.

During this study, the degree to which learning through visual journals was valued by the participants was emphasized. I had always valued the journal reflection process, but I was surprised to find that the visual journals surfaced as a valuable learning vehicle in three of the themes—professional and personal well-being, learning, and pedagogical leadership. Visual journals emerged as a common thread of the study, for which I was thrilled. In my commitment to creating movement, I have just begun to create my next step.

One system education director inquired, "When are you going to invite teacher leaders to participate in the visual journal reflection process?" It was time. When the question was first posed, I was tentative. I had always included assistant principals and had gradually supported them in becoming knowledgeable and comfortable in the process, but I did not expect the journal-writing process to fit the leadership style of every leader. I did not think I should expect

participation from teacher leaders. Now knowing, through the participant responses, the degree

to which the visual journal learning process is valued, I have started the discussion with the

whole leadership team. I am energized by the thought of six leaders participating in the process.

The ongoing cycle of feedback will be impactful in developing relational trust, as we continue to

create the rhythm of movement. Findings from this study highlight the importance of principals

having a process in place for ongoing cycles of feedback. Based on the evidence presented in the

findings, Male and Palaiologou (2012) and Cutler's (2014) notions of movement, action, and

flow within the leadership journey had an impact on pedagogical leadership learning through

visual journals in exploring the question, "How is relational trust developed through pedagogical

leadership in an elementary school?" In the spirit of creating movement, 11 teachers who

participated in teacher leader sessions over the years became the successful candidates of new

teacher leader and assistant principal roles in the school and in the system. We learned

collaboratively and supported one another on our leadership journeys.

Rhythm of Returning to the Question—Full Circle

This study's question is: "How is relational trust developed through pedagogical

leadership in an elementary school?" While Robinson (2010) indicated that relational trust is a

significant capability impacting both student and teacher learning within a school, her research

findings were unclear as to how principals create a culture of relational trust within their schools.

This study documents the journey of one principal, the researcher, in answering the question of

how. The visual summary (Figure 7) reflects the findings and is organized into the themes of

honouring professional and personal well-being, voice, learning, transparency and pedagogical

leadership, and the interpretations of the findings, in response to the question, how is relational

trust developed through pedagogical leadership, in an elementary school? Louis et al. (2016)

discussed the open door for continued exploration of caring among formal leaders, noting that there are relatively few educational studies that have completed an in-depth study of caring among formal leaders. Louis et al. (2016) stated that the success and well-being of both teachers and students in schools requires caring leadership. I feel that this is just the beginning of the work. Right now, creating a culture of relational trust where teachers share practice is a good place to maintain focus and development in moving forward. Kutsyuruba et al. (2016) stated, "Trusting environments are perceived as allowing for affirmation, empowerment, hope, and engagement of teachers in their work to establish well-functioning professional learning communities: enhanced teacher learning; and positive educational outcomes and student learning" (p. 366). I am dedicated to that hope as I engage in effective leadership practices by committing to the understanding of the leadership capabilities. In my ongoing pursuit of understanding how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership, I know that, as Robinson (2010) stated, "Evidence about effective leadership practices is not the same as evidence about the capabilities that leaders need to confidently engage in those practices" (p. 2).

This study focussed on understanding the rhythm between relational trust and pedagogical leadership. As noted in the literature review, it became clear that pedagogical leadership was the leadership approach most closely aligned with relational trust, in that building relationships for greater leadership participation requires trust so practitioners can challenge practice and take risks without fear of reprisal or reprimand (Murray & McDowell Clark, 2013). The study found that pedagogical leadership learning contributed to the development of relational trust, enhancing risk taking in practice. The conversation of pedagogical leadership is ongoing and, as Male and Palaiologou (2015) stated, "This dialogue will never be complete in any discussion of pedagogy … there is no final point of permanent and perfect equilibrium"

(p.228). With the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership, my commitment is to ensure that "as each new person is introduced into the environment, special attention is required to care for the person as well as the culture of trust" (Walker et al., 2011, p. 491). As a principal, I want to provide special attention to each new person who is introduced into our environment. I hold close Bronfenbrenner's (1979) statement, "Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always" (p. 262). In developing relational trust with teachers through pedagogical leadership, it is important, as principals, to show that somebody's got to be crazy about that teacher.

Figure 7

Visual Summary
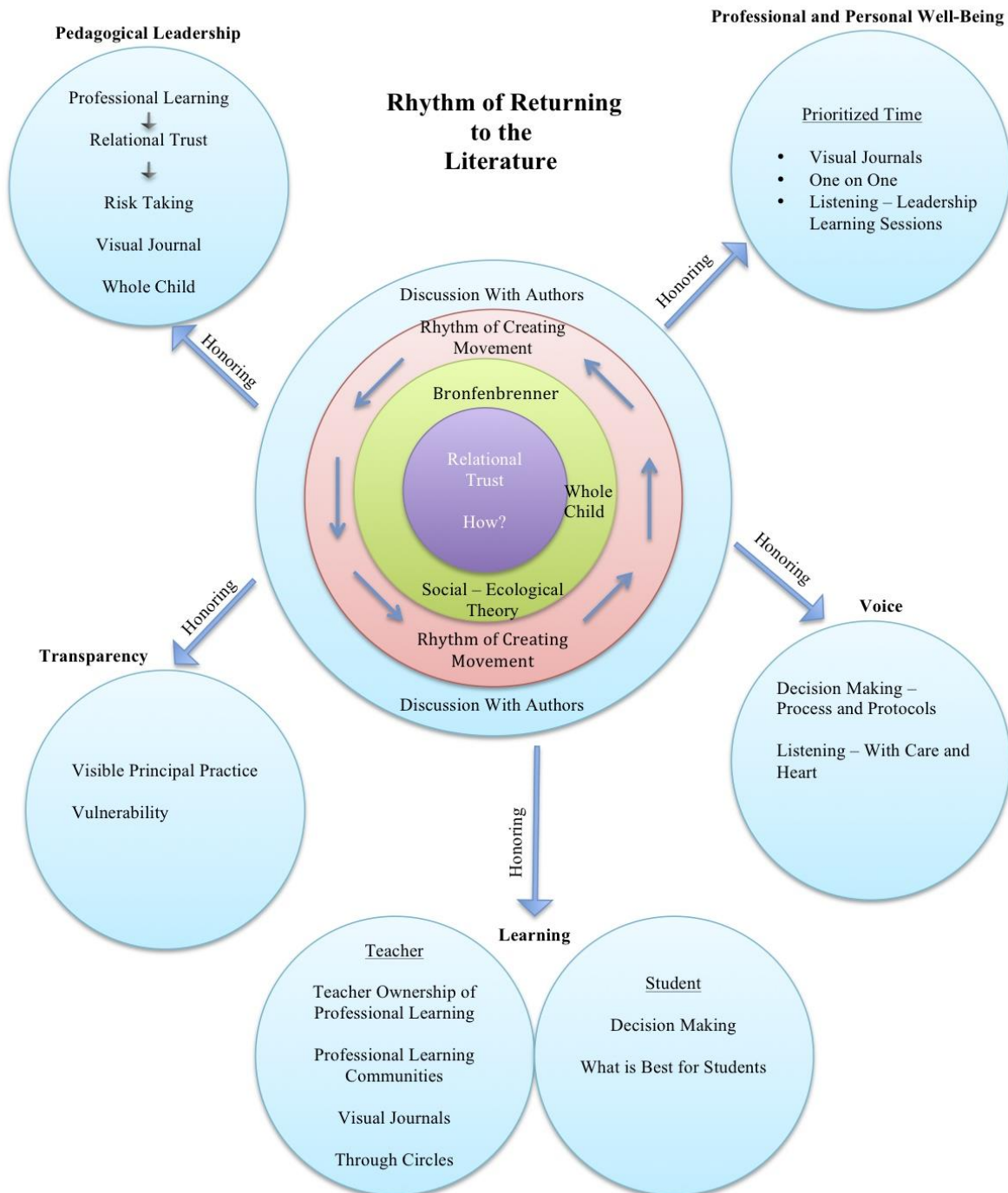
Chapter 7: Conclusion

The purpose of this practical action research study was to determine how relational trust was developed through pedagogical leadership in an elementary school. The conclusions from this study are in response to the research question and the findings, and therefore address five areas: (a) honouring the whole person; (b) honouring voice; (c) honouring learning; (d) honouring transparency; and (e) honouring pedagogical leadership. The following is a discussion of the implications emanating from the five key findings and conclusions drawn from this research. Recommendations for practice are included in each of the five areas. This discussion is followed by recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with the researcher's personal and professional reflections on leadership.

Honouring the Whole Person: Personal and Professional Well-Being

The first major finding of this study is that relational trust is developed when the principal commits to knowing the staff personally and professionally through:

- prioritizing time to come to know people personally and professionally

- providing ongoing cycles of feedback through visual journals

- scheduling open-to-learning conversations

- listening carefully to stories and experiences

- providing space for personal and sensitive conversations

A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that to build relational trust, principals need to commit to knowing the staff personally and professionally. It is the case that when asked, many principals would agree that building relationships is important. The literature (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Conway & Andrews, 2015; Louis et al., 2016; Murray & McDowall Clark, 2013; Robinson, 201; Walker at al., 2010) confirmed that it is necessary for principals to create

the conditions for relational trust and is important to create an ethos of relational trust. The difficult challenge that remained was to determine how principals began to create such an ethos. A related conclusion of this study suggests the strategies that principals might draw upon; prioritizing time; providing cycles of feedback that include some form of documentation; scheduling open-to-learning conversations; listening carefully to teachers' stories and experiences; and providing space in their calendar for personal and sensitive conversations.

A recommendation for practice for principals who are seeking to build, improve, and strengthen relational trust is to establish a schedule that includes frequent and regular strategies for coming to know teachers personally and professionally. As a range of strategies is required, principals who are unfamiliar with multiple strategies could seek additional professional learning in their area of need.

Honouring Voice

The second major finding was that relational trust is developed when the principal commits to honouring voice. Honouring voice is developed through multiple strategies, including:

- implementing decision-making processes

- sharing values and beliefs

- providing practice and feedback for the leadership team

- presenting as the question-posing body

- listening with care and heart

A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that to build relational trust, principals need to commit to creating processes that honor and respect teacher voice. Strategies to draw upon include: implementing decision-making processes and models; sharing values and beliefs;

providing practice processes and feedback specifically for the leadership team; presenting the leadership team as the question-posing body; and listening with care and heart.

A recommendation for practice for principals who are seeking to build, improve, and strengthen relational trust is to create and teach consistent processes and protocols that provide opportunity for teachers to share their voices during school-based decision-making processes, listening with genuine care and heart. An additional recommendation is for principals to provide opportunity for teacher leaders to practice implementing the processes, and to also provide ongoing feedback to the teacher leaders.

Honouring Student and Teacher Learning

The third major finding was relational **t**rust is developed when the principal commits to honouring learning through:

- dedicating more time for professional learning communities
- setting goals by designing a through circle
- ensuring that all decision making is guided by what is best for student learning.

A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that to develop relational trust, principals need to honour a visible commitment to student and teacher learning. Effective strategies include: dedicating time for teachers to participate in their own professional learning communities; designing processes for teachers to determine their own professional learning goals connected to a strategy of documentation such as a through circle; and ensuring that all decision making is guided by what is best for student learning.

A recommendation for practice for principals who are seeking to build relational trust is to dedicate significant time for teachers to participate in their own professional learning communities, facilitate goal-setting processes that reflect school, system, and provincial

expectations and accountabilities, and ensure that all decision making is guided by what is best for student learning.

Honouring Transparency

The fourth major finding of this study is that relational trust is developed when the principal commits to honoring transparency through:

- understanding and communicating the difference between public common knowledge and accountability and confidential accountability

- creating a secure environment with predictable and consistent decision-making processes and meeting protocols

- establishing consistent expectations and follow up

- modelling vulnerability, admitting to mistakes, and opening their own leadership practice

A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that to develop relational trust, principals need to believe in the value of honouring transparency in their leadership. Strategies include: understanding and communicating the difference between public common knowledge and accountability and confidential accountability; creating a secure environment with predictable and consistent decision-making processes and meeting protocols; establishing consistent expectations and follow up; modelling vulnerability; admitting to mistakes; and opening one's own leadership practice.

A recommendation for practice for principals who are seeking to strengthen relational trust is to model and honor a strong belief in the value of transparency in their day-to-day leadership practice. Strategies related to demonstrating public and confidential accountability,

predictable and secure decision-making processes, and modelling vulnerability all contribute to honouring transparency.

Honouring Pedagogical Leadership

The last major finding of this study is that relational trust is developed when the principal commits to honouring pedagogical leadership through:

- creating a leadership learning model that offers the opportunity for all teachers to participate in a self-discovery process of who they are as leaders, leading to relational trust, risk taking, and innovation.

A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that to develop relational trust, principals need to design a leadership learning model, with a pedagogical leadership approach in mind, in which all teachers are welcome to participate. The professional learning sessions lead to relational trust, risk taking and innovation.

A recommendation for practice is for principals who are seeking to build relational trust is to commit to designing a leadership learning model for all interested participants. The findings in this study clearly showed that it was the relational trust built in the learning sessions that created an environment for risk taking. This highlights the need for principals to attend to teachers' professional learning, by designing and actively engaging in ongoing professional leaning sessions, to build relational trust.

Recommendations for Future Research

My inquiry indicates how principals can develop relational trust through pedagogical leadership. Relational trust can be enhanced through honoring the well-being of teachers personally and professionally, considering teachers' voices, and valuing student and teacher learning, leadership transparency, and pedagogical leadership. There are a number of areas for

further research in order to expand the field of building trusting relationships within pedagogical leadership to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how principals instil practices that build relational trust. These areas for further research include:

1. Based on the limitations and delimitations of the current study, a larger and more diverse sample of participants is required to determine the prevalence of relational trust in schools. This sample should include schools beyond the K-4 environment.

2. Research into teachers' and students' perceptions of principals' strategies to build relational trust is required to confirm principals' perceptions.

3. Research into the impact of relational trust on student learning is warranted as one of the claims of pedagogical leadership is its impact on student learning.

4. Given the component design and the value of the through circle in support of teachers assessing their own practice and creating their own goals, exploring the impact of the Teaching Effectiveness Framework (Friesen, 2009) surfaced from this inquiry as a valuable direction of future exploration as well.

The four recommendations listed summarize areas for further research, related to the study of how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership.

Researcher's Reflections

At the beginning of my doctoral journey, I had to tell myself repeatedly to trust the process and to trust the people. I did not know where I was headed, which was very uncomfortable for me. I realize now that initially I was trying to make everything fit together. With the support of my supervisor, I have learned to let the data guide me. I had to think differently, with an open mind, and I had to have the courage to move forward with the research participants' responses leading the way. At this place in my doctoral journey, I now have a clear

vision of how all the pieces of the research puzzle eventually do fit together. I am truly grateful

for the opportunity I have had to conduct this research inquiry into how relational trust is

developed thorough pedagogical leadership, and for the insight and feedback of the research

participants who were so generous with their time in participating in leadership learning sessions

and in completing surveys. My practice as a leader has changed and has been enhanced in ways

that have deep meaning for me.

I began my doctoral program 6 years ago. During this last year, my role as a school

principal has never been more focussed on developing relational trust than it has been during this

time of pandemic. I am so grateful for my learning during my study. If there were ever a time

staff needed to trust, it has been now, during the COVID-19 global outbreak. I have been

dedicated to implementing the learning from my action research inquiry as I have focussed on

building relational trust by listening and continuing to move forward. I have been honouring

personal and professional well-being, teacher voice, student and teacher learning, transparency,

and a model of pedagogical leadership with a carefully orchestrated intentional approach. I felt

grounded during a very unsettling time. The findings from my inquiry have given me knowledge,

courage, and confidence, and have now provided a clear understanding of the leadership

strategies that teachers value and need in building relational trust. Everyone is so fragile and

unsettled. I do feel honoured and privileged to be in the position of making a difference through

implementing my research findings. Knowing that the study responses were generated by this

group of teachers and leaders, I made a very conscious plan to review my findings and to ensure

I was living the identified strategies.

Because of my focus on honouring professional and personal well-being, I made myself

very available to listen. To begin the year, medical accommodations, six online teachers, and

new safety measures and restrictions were all required. When I provided time to listen and to create individual plans, people started to believe and trust that creative solutions could be developed and that we would find our way. Our first day back was very quiet. Maintaining our practices, I asked people to write in their visual journals to capture this moment in time and to describe their feelings. We took time to share and discuss, and to develop a common understanding of how everyone was feeling. On the first professional learning day, I asked everyone to write again, and the time dedicated to writing and discussing proved to be invaluable. Honest emotions were shared, and conversations followed as we talked about fear, anger, nervousness, and anxiety. People need to feel safe. This led to the second question: What could we all do next, as a staff, to help and to contribute? We talked about everything for which we were grateful, and about what we have learned to value from living though a pandemic. From the discussion, a final Wordle / Word Cloud was created, with Family identified as the most dominant response to the inquiry of gratefulness. We identified that we are grateful for our personal and professional families. I was very encouraged in developing relational trust, knowing that the professional family was highly valued by the staff. It provided a great place to start in honouring professional and personal well-being. Facilitating a delicate, honest conversation always takes courage, and is always worth it in the end. One teacher had the Wordle / Word Cloud professionally produced with the word Family shining brightly in the center. I gain strength from this visual each day.

With my focus on honouring voice, we continued to make decisions together and to creatively problem solve together. More than ever, teachers needed to have a voice and to know that someone was listening with care and heart. They were scared to be in the school, initially. Day one was very quiet. As safety measures were planned together and communicated well,

some of the fear subsided. I believe that as relational trust developed, I heard the noisy voices again. The staff needed to have a voice and some sense of control.

With my focus on honouring learning, I made a strong commitment to the teachers' development of through circles, facilitating their own self-assessment and goal-setting processes. It was an intentional strategy to keep our teachers focussed on learning and to keep our school moving forward in the middle of a pandemic. Our staying focussed on my findings helped to prevent an environment where COVID-19 consumed our thoughts. The teachers demonstrated a dedicated and creative effort in examining their practices and determining their goals for the year. I was very proud of them and a new energy surfaced in the building.

Another example of honouring learning and moving forward was the new 3-year School Development Plan. I valued this process, and I believed the 3-year plan helped us to look forward. I am a strong believer in constantly moving forward and this requirement facilitated the process. It was healthy to plan for the next 3 years, and to determine goals, resources, strategies, and measures. I believe a positive mindset was created as we focussed on the learning of our students and teachers. The long-term commitment to learning was energizing. As one of the key findings from my study, I understand how the focus on professional learning contributes to building relational trust.

With my focus on honouring transparency, I presented myself as a learner. There was so much to read and learn each day, and I asked for everyone's help to stay current. From there, we continued with our decision-making processes and made plans together as we encountered each new problem. As we know, in a crisis, with each new situation and problem, we learn more and consequently the protocols change. Developing relational trust was so important while living in an environment of constant change. Creating a secure environment with predictable and

consistent decision-making processes and meeting protocols helped people to develop some sense of control. With positive cases constantly reported, action required to isolate students and staff, and the facilitation of school inspections, it was important to create a trusting environment, while demonstrating strength and confidence.

While demonstrating confidence, I also continued to focus on the findings of my study that related to leadership vulnerability. I was honest and shared the mistakes I made, as I was learning throughout the constant change in protocols, new measures, and new restrictions. To develop relational trust, I presented myself as strong, confident, and vulnerable. I was transparent.

With a focus on honouring pedagogical leadership, I continued with our leadership learning sessions. I knew people were exhausted, but I also knew from my own experiences that learning is energizing. I wanted to hold onto some sort of normal as well, since we were teaching during this very unsettling time. We started another group, virtually, with some new people and some new resources. The willingness to learn was apparent and the conversations were inspiring. I had another opportunity to build relational trust, even though it was limited in the virtual environment.

I never could have foreseen the value of my findings. While working through my doctoral journey, with all that I learned from my inquiry, I gained confidence in leading during a pandemic. I will be forever grateful that this work was by my side. The timing has great meaning for me. I was very fortunate, five years ago, to be one of the 42 principals who participated in the district / area professional learning opportunity that inspired the doctoral program and my study.

As referenced in my conceptual framework, the focus of my practical action research inquiry, anchored in Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory, was relational trust though

pedagogical leadership. This consists of four determinants: interpersonally respectful, personal regard for others, competent in role, and personal integrity (Robinson, 2011). While Robinson (2010) indicated that relational trust is a significant capability impacting both student and teacher learning within a school, she was not clear as to how principals initiate creating a culture of relational trust within their schools. Five findings emerged from this study: a) committing to knowing the staff personally and professionally by prioritizing time to engage in diverse forms of communication including ongoing cycles of feedback; b) ensuring staff voices are heard through multiple key actions, including decision-making processes and protocols; c) honouring learning through dedicating time for professional learning, setting goals, and ensuring all decision making is guided by what it best for student learning; d) honouring transparency by creating a visible principal practice in matters related to accountability, expectations, and decision making; and e) creating a leadership learning model that is open to all teachers to participate in a self-discovery process of who they are as leaders. One key conclusion from the research is that to build relational trust, principals need to design a leadership learning model, with a pedagogical leadership approach in mind, in which all teachers are welcome to participate. Relational trust was developed during the professional learning sessions, and lead to risk taking and innovation. I am hopeful that the integrated findings, themes, and strategies identified in this inquiry will support leaders in exploring the development of relational trust and in creating an understanding of how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership.

At the final recommendations, conclusions, and reflections of my inquiry, I feel I have gone full circle, from my understanding of my leadership role to a renewed understanding of my role. I was eager to begin again. With the pandemic this year, I initially felt unsettled in beginning a new school term in my principal role. When I took the time to pause and reflect on

what I have learned from my action research inquiry, I knew and felt that I was beginning a

school year, after 23 years as a principal, with a renewed understanding of my leadership role,

and I became more settled. I am discovering my leadership role all over again, for which I am

forever grateful.

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Appendix A: Research Study Meeting

Dear Leadership Learning Session Participants,

I am writing to you as your principal and as a doctoral student of the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. For my dissertation I am studying the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership. I am inviting you to participate in this study which will involve the completion of a survey, at two different times, during the research period.

Attached is a Letter of Invitation describing the study in more detail. This research has been approved through the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board of the University of Calgary, as well as the Research and Innovation Department of the school district.

I will share more about my study at our Leadership Learning Session and answer questions.

Given my roles as both principal and researcher participant, I will be sensitive toward the request for participation. With the involvement of my supervisor, I will ensure that informed consent is gathered and that anonymity is promised, as we work together throughout this research project. There will be no expectations, from the principal, for the teachers to participate in the study. This is possible because there are more teachers in the Leadership Learning sessions than the number of participants required for the study. In no way will any participant feel coerced to participate in the inquiry. Whether teachers choose to participate or not will in no way negatively affect their position, current or future, in the school or in the organization.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Jacki McLaren

Principal

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Appendix B: Letter of Invitation—Study Description for Participants

November 26, 2018

Re: Understanding the Development of Relational Trust Through Pedagogical Leadership

Dear Participant:

I am writing to you today to request your participation in a university research project on the topic of Understanding the Development of Relational Trust Through Pedagogical Leadership. I am conducting this project as part of the dissertation requirements for completion of an Ed.D. Degree in the Department of Graduate Studies, Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. The purpose of this proposed practical action research is to investigate how relational trust is developed through pedagogical leadership. The rationale for this study originates from my own desire, as a principal, to ensure quality teaching, by leading teacher learning and development. I want to explore how to develop relational trust, through pedagogical leadership, and the impact it has on teacher practice.

For this investigation, proposed practical action research study, I will facilitate two cycles of the practical action research process. I am seeking participants who have participated in our school's Leadership Learning Sessions. Specifically, I would like to have the opportunity to engage you in providing your perspective in the form of a survey. The timeline for completing the survey will be during the months of December / January, 2018 for Cycle Number One and during April / May 2019 for Cycle Number Two. Given my roles as both principal and researcher participant, I will be sensitive toward the request for participation. With the involvement of my academic supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen, I will ensure that informed consent is gathered. There will be no expectations, from the principal, for the teachers to participate in the study. This is possible because there are 14 teachers in the

Leadership Learning sessions, which is more than the number of participants required for the study. In no way will any participant feel coerced to participate in the inquiry. Whether teachers choose to participate or not will in no way negatively affect their position, current or future, in the school or in the organization.

Dr. Sharon Friesen, my academic supervisor, will meet with the Leadership Learning members, in person at the school, and explain the details of the study. I will not attend this meeting. Teachers who are willing to participate in the study will confidentially inform Dr. Friesen. I will not have knowledge of this information. I will not know which teachers have volunteered to participate.

You are under no obligation to participate and, if you do consent to participate, you may without consequence, decide not to continue your involvement. If you decide to withdraw your participation, any data collected from you will be withdrawn from the study.

Additionally, once data has been collected, you will have the opportunity to review the data and, if you choose, make additions, corrections, or deletions to the survey. Further, at any point you are free to ask questions about the research and your involvement with it.

Only the researcher, Jacki McLaren, and the researcher's academic supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen will have access to the revised and anonymized transcripts of the survey.

Additionally, the data gathered in this study will be collected by the researcher's academic supervisor, kept in strict confidence, and will be stored at a secure location, to which only Dr. Friesen will have access. The documentation will be kept in a secure cabinet for a period of five years after which time, the data will be destroyed in a manner that safeguards privacy and confidentiality. A final copy of the dissertation can be made available to you if requested.

This study received approval through the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board of the University of Calgary.

You may contact my research supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen, if you have further questions. Please complete the attached consent form to indicate your decision and return the form to Dr. Friesen. (sfriesen@ucalgary.ca)

Thank you for considering this request. I am very excited about the possibility of learning more from your perspective. Thank you in advance for your interest.

Sincerely,

Jacki McLaren

Ed.D. Candidate

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form – Survey

Name of Researcher: **Jacki McLaren**

Faculty of Graduate Studies, Education

(587) 224 – 6007 jacqueline.mclaren@ucalgary.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Sharon Friesen

Title of Project: Understanding the Development of Relational Trust Through
Pedagogical Leadership

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board as well as the Research Department of the school district have approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this practical action research study is to investigate the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership. The rationale for this study originates from my own desire, as a principal, to ensure quality teaching, by leading teacher learning and development.

The researcher, Jacki McLaren, is specifically interested in discussing the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership and the perceived impact of these actions on teaching practice.

What Will I Be Asked to Do?

The researcher would like to have the opportunity to engage you in completing a survey that consists of closed and open questions. Only the researcher's University of Calgary Academic Supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen, will have access to the raw survey and the academic supervisor and the student researcher, Jacki McLaren, will have access to the revised and anonymized transcripts of the survey.

You are under no obligation to participate and, if you do consent to participate, you may, at any time and without consequences, decide not to continue your involvement. If you decide to withdraw your participation, any data collected from you will be withdrawn from the study prior to May 31, 2019. Additionally, once data has been collected, you will have the opportunity to review the data and, if you choose, make additions, corrections, or deletions to the survey. Further, at any point you are free to ask questions about the research and your involvement with it.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to confidentially provide your name to my Supervisor, Dr. Friesen. The survey questions will be for use by the researcher and the researcher's academic supervisor only. Survey responses will never be shown in public.

There is an option for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. Please review the option and respond:

A pseudonym will be assigned.

You may quote me and use my pseudonym name.   Yes: ___ No: ___

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Only the researcher, Jacki McLaren, and the researcher's academic supervisor, Dr. Sharon Friesen will have access to the revised and anonymized transcripts of the survey.

The data gathered in this study will be kept in strict confidence, and will be stored at a secure location, to which only Dr. Friesen, will have access. Further, the surveys will be locked in a secure cabinet for the required five year period, after which time they will be destroyed in a manner that safeguards privacy and confidentiality. A final copy of the dissertation can be made available to you if requested.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Email: _____

Supervisor's Name: (please print) _____

Supervisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

> Jacki McLaren
> Faculty of Graduate Studies, Education
> (587) 224 6007, jacqueline.mclaren@ucalgary.ca
> or
> Dr. Sharon Friesen (Supervisor) sfriesen@ucalgary.ca

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-4283 / 403-220-6289; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The student's academic research supervisor will keep a copy of this consent form.

WERKLUND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

November 26, 2018

Appendix D: Survey – Questions and Prompts

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study. This information, including questions and prompts, that will guide your thoughts related to understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership in your school, is being provided in advance for consideration and reflection.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this Practical Action Research is to investigate the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership in your school. The rationale for this study originates from my own desire, as a principal, to ensure quality teaching, by leading teacher learning and development. I want to explore how to develop relational trust, through pedagogical leadership, and the perceived impact it has on teacher practice.

Survey Questions and Prompts

The following questions and prompts have been designed to guide responses and reflections related to understanding the development of relational trust through pedagogical leadership in your school.

Please feel free to reflect on documents and/or artifacts that may be helpful in this inquiry, for example, visual journals, task design, assessment strategies, professional learning opportunities, school development planning, and professional learning communities. The format of your responses and reflections may be short answer or in point form.

Survey Directions

Highlight one of the following choices on each question:

Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Respond to the additional questions by short answer or point form.

RELATIONAL TRUST

1) The leadership model at my school demonstrates personal regard for me.

> ❖ **Strongly Agree**   ❖ **Agree**   ❖ **Disagree**   ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, demonstrates personal regard for you.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to demonstrate personal regard for you.

2) The leadership model at my school develops interpersonal respect for me.

> ❖ **Strongly Agree**   ❖ **Agree**   ❖ **Disagree**   ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, develops interpersonal respect of you.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to develop interpersonal respect for you

3) The leadership model at my school demonstrates competence with me.

> ❖ **Strongly Agree**   ❖ **Agree**   ❖ **Disagree**   ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, demonstrates competence with you.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to demonstrate competence with you.

4) The leadership model at my school models integrity for me.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, models integrity for you.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to demonstrate integrity for you.

5) I demonstrate innovation and risk in my teaching practice.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

6) I demonstrate professional commitment in my teaching practice.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP

1) The leadership model at my school models a focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, models a focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

2) The leadership model at my school demonstrates a care component in children's positive learning outcomes.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, demonstrates a care component in children's positive learning outcomes.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to demonstrate a care component in children's positive outcomes.

3) The leadership model at my school demonstrates leadership of student learning.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, demonstrates leadership of student learning.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to demonstrate leadership of student learning

4) The leadership model at my school demonstrates leadership of teacher practice.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, demonstrates leadership of teacher practice.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to demonstrate leadership of teacher practice.

5) The leadership model at my school demonstrates a focus on goals and expectations.

❖ **Strongly Agree** ❖ **Agree** ❖ **Disagree** ❖ **Strongly Disagree**

a) Describe how the leadership model, at your school, demonstrates a focus on goals and expectations.

b) Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, could be enhanced to focus on goals and expectations.

LEADERSHIP LEARNING SESSIONS

1) Describe how the Leadership Learning Sessions have impacted your ability to enhance your innovation and risk in your teaching and / or leadership practice

2) Describe how the Leadership Learning Sessions have impacted your professional commitment in your teaching and / or leadership practices.

Appendix E: Data Collection Analysis (Samples)

3a - Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, demonstrates competence with you.

Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, demonstrates competence with you. *trusted*

1. Teachers at Taradale trust Jacki. Jacki trusts her teachers. Her "happy place" is in classrooms, with students and their teacher. She engages teachers in professional learning which is relevant. Instead of being an early adapter, Jacki is thoughtful and purposeful when planning learning opportunities for her teaches. - *appreciative*

2. -Jacki will never solve a problem for me unless it is a supervisory role (a role of which I am not in) -She will take me through guiding questions to bring out the competence and awareness of that competence - *appreciative*

3. Leadership regularly seeks learning opportunities, and makes changes to improve their capacity to organize and lead - *appreciative*

4. The leadership practice at my school demonstrates competence with me in that it has given me more responsibilities this year in my role to make decisions based on my own professional judgements. I am being more trusted to put into practice the professional development I'm learning at leadership sessions and then being given the opportunity to reflect on the decisions that I'm making to see if they align with who I feel I am as a leader. *trusted*

5. Our school principal is highly competent, committed equally to student and teacher success, and brings a wealth of experience to the role. The principal thoughtfully and intentionally explores and considers all options and seeks *apprec.* multiple perspectives before making decisions. She is caring, compassionate, and empathetic. She *grateful* communicator. She is a servant leader, committed to making a difference in the lives of students and teachers. These qualities and actions generate trust in and respect for her as a leader, and therefore people naturally follow. *trusted* Professional learning opportunities, including the careful scheduling of our Personal Development days to ensure that we have opportunities to learn skills such as how to help students with learning challenges meet their goals or *respected* opportunities to look at what knowledge or skills we need to improve learning outcomes for our students. -No one in our school feels pressure or feels forced to take a project on or committee (for example). There is respect for peoples' strengths and weaknesses leaving the decision ultimately up to the teacher. Then, if you sign up for a committee it is ensured that you are not alone and there is a team involved. - *appreciative*

7. I think the level of trust displayed by the leadership at the school that demonstrates the competence with me. By having a leadership practice that allows for successful decision making in such a large school, to me, that shows competence. On a more personal level, the trust that was placed in me to complete tasks or to lead, showed that there was a level of competence within myself that was recognized by leadership.

Emotions

trusted
trusted
appreciative of
competence.

Trusted - 6
Appreciated - 7
Grateful - 1   Confident - 1
Respected - 1
Valued - 2

4a - Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, models integrity for you.

quote
④ Transparency

1. Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, models integrity for you.

④ quote listening

Jacki's commitment to her teachers, support staff, students, parents, and all stakeholders is outstanding. She always conducts herself in a professional and respectful manner. As a new leader, working with Jacki, was such a gift. Each and everyday I learned from her. She is so dedicated to the complex work of being a Principal. In every interaction, she listens and makes decisions that align with her beliefs. She really does think about what is best for students and this guides and grounds her work. Jacki is predictable, credible, and truthful. — *grateful, appreciative*

2. -Jacki encourages us to reflect on our gut feelings -If something doesn't sit right or feel 'good', she encourages us to dig deeper into the situation to find out why, and if necessary, how to resolve those feelings — *trusted*

3. They are fair and respectful of all points of view. They are honest even when it is difficult. — *trusted*

4. The leadership practice at my school models integrity with their words, actions, decisions, and core values. This high integrity gives the sense of trust in which employees are willing to be vulnerable. The kindness that is shown demonstrates a high value for employees all around. — *trusted, valued, grateful*

5. Our school principal's values, words, and actions are consistently aligned. Her actions and words are grounded in and guided by her beliefs. Actions and decisions are often predictable because of this strong and consistent alignment. This offers a level of comfort within and among teachers in our school because they know which direction we are headed and how we're going to get there. Teachers never have to worry about hasty, careless changes in approach or direction. This enables us to focus on our students, our program, and our classroom. The integrity modeled and lived contributes to a safe and caring environment that encourages teachers to take risks in their professional learning and practice. — *secure - focussed - confident - cared for*

④ quote leadership

6. -The integrity is witnessed by the incredible level of commitment to the staff, students, and parents day after day - showing up to do the hard work that often has to be done before, during, and after school. I have felt supported by the leadership practice at my school during uncomfortable conferences with parents. — *supported*

④ quote PLP

7. The leadership practice shows and models integrity daily. Never is a negative word spoken about a staff member, student, parent, or any other stakeholder. This professionalism is always on display and modeled for all. Even more so, the sharing done by the leader at this school is often so personal and so reflective, but maintains that professionalism at all times. That integrity is so important, and is such a huge part of the trust and respect that is evident within the school.

- trusted
- respected
- appreciative

- appreciative
- grateful

- encouraged to take risks

Appreciative - 3
Trusted - 5
Grateful - 3
Secure - 1
Respected - 2

Cared for - 1
Confident - 2
Focussed - 1
Supported - 1

Encouraged
↓
1

1a - Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, models a focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

- confident, appreciative (handwritten)

Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, models a focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

100% of the time, Jacki always reverts back to what is best for students, which then translates to what is best for teachers.

We are always being asked to reflect on our practice and how we can connect what we are learning/teaching to the SDP, DBIR, TEF and the three year plan and how it all impacts how and what our students are learning. The way in which we do this through our visual journals allows us to each take what we are learning and really think about how we can put it to practice in the way to best suit the needs of all of our students. *- Valued, trusted* (handwritten)

The Teaching Effectiveness Framework is a living document within our school. It is not just discussed but used regularly and authentically as a core document guiding our professional growth, learning, and practice. With the TEF as a guiding document, teachers are provided time and space (visual journal) to reflect on teaching and learning, set professional goals, and reflect on our practice. - The school principal visits classrooms, taking note of how the TEF is lived and practiced within our classrooms and programs, and celebrates the work of teachers and the learning of students by reflecting and responding in our visual journals. The entries serve as feedback that teachers can then reflect on and use to improve their practice. - Staff are actively involved in the creation of our School Development Plan. Goals are thoughtfully generated based on evidence of student learning across the grades gathered through multiple sources. - Teachers in Grades 1-4 have recently begun to collaborate to improve students' writing skills by implementing grade specific writing assessments three times a year and working together to assess student work using a common rubric. The results are then used to improve teaching practice and enhance student learning. The data are also used as evidence of student achievement in our School Development Plan.

-Staff meetings -Emails -Whiteboard in staff room that gives updates and the week at a glance -PD Days that are engaging -Opportunities to participate in leadership sessions -Special guests -Hand-picked books each school year given out to teachers and shared with students

The focus of the school is on teaching and learning, and not just for students. The leadership practice at this school makes it clear that professional learning is valued and will be provided as much as possible. Additionally, time is provided to focus in on the best teaching practices and how teachers can work together to support each other in this teaching. I can not stress how beneficial the time is. Even more important is that teachers know they are not in this work alone. They see their leadership involved in the learning and bringing that learning back to them.

Quote (4) - learning (handwritten)

Valued (handwritten)
trusted
appreciative
respected

appreciative (handwritten)
grateful
respected

- appreciative (handwritten)
- grateful

Confident - 1 (handwritten)
Appreciative - 6
Valued - 2
Trusted - 2
Respectful - 2

Grateful - 2 (handwritten)

1 - Describe how the Leadership Learning Sessions have impacted your ability to enhance your innovation and risk in your teaching and / or leadership practice.

Describe how the Leadership Learning Sessions have impacted your ability to enhance your innovation and risk in your teaching and / or leadership practice.

As a new formal leader, it was so valuable for me to participate in Jacki's Leadership Learning Sessions. It gave me time to think about myself as a leader. In the day to day business of a school day, there are rarely moments reflection. These sessions provided me with opportunities to think deeply about how I was conducting myself as a leader. Using literature, grounded in research, helped me to reflect on areas of strength and areas for growth. Being able to set my own goals, gave me a lens to think about my daily interactions with staff, students, and parents. Participating in these sessions also fostered new understandings and relationships with colleagues who were not "formal" leaders. It was so valuable to engage in dialogue focussed on leadership.

they have provided a framework for who I am as an educator and a leader -because I have had the time to reflect on who I am, I can confidently take risks and lead others in the same way. I have learned a greater sense of humility in my teaching practice, and in leadership roles. I have recognized the strength that comes from vulnerability. This has allowed me to more boldly approach uncertain situations and try new and unfamiliar approaches to my practice.

The LL Sessions have impacted me in a way that has me always thinking about what kind of leader I want to be and how I can go about building the foundations for being a strong leader with relational trust that I so value in my own leader. I have taken many risks in my leadership practice not knowing what the outcome might be but always taking a step back and reflecting on the actions that I took and what I learned from each situation.

- Our use of professional literature (specifically the work of Robinson and Timperley) has had an impact on my understanding and enactment of leadership in practice, as the discussions and readings have helped me to understand the leadership values and beliefs of our school district, and appreciate how these values and beliefs have shaped the structures and policies implemented within our school district. - Such discussions and readings have expanded my view of leadership beyond our school to a more global perspective, and have grounded the practices enacted in our school in the literature. - I feel that the leadership sessions have had more of an impact on my leadership practice than on my teaching practice. While the sessions have inspired me to pursue leadership and expanded my understanding of leadership, I feel that the connection to teaching and learning has not firmly been established or explored deeply at this point. The 'relational trust' aspect of the leadership sessions is definitely strong. However, with my personal professional learning goals in mind, I would like to see a stronger, more intentional focus on the pedagogical component of leadership within the context of the leadership sessions. We are exposed to vulnerability and stories during the leadership sessions that help us to be vulnerable ourselves. They have provided me with knowledge that has helped me take more control of my own professional learning.

The leadership learning sessions where super valuable to me. Not only did they provide me with an opportunity to look at my own leadership in a different way, they provided me with a chance to really reflect on my leadership and on my own teaching practice. I feel like these sessions really let me know myself better and let me better understand where I want to go in the future and how I might get there. These session gave me some new confidence to move forward with my leadership and to take some of those risks while I continue to find myself as a leader.

Tone of Emotion (1a.)

Heard - 1
Appreciative - 6
Grateful - 1
Supportive - 2
Trusted - 2
Cared for - 2
Gentle Coaching - 1
Acknowledged - 1
Respected - 2
Valued - 1
Empathy - 2

Gratitude

2

1a - Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, demonstrates personal regard for you.

Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, demonstrates personal regard for you.

4 - Leadership is flexible in providing for my needs as a teacher - My needs and concerns are heard, acknowledged and responded to quickly and with care - appreciative

5 The leadership practice at my school demonstrates personal regard for all staff members as our leader treats everyone as individuals and shares care, compassion and personal regard for each person. - appreciative - grateful

6 -by offering the Leadership group sessions, Jacki clearly represents a strong interest in wanting what is best for me as a teacher and leader -with the leadership group focused on self reflection, she provides an opportunity for teachers to get to know themselves, which then translates into best leadership practice -Jacki gives teachers the freedom to make decisions that are best for us in our own practice and given context -Jacki guides us through the process of decision making where where reflection of practice and beliefs are at the forefront - appreciative - supported - Trusted

7 The principal provides very gentle coaching for me and helps guide my practice through check-ins, conversations, and by encouraging me to engage in system and local professional development. When I require redirection or support, I can be guaranteed that the conversations are about building my skills rather than making me feel punished or ashamed. - supported - gentle coaching → do not feel "ashamed" or "punished" - Trusted -

- I feel valued and appreciated and am treated with respect, kindness and compassion - principal is genuinely caring, compassionate, and empathetic - principal is usually visible and present, and available to meet with teachers to discuss both personal and professional matters - I feel acknowledged for my work within the school, whether it be a round of applause at a staff meeting or a personal, handwritten card - staff gather on a weekly basis, not just to discuss school-related matters, but because community is valued within our school - community- and team-building activities are organized during professional development days to bring staff together in fun ways and in different configurations; opportunities are provided to share during whole-group Sharing Circles - classroom visits (informal pop-ins) have increased; I love the quick' walk throughs', as do my students

previous printing #1

gentle coaching / guide practice / freedom to make decisions

Labels
Total Responses - 7

⭐ (4) Genuine Care & Concern - (Pink)
⭐ (4) Kindness & Compassion - (Orange)
⭐ (4) Valued / Acknowledged / Appreciated - (Peacock Blue)
⭐ (2) Empathetic (Green)
⭐ (1) Personal & Professional (Pink Felt)
⭐ (1) Voice & opinions factored into decision (purple felt)

LIST OF HOW
- Visible & present & available to meet
#1 - response - list of How
- staff informed - common knowledge
- respond to needs quickly
- treat as individuals
- offering of Leadership sessions → works best for needs / leader

Handwritten left page:

Emotion Coding - 2a

Respected - 1
Grateful - 2
Appreciative - 1 + 3 = 4
Supportive - 1
Trusting - 2
Valued - 3
Listened To - 1

Handwritten/typed right page (researcher-annotated document):

2a - Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, develops interpersonal respect for you.

Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, develops interpersonal respect for you.

4. N/A   respected - "respect the feelings"   - grateful for acknowledging individuals

5. Our leadership practice takes the time to listen, understand and respect the feelings of each and every staff member. We are all individuals who have different learning/personal needs and there is always time taken to help understand what we as individuals need to be successful both in work and in personal aspects.   - needs - personal + professional

6. -Jacki always finds a moment to meet with us. When she does, she listens, listens and listens -She asks questions to better understand a situation, then asks questions to help understand our point of view on the situation -Jacki will never tell someone they are wrong or 'no'. She easily guides us through the process of discovering what other perspectives could be involved, then bringing the situation back to what's best for the students and teachers.   - appreciation of listening - supported - Trusted

7. I feel as if Jacki knows who I am and checks in about the professional and the personal. Jacki allows herself to be vulnerable and admits to her mistakes which makes me feel safe in admitting my own errors. Jacki allows me space to grow at my own pace. Jacki trusts that I will do what I am expected and she models consistent and trustworthy behaviours.   - grateful - personal + professional - TRUSTED -   "I feel" "knows who I am" "I feel safe"

- staff are provided opportunities to contribute their perspectives and ideas, and to voice their questions and concerns during staff meetings and monthly Community Coordinator meetings - staff input is usually sought when making decisions related to school matters, such as scheduling, whole-school events, academic programming, etc.   #1 - respectful

★ 3 - Purple (2nd Strongest) → Knew person - Professionally + Personally

★ 9 - Listens + provides opportunity to be heard/voice   Strongest - Green

★ 1 - Vulnerable - peacock (blue) mistakes

★ 1 - Trusts (red)

★ 1 Guides us through the process of discovering other perspectives.   staff meeting ←

- How Listed in Responses
- Model Mentorship - Protocol/Process
- CC meeting - contribute perspectives

Preserves - Dignity through ✱ *Honest & Compassionate* ①
teacher conversations ✱ *Provides Feedback* ①
✱ *Collaborative Connections* ①
11
4a - Describe how the ✱ *Multiple Policies - support teacher interactions* ①
leadership practice, at your school, models integrity for you.
★ *Shares information* ①
✱ *Shares successes & short comings* ①

Describe how the leadership practice, at your school, models integrity for you.

4. N/A   "trust" "

VOICE 5. Our leader shows the utmost integrity in all regards. By listening to everyone in each and every situation and then *respect,*
handling people with consistent respect and honour people feel as though they are being heard and in turn trust is *trust is*
earned in a sincere way.   "feel as though they are being *appreciative*
heard"

6. -Jacki respects and supports the decisions I make. If she has questions, she uses the 'Open to Learning' model to
VOICE better understand the steps I am taking -She listens deeply to better understand and paraphrases...this process
also helps me understand the decisions I am making and whether they are moving in the right direction, or need
to be shifted   *- respected, supported - TRUSTED - grateful*

Whole 7. - Honest - Compassionate - Slow to anger/judge - Provides feedback - Engages in collaborative conversations - *appreciative*
Person VOICE Has developed multiple policies to support teacher interactions around tricky topics - Shares information as she
receives it (CBE news) - Shares successes and shortcomings - Preserves teacher dignity through conversations → *Trusted*
→ *Respected*
(*"dignity"*)
✱ - servant leader, committed to making a difference in the lives of students and teachers - actions and words are
Reported grounded in and guided by her values and beliefs - values, beliefs, words, and actions are consistently aligned;
#1 creates trust and a sense of stability because a process is in place, things are predictable, and changes are not
made hastily - actions and decisions are often predictable because of the strong and consistent alignment
between values and beliefs, and actions and words - decision making is generally transparent and decisions that
impact whole-school are usually brought forward to all staff, if and when time permits   → *VOICE*

★ ①
✱ ① *Servant Leader → committed to making a difference - student &*
teachers

✱ ③ - *Listening - being heard, listening deeply - paraphrase*

✱ ② *Values / Beliefs → Consistent with words & actions*
grounded in guided
by values & beliefs
✱ ① *Trust - due to Process*
↗
✱ ① *Predictable → due to* *MORAL*
✱ ① *PRINCIPLES*
✱ ① *Transparent → whole school decision making →* *decision*
making
✱ ① (*guide*)
✱ ① *Utmost Integrity in all Regards*
✱ ① *Respect - my decisions - OPEN to LEARNING MODEL*

Appendix F: Through Circle
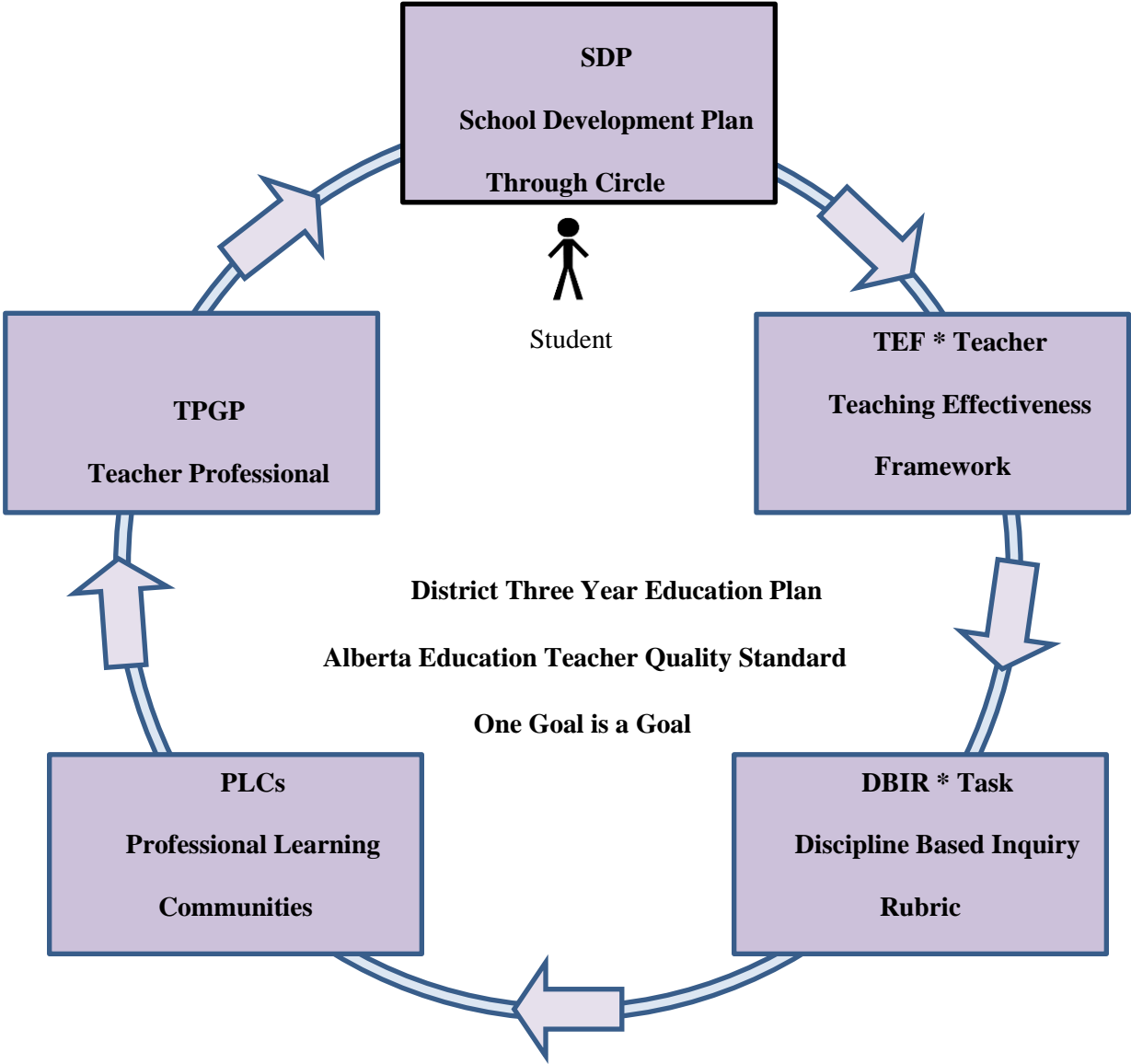
Appendix G: School Based Decision-Making Model

<u>School Based Decision-Making Process</u>

Prior to a decision making process, the protocol is reviewed with the staff. The goals are for everyone to have a voice and to reach consensus. Staff is always reminded that a collaborative process takes time.

<u>Protocol – Provides Opportunity for:</u>

- Listening – can be open to listening when there is a protocol – everyone listens
- Note-taking - take jot notes to develop questions
- Writing Questions - there will be opportunity during the process for questions
- Speaking - one speaker at a time – facilitator monitors
- Speaking - Voice – everyone has a voice
- Sharing Questions
- Rotating through the group – administrators facilitator through the group to ensure everyone has a voice
- Passing – if not ready to speak
- Reflecting rather than reacting - time is provided in the protocol for people to think
- Focussing on listening rather than trying to find a moment to try to jump in to speak
- Responding – one responder – facilitator – or by request
- Maintaining rotation order – one question at a time
- Discussing the model – not teacher names