

THE REVOLVING DOOR: EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER ON
DISTRICT CULTURE

By

SALLY A. LÓPEZ

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Approved by

Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D., Chairperson

John W. Adamus, Ed.D.

Rachel Pereira, Ed.D.

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EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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SALLY A. LÓPEZ

Dissertation Chairperson: Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D.

One of the most significant events in the life of a school and a school district is a change in leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district. Unfortunately, there is little research documenting teachers' experiences with frequent administrative turnover. I examined the phenomenon of frequent change in leadership in my school district (referred to as succession in the literature) through a micropolitical framework.

Using a qualitative approach, this study explored how teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover. I interviewed and examined the responses of nine middle and high school teachers from one school district who have been employed in the same school district for at least ten years and have experienced frequent changes in leadership. The data suggest that the frequent administrative succession in the district has led teachers to feel "leaderless" and frustrated with the "revolving door" of administrators. The teachers indicated they do not trust the administration. Trust is developed over time and the majority of

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administrators do not remain in the district long enough to develop trusting relationships with the staff. While the findings are not generalizable, they may be transferable and of interest to administrators and boards of education in other districts experiencing frequent administrative turnover (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The purpose of this study was to acknowledge the experiences of the participants and hopefully, influence decision-makers to consider the possible important effects of this phenomenon.

The significance of this study is twofold: It will add to the limited research that documents teachers' individual experiences with frequent administrative turnover and provide research regarding the frequent turnover of the building principals in addition to various administrative positions which is currently lacking in existing literature.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Introduction to the Problem

One of the most significant events in the life of a school and a school district is a change in leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). The practice and frequency of leadership succession in schools and the central administration varies greatly from district to district. Some leaders remain in districts so long they are seen as permanent fixtures, while other districts experience a revolving door of leadership.

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district. As required by code, administrators in my district (district directors, building principals and assistant principals) must hold a minimum of a principal's certificate and, as such, are defined as "an educational leader who evaluates teachers, guides curriculum and instruction and supervises departments" (NJDOE, 2011, para 2 - 3). Some of the assistant principals deal with disciplinary issues in lieu of supervisory responsibilities. The assistant superintendent and superintendent require chief school administrator certification and evaluate all previously mentioned administrators. My interest in the topic stems from the fact that I work in an environment with frequent leadership changes. The only exception has been the Superintendent who has held the position for the past 20 years although he does not directly supervise teachers. There are approximately 2,000 students and

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approximately 200 teachers in the district. The district is comprised of a middle school (grades 7-8) and a high school (grades 9-12). As a fellow administrator in the district, I have worked closely with the revolving door of colleagues for the past sixteen years as indicated in Figure 1.

I contend that the result of this frequent administrative turnover has led to a lack of continuity regarding procedures and vision. The lack of consistency for the past sixteen years has led the teachers to feel frustrated and mistrustful. The teachers' attitudes and perceptions over time have directly shaped the culture of the district. Unfortunately, there is little research documenting teachers' experiences with frequent administrative turnover. I intend to examine this phenomenon of frequent change in leadership in my school district (referred to as succession in the literature) through a micropolitical framework.

Figure 1

Position	Number of individuals who have held the position in the past 16 years *
Assistant Superintendent *The position has been filled for the past 11 years. Prior to that the position was unfilled.	3
Director of Instruction (Currently 3 positions)	11
Director of Counseling	5
High School Principal	5
Middle School Principal	5
High School Assistant Principal (Currently 3 positions)	14
Middle School Assistant Principal (Currently 1 position)	8

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Research questions

The intended audience for this study is fellow administrators, Boards of Education, State policy-makers, and researchers. Understanding the affects that frequent succession has on the teachers and culture of the district hopefully demonstrates the need for administrators and Boards of Education to revise their hiring practices for administrators and plan for administrative succession. Interviews with teachers focused on the following research questions:

How do tenured teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover/succession?

How do tenured teachers perceive the effect of frequent administrative turnover/succession on district culture?

The fundamental purpose of answering these questions is to examine how tenured teachers feel the frequent administrative turnover/succession has affected them individually as well as the culture of the district. Due to the lack of consistent leadership in the district, there is a potential for administrative chaos and incomplete reforms. In addition, frequent administrative turnover/succession may affect teachers' ability to trust school leaders. The length of time the leader is in position is a crucial factor in determining the extent to which the relationship between the teachers and leader can progress on Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield's (2005) trust continuum.

Micropolitics

In reference to politics in schools, Blase (1991) defines micropolitics as "the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations" (p. 11). Some micropolitical interactions are quiet and unnoticed while others are overt political

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actions consciously motivated (Blase, 1991). Meyer, Macmillan and Northfield (2011) develop their definition based on Blase.

Micropolitics is the formal and informal use of legitimate and illegitimate power by the principal and teachers to further individual or group goals, with such goals based on values, beliefs, needs and ideologies. Shifts in balances of power can be created through collaborative efforts and may shift with time and circumstance. (p. 3)

When a new administrator joins a school, issues of power and influence play a crucial role in the development of relationships (Meyer, Macmillan & Northfield, 2011). The new leader attempts to understand the culture and his or her expected role as understood by others. This understanding of others must be reconciled with the new leader's own perceptions of the position. Teachers' perceptions of the new administrator may affect morale and school culture (Meyer, Macmillan & Northfield, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

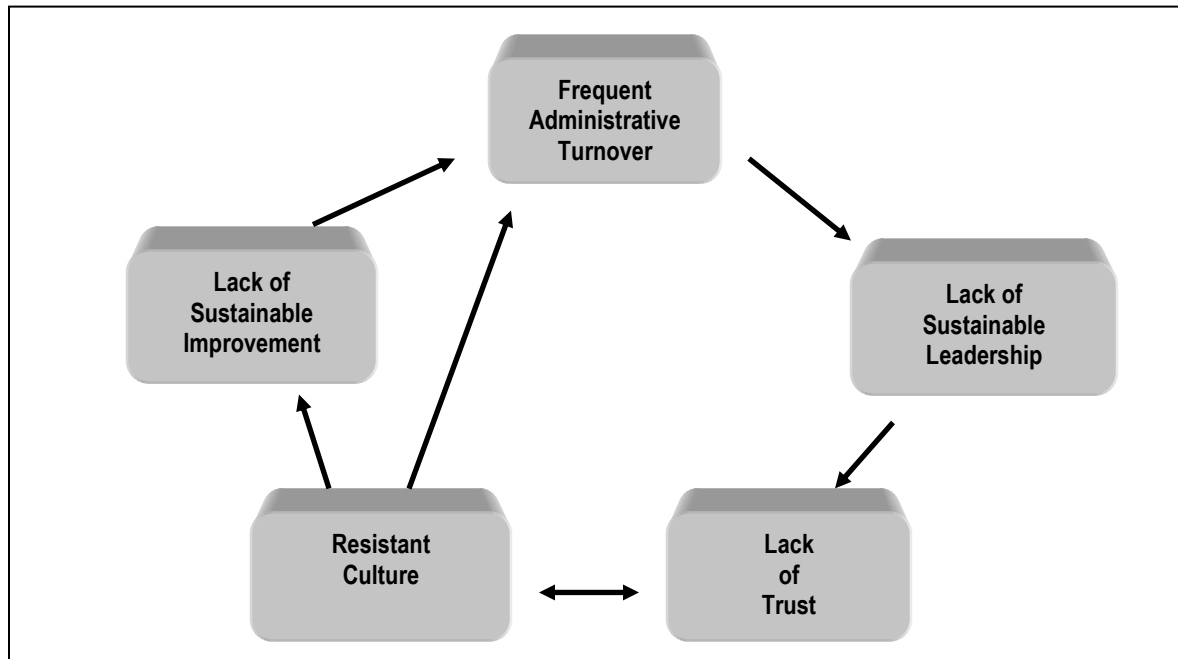
By using the lens of a micropolitical framework, this study examined how frequent administrative turnover affected a district – particularly its teachers. The cultural norms of a district are part of micropolitics (Blase, 1991).

The literature on the effects of administrative succession on teachers indicates that frequent succession leads to a lack of trust on the part of the teachers which in turn has a negative impact on the culture of the organization (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003; Macmillan, 2000; Meyer, Macmillan & Northfield, 2011). The culture of a school has a direct affect on how procedures and new initiatives are implemented.

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Frequent administrative turnover is a lack of sustainable leadership which leads to lack of teacher trust. The resistant cultures that teachers build due to the lack of trust affect the district and its ability to make sustainable improvements. Figure 2 contains a visual representation of the conceptual framework prior to collecting and analyzing the data.

Figure 2



In summary, the purpose of this research study was to investigate if the frequent administrative turnover shaped the culture of a specific school district and if so, how. The school district where I have been employed for the past sixteen years has experienced significant administrative succession/turnover. For this study, I interviewed tenured teachers at my place of employment. I recognize the limitation of conducting my study at my place of employment and bracketed my biases and perceptions of the phenomenon throughout the study. As a phenomenological case study, it was not conducted for the purpose of generalizability, but rather

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to provide a voice to the teachers working in a specific district with a great deal of frequent administrative turnover.

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CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The majority of the literature on administrative succession focuses on the role of the principal (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Hargreaves & Fink; 2003; Hart, 1991; Macmillan, Meyer & Northfield, 2005). However, a range of other administrators, such as assistant principals, directors of curriculum and instruction, directors of guidance and directors of special education work closely with faculty. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) described educational leaders as “those persons who provide direction and exert influence in order to achieve school goals” (p. 9). Therefore, turnover in all leadership positions may also have an effect on teachers and in turn, the culture of an organization.

Although it is an important topic for practitioners and policy makers, only a relatively small body of research related to administrative succession exists (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003; Hart, 1999; Hart, 1993; Hart & Bredeson, 1996; Jones & Webber, 2001; Macmillan, 1993; Macmillan, 2000; Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004; Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield, & Foley, 2011; Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009; Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). Some of the studies addressed topics related to succession such as its effect on student performance and the experiences of the successor (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hart, 1991; Hart, 1993; Hart & Bredeson, 1996; Hoy, Tarter, & Witkowski, 1992; Macmillan, 1993; Roberts, 1992; Sergiovanni, 2002). Other studies addressed the relationship between succession and its effect on teachers (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Jones & Webber, 2001; Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2005; Ogawa, 1991). Few studies have been conducted specifically addressing the

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effect of *frequent* succession on teachers and the school culture and most have been conducted by Hargreaves and Macmillan and their colleagues (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves et al. 2003; Macmillan, 2000; Macmillan et al. 2004; 2005).

Many of the research studies on frequent administrative succession have been conducted in Canada because principal rotation is a common practice. Few recent studies have been conducted in the United States, and even fewer were phenomenological studies. Earlier studies only speak to the effects of frequent principal succession. There is a lack of research regarding the effects of frequent succession of other key administrative positions. My research aims to fill these gaps through a phenomenological study on the effects of frequent administrative succession on teachers in a school district in the United States. The relevant research in this dissertation is related to administrative succession, trust, culture, sustainable leadership, sustainable improvement, and managed succession. The conceptual framework referenced earlier supports the investigation of research in these areas. Frequent administrative turnover leads to a lack of sustainable leadership. A lack of sustainable leadership leads to a lack of teacher trust which in turn results in a resistant school culture. A resistant school culture leads to a lack of sustainable improvement. An inability to effect change or sustainable improvement and a resistant school culture can affect administrators' desire to remain in the district, thereby resulting in continued frequent administrative turnover.

Administrative Succession

A change in leadership of an organization or school is defined as succession (Gephart, 1978; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). Leadership succession is occurring

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more frequently (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003; Hart, 1991; Macmillan, Meyer & Northfield, 2005; Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011). Reasons for leadership succession have been identified as the following: rapid turnover of leaders as the baby boomer generation retires, disenchantment among administrators with the standardization agenda of educational reformers (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2003), increased demands on school districts to bring about rapid improvements in underperforming schools, insufficient pool of capable, qualified, and prepared replacements (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2011), struggle to find a leader who “fits” (Reynolds, White, Brayman & Moore, 2008; Tooms, Lugg & Bogotch, 2009), administrators seeking higher salaries (Baker, Punswick & Belt, (2010); and some schools periodically rotate administrators (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011; Ogawa, 1991).

Hart (1993) stated that, “Succession may be among the most important professional transitions principals ever make” (p. 15). However, it is something new leaders are rarely prepared for. Little support exists for new administrators unlike support often provided for new teachers. Fellow administrators are often busy dealing with their own crises and putting out their own fires or they are unhappy because they were not given the new position.

Daresh conducted a study asking first year principals to comment on their new positions and his findings suggested that new principals experience a sense of isolation from peers, lack confidence, and express anxiety, frustration, and self-doubt (1993). Most of the participants were surprised that the teachers acted as if the previous principals were still in charge (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). People in general often struggle with change. It is easier to continue with the procedures and routine that people are comfortable with. In his study of leader succession in business, Gouldner (1954) references the “Rebecca Myth” (p.

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79) as in Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* where the new wife is plagued by the memory of the first wife. Similarly, new leaders may be plagued by the memory of the previous leader regardless of whether the person was admired. Familiarity with expectations, procedures, etc. whether positive or negative are often more comfortable than the unknown.

Hart's research found that new principals indicated staff was the most important source of influence, satisfaction, and dissatisfaction during the first year (Hart, 1993). This should hardly come as a surprise. Teachers struggle with change. Depending on how much the new leader is able to work within the existing culture will determine the first year experiences of the new leaders.

The transition from one school leader to another is a significant event in the culture of a school (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011). Faculty rarely regard leadership succession with indifference (Hargreaves & Fink; 2003; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield and Foley (2011) investigated the teacher-principal relationship over a three year period in schools with a significant principal turnover (3 or more principals in 7 years). They indicate that a new leader is closely scrutinized by staff as they attempt to determine how the leader's decisions and actions will affect them (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011). Teachers want to know if the new leader will support them. Ingersoll (2001) finds administrative support to be an important factor in teachers' decisions whether or not to remain in the teaching profession. Frequent administrative turnover often leads to teachers experiencing negative work environments (Ingersoll, 2011). Succession is disruptive because it changes the lines of communication, affects relationships of power, and disturbs normal activities (Macmillan, 2000). For example, Fauske and Ogawa's study described the manner in which the faculty of a public elementary school made sense of the impending

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succession of its principal. Their findings indicated that three themes consistently appeared both in events leading up to the succession and in teachers' responses: a sense of detachment, fear, and expectation (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987). The detachment referred to a sense of powerlessness which resulted in minimizing the importance of the succession. It didn't matter, because they would carry on as always. There was a fear of the unknown and not knowing what to expect from the new principal. There was also a hope and expectation that the new principal would be friendly and support the teachers (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987).

Daresh interviewed eight first year principals for one year. His study used Elizabeth Küber-Ross's description of the stages of grief as a framework to describe the teachers' reactions (Küber-Ross, 1969). The new leaders found that faculty felt that losing someone familiar was worse than having to tolerate an unpopular leader (Daresh, 1993).

Ogawa extended his research to study how the faculty of the previously studied elementary school responded to the succession of the new principal (Ogawa, 1991). He observed staff meetings and interactions for one year. Ogawa also interviewed the new principal twice and the faculty during the last month of the school year. He found that teachers became anxious as a result of the changes and responded negatively when the new principal violated existing norms (Ogawa, 1991).

Gouldner's study of succession in business found resistance among the workers to the new manager. Similarly, his findings indicated that the new manager increased tensions and there was decline in morale among the workers (Gouldner, 1954). Gouldner (1954) stated that, "... it is clear that the succession had shaken the stability of the worker-manager relationship at its very foundations" (p. 79).

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Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, and White (2003) examined the impact of succession and rotation on principals and teachers in Ontario secondary schools. They concluded that while the rotation policy may be perceived as a rational process for planned improvement, administrators and teachers found the experience to be disruptive. Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, and White's (2003) position is that "...leadership succession has turned into an accelerating carousel of principal rotation in which principals go round and round while the schools just go up and down" (p. 81). They recommend lengthening the time spent in a specific school to provide principals enough time to become part of the culture of the school and implement improvement efforts.

One of the most comprehensive studies regarding frequent administrative change in schools was conducted by Hargreaves and Goodson (2006). They gathered data examining perceptions and experiences of educational change in eight United States and Canadian secondary schools among teachers and administrators for three decades. Their *Change Over Time?* study investigated the sustainability of educational change by looking at how educational change forces have exerted their effects (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) found that the rate of leadership succession has increased over the past three decades. The increased succession has changed the nature of leadership. School leaders used to be admired and seen as "larger than life characters" (p. 20) by their school communities. They were career administrators invested in their schools. Teachers in the 1990s were more likely to see their leaders as "...anonymous managers who had less visibility in the school, seemed to be more attached to their own careers than the long-term interests of the school..." (p. 21).

In Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield, and Foley's three year investigation of 12 Canadian middle and secondary schools that experienced high principal turnover rates, they found that

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teachers may develop ways to reduce the potential disruption caused by new administrators.

Teachers may marginalize the new leader's role by developing ways of handling issues that do not require the leader's involvement (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011).

Frequent succession can create instability in the leadership which results in the informal leaders becoming critical in maintaining morale with the staff. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) found the following patterns in their data regarding the effect of frequent succession on teacher morale:

1. Teachers used various means to limit the effects of turnover on their schools and their personal morale;
2. Informal leaders were more prominent during periods of frequent principal succession – these informal leaders affected individual and collective morale through interpretation of decisions and practices;
3. The effect of principals' succession on the morale of individual teachers decreased with teachers' years of experience;
4. As the frequency of principal succession increased the principal position became more marginalized and its influence on school events and improvement on morale was reduced. (p. 172)

Not all research indicates there are negative consequences to leader succession. Miskel and Owens' (1983) study of 89 schools in the U.S. Midwest found that principal succession had no significant effects on teachers. However, as previously discussed, most research indicates that teachers are affected in some manner by new leaders in their schools. Some demonstrate a "wait and see" attitude (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman & White, 2003) while others feel a sense of anxiety (Ogawa, 1991). Districts have a responsibility to provide teachers with a leader

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they can trust (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010) and frequent change in administration affects teachers' ability to trust in their leadership.

Trust

Researchers have described trust as one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, consistent, respectful, and competent (Daly, 2009; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Smith, Hoy & Sweetland, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Trust is a core component of leadership (Hanford & Leithwood, 2013). Zand (1997) proposes, "Leaders communicate trust by how they share disclose information, share influence, and exercise control" (p. 91). Leaders demonstrate trust in others when they share important and timely information. Leaders demonstrate trust in others when they accept the input of others in their decision making processes or even permit others to make the decisions (Zand, 1997). Effective leaders experience trusting relationships with their staff.

From the onset, new leaders are scrutinized to see how they will administer the school and to what degree they trust teachers and teachers can trust them (Fullan, 1986). It is important for faculty to trust their leaders and it is not easily accomplished because earning trust takes time. In order to earn the trust of teachers and staff, school leaders must demonstrate predictability and consistency of supportive behavior (Solomon & Flores, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Kouzes and Posner (2003) state that, "Credibility is the foundation of leadership" (p. 37). A first step towards earning trust requires school leaders to reach out to stakeholders and self-reflect on how they are viewed as new leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Trust, morale, and school culture have an effect on whether or not new leaders are considered effective.

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While researching the impact of rapid principal turnover on teachers, Macmillan, Meyer and Northfield (2005) concluded that trust was a critical factor in principal succession. Trust in school administrators is essential for teachers, because in order to function in the classroom, teachers need to feel at least a minimal level of trust. Hoy, Tarter, and Witkowskie (1992) emphasize, “Faculty trust in the principal reflects teachers’ confidence that the principal will keep faith with the teachers and act in their best interests...” (p. 39). Without trust, teachers are likely to question the motives of new initiatives and are unlikely to embrace school improvement efforts (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2005). Trust is recognized as crucial to the effectiveness of organizations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Bryk and Schneider (2002) contend that trust is a significant factor in school reform. They base their claim on their analysis of change in three Chicago schools that underwent significant organizational change. They describe the importance of “relational trust” which is a mutual understanding and expectation of particular actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Bottery (2003) claims that trust varies over time as people have additional opportunities to observe and evaluate each other’s actions. Based on their previous research, Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2005) adapted Bottery’s (2003) levels of trust to represent more of a continuum representing the relationship between principals and teachers. Figure 3 recreates Macmillan, Meyer and Northfield’s (2005) “Description of the Levels of Trust” (2005 p. 88).

Unfortunately, frequent succession does not allow time for much more than “role trust” to be built among stakeholders. The length of time the leader is in position is a crucial factor in determining the extent to which the relationship between the teachers and leader can progress on Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield’s (2005) trust continuum. Frequent succession does not permit the faculty time to earn the trust of the new principal or the principal enough time to earn

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the trust of the faculty (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Both faculty and administrators refer to trust when discussing experiences related to administrative succession (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2005; Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2011). Not being able to predict the actions of each other affects the relationships negatively. In Macmillan, Meyers, and Northfield's studies of teachers from 12 middle and secondary schools in Nova Scotia, distrust often occurred due to a lack of consistency and predictability resulting from frequent principal succession. Macmillan, Meyer, and Northfield cite the development of mutual trust as a critical factor for both teachers and principals during succession (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004; 2005). The development of trust or lack thereof was identified to have had a critical influence on the relationship between the new leader and the teachers (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011). The lack of faculty trust due to frequent leader succession creates a resistant culture (Macmillan, 2000).

Figure 3

Stages of Trust	Description of the Level
Role Trust	Teachers trust the principal to function within the legal mandate of the position; that is, the principal will follow the laws, policies and regulations that govern schools and the position.
Practice Trust	After observing the principal's practice, teachers trust that the principal will respond to similar situations similarly.
Integrative Trust	After observation of the principal in a multitude of situations, teachers' trust is based on their identification of underlying principles on which the principal makes decisions.
Correlative Trust	Teachers' trust is based on a deep understanding of the principal's beliefs and philosophy such that the principal and teaches function as a well-choreographed, mutually supportive team.

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Culture

Culture is defined as a set of shared assumptions, beliefs, understandings, values, and norms (Daly, 2009; Hoy & Feldman, 1999; Roberts, 1992; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002; Schein, 2010). Deal and Peterson (2009) posit that culture consists of "...underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time" (p. 6). Kouzes and Posner (2007) describe culture as "...the organizational equivalent of a person's character" (p. xvi). Culture is the way things are done in a school and every school has its unique culture (Gordon & Patterson, 2006). Barth (2007) further defines school culture as, "...the complex patterns of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization" (p. 161).

Relationships among the staff and school leaders are crucial to schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Barth (2007) concludes that the greatest influence on school culture is the relationships between teachers and school leaders. New leaders need to understand and learn the culture of their school (Deal & Peterson, 2007). Just as a doctor obtains the medical history of his patient, Deal and Peterson (2009) suggest that a leader needs to have a complete understanding of the history of his or her new school prior to attempting to change the culture. Teachers appreciate a new leader taking the time to understand who they are as a school; however, understanding school culture is a new leader's most challenging task (Roberts, 1992). Unfortunately, time is rarely on a new leader's side. It takes time to become familiar with a culture and see how to fit in. When teachers determine a new administrator does not fit in, they do not respect the leader's authority and continue to function to the best of their ability without his or her input (Hart, 1991).

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Leithwood and Riehl (2003) believe that upon understanding the current culture, it is a new leader's responsibility to strengthen it. A strong, healthy culture is one where shared attitudes and goals exist resulting in trusting relationships among the administration and faculty (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Unfortunately, in the case of frequent leadership turnover, the new leaders are not in position long enough to have a complete understanding of the current culture nor shared beliefs with the staff. In summary of organizational culture, Schein (2010) acknowledges that organizations with frequent turnover suffer from a lack of shared vision.

In Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield's study of principal succession in two secondary schools in Nova Scotia, new principals found initiating changes difficult because they had to demonstrate the consistency between the initiative and the image the teachers had of the school (Meyers, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009). In one of the schools, the new principal was filling in for the well-liked principal who was on leave. The new principal wanted to make changes that would affect the school's culture, and the teachers were not sure the changes should be implemented, especially if the former principal returned as was planned. As a result, teachers had a strained relationship with the new principal and morale was very low (Meyers, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009). In the other school in their study, the principal failed to follow practices that fit within the norms of the school's culture which resulted in low morale and marginalization of the principal.

Fink and Brayman (2006) concluded that rapid and repeated principal succession affected the culture of the schools. They found that frequent succession made it difficult for school administrators to become an integral part of the school's culture. Teachers exhibited increased resistance to change and invest their energies in new structures and practices that they anticipate

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will change in two to three years. Teachers became cynical about leaders and the “revolving door” (p. 84) leadership due to frequent succession.

In Macmillan’s (2000) research on regular administrative rotation of secondary school principals in Canada, he found that rapid rotations of less than three years “harden” (p. 58) teachers against future leaders and their improvement efforts. Teachers learn to tolerate and accommodate new leaders on a temporary basis without committing to their change agendas. If any feelings of anticipation accompany the new administrator, they are replaced with a sense of apathy toward the continuous flow of administrators as they come and go. Macmillan’s (2000) findings suggest, “When succession is frequent...the principal is treated as merely an aberration” (p. 56). He further states that, “The policy of regularly rotating principals within a system is a flawed, perhaps a fatally so; When leadership succession is regular and routinized, teachers are likely to build resilient cultures which inoculate them against the effects of succession” (p. 68).

A new leader’s inability to implement new initiatives affects their success as a leader in the eyes of staff and community (Meyers, Macmillan & Northfield, 2009). Ineffective leaders are often replaced or upon realizing that they are unable to affect change due to a resistant culture, choose to leave the school on their own (Hart, 1993). A resistant culture may also contribute to frequent administrative turnover.

The literature regarding frequent succession and its impact on school culture only speaks to the turnover of school principals. The literature indicates that the culture is greatly affected by frequent succession of the principal, the educational leader of the building. The lack of trust in the educational leaders of the district due to frequent changes in educational leadership contributes to a resistant culture.

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Sustainable Leadership = Sustainable Improvement

Due to reasons previously mentioned, leader succession is inevitable in every school and public school district. However, frequent turnover presents significant challenges for schools (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). In Macmillan's (1993) study of five secondary school principals in two Canadian school districts, he concluded that it is very difficult for new principals to affect change. Frequent administrator succession disrupts school change efforts when the administrator supporting the effort departs and is replaced by someone with different priorities (Corbett, Dawson, & Firestone, 1984). Fink and Brayman (2006) found that schools experiencing frequent leader turnover suffer from a lack of shared purpose and an inability to maintain a school improvement focus long enough to accomplish any meaningful change.

As noted earlier, frequent administrative succession does not provide time for teachers to build trusting relationships with school leaders. Therefore, an organization or school cannot endure sustainable improvements year after year if it lacks sustainable leadership. Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, and White (2003) stated that, "Sustainable leadership makes succession central to the process of continuing school improvement" (p. 36). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) highlight the importance of sustainable leadership and improvement through the following definition:

Sustainable educational leadership and improvement preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now and in the future (p. 17).

Frequent leadership succession deters schools from implementing and maintaining improvement efforts (Louis, 2006). Macmillan, Meyer, and Northfield (2005) suggest that, "...a succession of turnover events can potentially create a school culture in which teachers are so

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inured to principal turnover that they marginalize each new principal and reduce their own involvement in initiatives in expectation of the next turnover event” (p. 89).

Successful implementation of initiatives requires there be a trusting relationship between the staff and administration (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It takes many years for a leader and staff to build a relationship and collaborate on improvement efforts. Fullan (2001) suggests that the amount of time and the degree of energy required to institute school reform at the high school level is at least twice that of elementary schools. Initiatives require time to become an integral part of a school (Fullan, 2001). Not providing sufficient time for this relationship to develop prohibits improvement efforts. In addition, with every new administrator, it is possible to have at least one new initiative. As a result, teachers may not trust the administrator’s motives and resist new initiatives (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Regarding change initiatives, Fullan (2001) states that, “Resisters are crucial when it comes to the politics of implementation” (p. 42). Teachers and administrators need time to building trusting relationships in order to work together to develop common goals, implement and maintain initiatives. It is impossible to endure sustainable improvements without consistency in leadership (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 1994).

Managed Succession

Given the challenges inherent in administrative turnover and especially frequent administrative turnover, some researchers suggest “managed succession” (p. 62) is a more attractive alternative. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) conclude, “Taking responsibility for leadership succession is essential to ensure that improvement efforts endure over time” (p. 56). Hargreaves and Fink (2003; 2006) suggest that choosing internal candidates who have been groomed as successors can sustain organizational improvement efforts. Well-prepared insiders

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understand the school culture, school history, are accepted by the school and community as well as share in the vision for the future. The success of a new leader is often dependent upon their “fit.” Ogawa (1995) concludes, “...when successors fit their new organizations, disruption is minimized; when successors fail to adhere to organizational norms, conflict and tension rise...” (p. 368).

However, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) caution school leaders against “grooming their own successors” (p. 65) in an attempt to create a “mini-me.” School leaders should not mold a future leader to be exactly like them, thereby perpetuating their leadership style and extending their legacy, which may not be appropriate for the changing context of the school and district. In order to promote growth and improvements while respecting the culture, Hargreaves and Fink suggest “spreading the responsibility for grooming a successor beyond the clutches of the existing leader” (p. 66).

Sustainable leadership regulates the frequency of succession in order to avoid staff cynicism brought on by succession fatigue (Fink & Brayman, 2006). Hargreaves and colleagues (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) have identified endurance as one of the “Seven Principals of Sustainable Leadership” (p. 97). They identified “Endurance – so that improvement across reforms carries over from one leader to the next through effectively managed succession” (p. 97).

The literature on the effects of administrative succession on teachers indicates that the pain of succession can be eased by grooming insiders for administrative positions. Insiders often have established trusting relationships with colleagues (Hargreaves & Fink, 2011). Again, the majority of the studies are conducted in Canada because of the government’s policies regarding principal rotation and they are not phenomenological in nature.

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The culture of a school and district is greatly affected by its educational leaders. As a result, districts must plan carefully for leadership succession, regardless of the administrative position. Districts must adequately prepare and support administrators in their new positions, regardless of whether the leader is a new administrator to that school, or an experienced insider.

The micropolitics of a school involves leaders and teachers working together to improve the organizations' effectiveness (Blase, 1991). A continued lack of consistency in leadership prohibits teachers and leaders from developing trusting relationships and a shared vision for sustained improvement (Fullan, 2005). I investigated the impact of frequent succession on school culture to expose how this phenomenon might shape or adversely influence improvement and growth within a district.

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CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Using a qualitative approach, this study explored how teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover. I interviewed and examined the responses of nine middle and high school teachers from one school district who have been employed in the same school district for at least ten years and have experienced frequent changes in leadership.

Methodological Approach

A qualitative research method is appropriate for this study because as Miles and Huberman, (1994) state, it “focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so we have a handle on what ‘real life’ is like” (p. 10). A qualitative approach provided a thick description of the setting and teachers’ experiences which will permit the reader to gain a thorough understanding of the situation being studied.

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine how tenured teachers in one particular district have experienced frequent administrative succession. Since this researcher studied teachers’ experiences in a specific school district, a case study method was appropriate. Case studies allow the researcher to focus on the culture of one particular group. (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Yin (2009) concludes, “...you would use the case study method because you wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth...” (p. 18). However, in order to thoroughly highlight the personal experiences of the participants, it was appropriate to include a phenomenological approach. Creswell (2007) states, “A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomena” (p. 57). A phenomenology is well-suited to this study because I examined the

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experiences of tenured teachers in one district that has experienced the phenomenon of frequent administrative succession. The district in which I am currently employed as a Director of Instruction has experienced a great deal of administrative turnover in the last sixteen years. The revolving door has had an effect on the teachers and with this study I afforded them the opportunity to share their experiences, impressions, and feelings regarding this phenomenon.

The paradigm that I chose to use for my research study is that of Social Constructivism. The purpose of my study is best supported by Creswell (2007), “The goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (p. 20). As a researcher, it was my objective to develop an understanding of the reality that the teachers in my district live while experiencing the phenomena of frequent administrative succession. According to Creswell (2007), the constructivist researchers “...also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (p. 21). My study’s semi-structured interview questions were carefully designed to elicit descriptions from teachers regarding the reality they experience in the work setting and their perceptions of the school culture.

Description of Site for Dissertation

The district in which I conducted my study is a grades 7 – 12 regional school district comprised of a middle school with approximately 750 students and a high school with approximately 1,250 students. The school’s District Factor Group (DFG) is DE. Students come from four sending K – 6 sending districts in addition to the Joint Military Base. There are approximately 140 high school and 60 middle school teachers. Twelve teachers are shared and teach in both schools. The middle school is a relatively new building with the latest technology

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and air conditioning. The high school is an older open campus with two buildings: the east building and the west building. The east building is the former middle school which houses many freshman classes, the World Language Department, a computer lab, some advanced Science classes, a secondary main office, the Child Study Team, and a faculty lounge. There are approximately 40 teachers whose home base is the east building. The west building is comprised of the remainder of the classes as well as the primary main office, the nurse's office, the media center, the guidance department, an additional computer lab, and two faculty lounges. I am a Director of Instruction in the district serving in one of the 11 administrative positions that have been held by 48 different people in the last 16 years.

Data collection

I employed a criterion sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to select my participants to ensure that they had all experienced frequent administrative turnover during their tenure in the school district. The participants for my study were nine teachers who have taught in the district for at least ten years and who are not or ever have been evaluated by me so as to avoid any coercion or potential conflicts of interest. As there are significantly more high school teachers, I intended to select six from that school and four from the middle school in order to provide fair representation. Unfortunately, many of the middle school teachers were unwilling to participate. Therefore, my participants included seven high school teachers and two middle school teachers. I supervise all teachers from the following departments: Agriscience, Business, Family and Consumer Science, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Language. Therefore, the participants will be selected only from the following departments: Applied Technology, English, Math, History, Science, Special Education, and Physical Education. In addition, the participants

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were tenured teachers who have been in the district for at least ten years in order to ensure that they have significant experience with the phenomenon of frequent administrative succession. I selected ten teachers with whom I have a very comfortable relationship and asked them if they would be willing to participate in my research study. As some of the middle school teachers declined, I selected other high school teachers that met the criteria and asked them to participate. Although many teachers have expressed to me their concerns regarding the effects of frequent administrative turnover, it was more challenging than I anticipated finding willing participants that met the criteria.

During my pilot study, some of my participants included administrators in the district. My original intent was to only interview teachers, but I was not permitted by IRB and I was required as part of the pilot study process to interview participants. Therefore, I expanded my participant pool to include administrators. For this study, I did not include administrators as participants because the purpose was to determine *teachers'* perceptions of frequent administrative turnover/succession.

My data collection involving the participants directly was to consist of focus group interviews and individual interviews with at least five of the focus group participants. My thought process was that being interviewed can be an awkward experience even if the participant is comfortable with the interviewer. Therefore, conducting a focus group was to have allowed me to create a familiar environment for participants that have all experienced the same phenomena. However, as I attempted to secure participants for my study, teachers indicated a willingness to participate in an individual interview with me but not in a focus group. The teachers indicated an unwillingness to participate in a focus group because they feared their colleagues, other teachers, may reveal that they participated in the study. The teachers did not

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have confidence in their colleagues' ability to maintain confidentiality and they feared retribution from the administration. Therefore, I was forced to abandon the idea of interviewing a focus group and interviewed each participant individually in a location of their choosing. The individual interviews took approximately 40 – 50 minutes each and were audio taped.

I employed triangulation and analyzed a variety of sources to ensure consistency of data (Patton, 2002). Additional sources of data included public documents such as organizational charts to provide documentation as to the number of administrative positions and the structure of the administrative team; memos and meeting agendas from previous administrators to provide documentation of administrative objectives and tone; staff and student handbooks to provide documentation of administrative procedures; programs of studies to provide documentation of course offerings and pre-requisites; curricula to provide documentation regarding department goals and objectives; and lesson plans from teachers in departments that I do not supervise to provide documentation regarding expectations of instructional directors. The collection process lasted approximately eight months.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Though my phenomenological case study, I provided teachers in my district the opportunity to share how they feel the culture has been affected by the frequent administrative turnover. As a result of my lengthy employment (as both a teacher and administrator) at the data collection site, I have also experienced the effects of administrative turnover. In order to properly analyze my data, I maintained a resource journal to have an appropriate venue in which to “bracket” my personal feelings and thoughts. Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that “The important thing to recognize is when either your own or the respondents' biases, assumptions, or

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beliefs are intruding into the analysis” (p. 80). It was important for me, as the researcher to acknowledge my feelings and experiences regarding administrative succession. Patton (2002) suggests that “The first step in phenomenological analysis is called *epoche*” (p. 484). Moustakas (1994) states that, “*Epoche* is a Greek word meaning to refrain from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (p. 33). Throughout my analysis, it was my responsibility as a researcher to examine the data rather than simply agreeing or disagreeing with the participants.

The focus of phenomenological studies is to understand how participants are experiencing a particular phenomenon. Data in the form of transcripts from phenomenological studies are condensed in order to provide an accurate account of the participants’ point of view (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, as I attempted to analyze the data from my phenomenological case study, it was important for me to bracket my experiences and categorize the participant’s experiences. For qualitative research methods, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest “creating codes” (p. 58) as part of early analysis. When examining the interview transcriptions and the written reflections, I implemented *in vivo codes* (Miles and Huberman, 1994) by referring to the participant’s exact words to develop coding categories. As I developed categories, I carefully examined the data in an attempt not to include any of my biases.

Due to the difference in content, I was unable to analyze the document data in the same manner that I analyzed the interview data. As a result, I created a “Document Summary Form” (p. 55) as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) to analyze each document. I completed one document summary form for each document source in order to more easily make comparisons within that source.

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Pilot Study

In the spring of 2011, I conducted a pilot study in district where I am currently employed as an administrator. Therefore, in order to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of my study, it was important that I attempt to triangulate the data by collecting data from several sources: anonymous survey responses from nine teachers in the district who have been employed there for at least 15 years; interviews from three administrators in the district; and a variety of documents from the district (student and teacher handbooks, curricula, lesson plans, program of studies, etc.). I also used a research journal on a weekly basis to record my thoughts throughout the entire study.

Findings

As I examined the phenomenon of frequent change in leadership in my school district through a micropolitical framework, I chose to organize my findings by the participants (teachers and administrators) so as to highlight how each group influences the culture. The teachers' survey responses indicated very clearly that the frequent administrative turnover is very frustrating because it results in the following: lack of trusting relationships, lack of teacher input, and lack of consistency in leadership.

The teachers indicated that most administrators are not in the district long enough to develop trusting relationships with the teachers. They acknowledged that professional and personal relationships take time to develop. Teachers' responses indicated it is difficult to know whom to go to with a problem or concern because of the lack of positive relationships. The culture of the district has been affected by the frequent turnover with many teachers indicating there is less of a feeling of community.

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When the administrators were asked how the frequent administrative succession has affected the staff, all of the participants recognized that it has been difficult for staff to trust administrators as a result of the frequent turnover. They acknowledged that the difficulty in building relationships among teachers and new administrators has led to a lack of trust. Both the teachers' and administrators' responses clearly indicated that they felt the frequent administrative turnover has resulted in a lack of trusting relationships between faculty and administrators.

In the pilot study, I attempted to provide teachers and administrators the opportunity to share their experiences with frequent administrative turnover. While the anonymous online survey provided important data, it was somewhat limited due to my inability to follow up with teachers' responses. However, the data from the survey strongly indicated that teachers expressed that, "the constant turnover strains relationships" and a "lack of trust" exists between administration and teachers. The data indicated that the frequent administrative turnover led to "low morale" and "negative relationships" which have affected the culture of the district. The teachers indicated the "lack of continuity in leadership" led to a lack of consistency in programs. There was little or no growth due to the frequency of new leaders and ever-changing initiatives.

The administrators also acknowledged the low morale, negative relationships between faculty and administration, and lack of consistent implementation of procedures. However, the data did not indicate that the administrators acknowledged a lack of sustainable leadership and the negative impact it has had on school improvement.

As evidenced by the literature, sustainable leadership leads to sustainable improvement (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). These data from this pilot study support the claim by indicating that lack of sustainable leadership leads to no consistent growth.

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Role of Researcher

My role as a researcher was that of an insider being that I am employed in the same district as an administrator for the past eight years. This study examined the frequency of administrative succession, which having been in the district for sixteen years is something that I have also experienced. Prior to being an administrator, I was a classroom teacher for eight years so I have the unique opportunity of experiencing the phenomenon from two different perspectives. As a result, I have my own realities and opinions as to how the phenomenon of frequent administrative succession has affected teachers and therefore the culture of the district. I recognize my insider role as a limitation of the study and in order to compensate for this limitation, specific safeguards were implemented. First, colleagues in my doctoral program reviewed my interview questions to ensure that they are appropriate and not leading. Secondly, in order to avoid any coercion, I only selected participants from departments that I do not supervise and participants that I do not evaluate. Finally, I used member checks with the participants by providing them with a copy of the transcript of the interview and my analysis of their interviews to ensure accuracy and avoid any misrepresentation.

Trustworthiness, Validity, Rigor

The need for reflexivity in a qualitative research study addresses the issue of trustworthiness in my study. As an insider, and someone experiencing the lived reality of the participants, in order for the readers to trust my data, it was crucial that I bracketed my biases and perceptions of the phenomenon throughout the study. I also kept a separate journal during data collection and analysis in order to document my feelings and responses to the participants' responses and events at my place of employment.

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Creswell (2007) summarizes his definition of validation as the following, “I consider ‘validation’ in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ of the findings as best described by the researcher and the participants” (p. 207). In attempt to provide accurate findings in my study, I implemented several of Creswell’s (2007) validation strategies: spending a long time in the field with the participants in order to learn the culture, triangulate the data, and member checking. Since I am an insider in the district, spending time at the site and learning the culture is something that I have been experiencing for the past sixteen years. By gathering data from various sources as previously mentioned (interviews and public documents), my goal was to triangulate the data to corroborate the evidence of the phenomenon. Finally, I conducted member checks (Creswell, 2007) to review the transcriptions of the audio-taped interviews with the participants as well as shared my analysis of the interviews with them in order to ensure accuracy.

Regarding rigor, Creswell (2007) states that the qualitative researcher, “employs rigorous data collection procedures” (p. 45). In order to provide rigor to my study, the data collection included audio-taped individual interviews, their accompanying transcriptions, and an examination of public documents such as curricula, programs of studies, lesson plans, memos, and meeting agendas.

Limitations and Significance

There are specific limitations to the study. The study was conducted at my place of employment. I have also lived in one of the four sending districts for the past 31 years and my three children attended both the middle and high schools. Therefore, although I did “bracket” my feelings and share my initial analysis with academic colleagues, a possibility for bias exists.

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In addition, I recognize the limitation of conducting my study in one site. As a phenomenological case study, it was not conducted for the purpose of generalizability, but rather to provide a voice to the teachers working in a specific district with a great deal of frequent administrative turnover. This dissertation is significant because there is little research documenting U.S. teachers' experiences with frequent administrative turnover. Additionally, existing research is limited to frequent turnover of the principal position. Districts and schools have become complicated enterprises with increased accountability. Rarely does all of the leadership responsibility lie with one individual (the principal) as in the past. This dissertation added to the established literature by examining the effects and teachers' perceptions of frequent turnover of 11 administrative positions (district and building-based).

While the findings are not generalizable, they may be transferable and of interest to administrators and boards of education in other districts experiencing frequent administrative turnover (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The purpose of this study was to acknowledge the experiences of the participants and hopefully, influence decision-makers to consider the possible important effects of this phenomenon.

Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in the district in which I am employed and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district. As I studied teachers' personal experiences in a specific school district, this dissertation is defined as a phenomenological case study. I recognized my insider role as a limitation of the proposed dissertation and in order to compensate for this limitation, specific safeguards were implemented. In an effort to triangulate

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the data, collection procedures included individual interviews, as well as the analysis of district documents and published accounts. The significance of this study is twofold: It will add to the limited research that documents teachers' individual experiences with frequent administrative turnover and provide research regarding the frequent turnover of the building principals in addition to various administrative positions which is currently lacking in existing literature.

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CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS**Introduction**

The majority of the literature on administrative succession focuses on the role of the principal (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Hargreaves & Fink; 2003; Hart, 1991; Macmillan, Meyer & Northfield, 2005). However, a range of other administrators, such as assistant principals, directors of curriculum and instruction, directors of guidance and directors of special education work closely with faculty and turnover in these positions may also have an effect on teachers and in turn, the culture of an organization. The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district.

Participants

The participants in the study are teachers with whom I have a good relationship and who have all met the criteria of having been employed by the district for at least ten years and are not under my supervision nor have I evaluated them. All of the participants have much more than ten years experience in the district. Most of them have between almost twenty years experience and some have at least thirty years. One participant has forty years experience. The participants include seven high school teachers (two females and five males) and two middle school teachers (two females). I attempted to recruit more middle school teachers, but was unsuccessful. In part, I attribute this to the fact that as I was a teacher in the high school for eight years, I had developed more lasting relationships there. In addition, I simply had a larger pool of people to draw from as there are twice as many teachers in the high school than there are in the middle school. In the middle school, I had a smaller group of teachers to reach out to largely because of the ones I was friendly with; most had retired in recent years. While I did reach out to other

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middle school teachers, they only knew me in the role of administrator, and not a teacher, friend or colleague.

It was my intention to interview participants in a focus group prior to the individual interviews. However, when I contacted teachers with whom I have a positive and personal relationship to participate in the study, I did not receive any responses at all. People were reluctant to commit, but at the same time they did not state that they would not participate in my study. I was somewhat confused with the lack of positive response because many of the teachers had previously indicated frustration with the frequent administrative turnover and upon learning of my dissertation topic some time ago, enthusiastically volunteered to participate. I spoke with a few of the teachers personally and they indicated their reluctance to participate was due to the focus group format. Anonymity was of utmost importance to them and they did not trust the fact that their colleagues would maintain confidentiality. The teachers expressed concerns that if their identities were divulged to administration, they could retaliate in some way despite their tenured positions. As a result, I contacted the teachers again and offered individual interviews with each of the participants. Nine of the teachers agreed and I conducted individual interviews with each of the participants at a time and location of their choosing. The teachers' unwillingness to participate in focus group interviews with their colleagues was a major finding even prior to beginning the interviews. The lack of trust exists among the staff, but also between staff and administration. The teachers expressed the importance of maintaining their anonymity for fear of negative repercussions from the administration. Teachers were fearful that their participation in a study regarding frequent turnover of administrators may be perceived as a negative by administration. The trust or lack thereof that teachers feel towards their colleagues can have a significant effect on the culture of a district (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

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Therefore, in an effort to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, I made a deliberate decision not to reveal the content area or department of each participant. Throughout the interviews, several of the participants restated, "...since this is confidential" prior to answering questions. One participant even shared, "...most of the staff would think I'm an idiot for sitting here and letting you record what I'm saying...seriously." Therefore, it is extremely important to me that their anonymity be maintained so all participants have been provided with pseudonyms. The pseudonyms selected are those of my dissertation colleagues and friends who have supported me throughout this process: Frank, Jessica, Mark, Tim, Keri, Maggie, Alexandra, Michael, and Peter.

"Maggie" is a middle school teacher who has been a teacher for over 30 years and is respected within the community. She indicated that having been in the district for a length of time "is not an advantage." She doesn't feel highly respected by administration because they do not consider her opinions. Maggie believes change is healthy, but it is important to consult people currently in the district before changes are made so as not to repeat previously made errors. Despite the fact that relationships are deemed as a priority in the district, she has not seen evidence of it in many years and "as teachers, we have given up on it."

"Frank" is a high school teacher who has been in the district for a little over 25 years. In that time he has taught both middle and high school classes. Frank indicated that there have been so many changes, that teachers "...kind of have a wait and see attitude" and wonder "How long is this person gonna stick around?" He also expressed frustration with the lack of consistency in administrative expectations indicating, "Administrators treat the teachers differently...some people can get away with something while others can't."

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“Jessica” is currently a high school teacher. She has been a teacher in the district for forty years and during that tenure she also taught in the middle school for a significant period of time. She expressed frustration at not “knowing anything until it’s done” and stating “I don’t particularly like everything so secretive.” Jessica also indicated that the district is no longer a “family” despite it being identified as such by upper administration. She stated that she “would not tell people to come work here anymore...not in a million years.”

“Alexandra” is a high school teacher who has been in the district for a little over 20 years. She has had five direct supervisors in the last ten years. She stated, “...there is a lot of cynicism that has crept in over the revolving door of administration.” Alex indicated that one perception is that the district is a place for administrators to gain experience before moving on to another position. Whoever is in a particular administrative position is seen by the staff as temporary. Alex expressed frustration in that very few teachers feel their opinions are valued and that they are respected as professionals.

“Mark” is currently a high school teacher and has been in the district almost 20 years. He has taught in both the high school and middle school. He is disheartened with the different directions the district has taken in the last ten years. There have been three different assistant superintendents in the district and three very different styles, “Under this leadership, you were God’s gift to education, and then under this leadership you are a jerk.” Mark indicated frustration because although he and others have not changed how they interact with students or changed as educators, they are perceived differently under the different administrations.

“Michael” is a high school teacher who has been in the district for a little over 20 years. Michael explained that there is a great deal of confusion among the staff due to the ever-changing administration coupled with the changing administrative roles. Responsibilities of

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administrators have shifted as new ones join the district. He indicated that most staff does not really know who they are supposed to “go to” if they have an issue or question. Should it be the building principal or their immediate supervisor (Director of Instruction)? They may not be comfortable with either. Additionally, Michael expressed concern that teachers simply do not understand how and why decisions are being made, “People like to know...they like a sense of order and certainty.”

“Peter” is currently a high school teacher who has been in the district for almost 20 years. He began teaching in the middle school and has been in the high school for a little more than 10 years. Peter shared that teachers have come to expect that administrators may only stay in the district for three to four years before moving to another position. He stated, “...the joke is the turnstile...another one through the turnstile.” Teachers dislike the fact that the district lacks consistency because they “are going to have to start over again with someone new.”

“Tim” has been a high school teacher in the district for almost 20 years. He expressed frustration with the frequent administrative turnover indicating that many of the new administrators bring their ideas and visions from their previous districts and attempt to implement them without considering the district’s culture. Tim noted frustration from the teacher’s perspective, “I’m gonna wait you out” and the administrator’s perspective, “If I can’t make the changes that I want, I’ll find a new job.”

“Keri” has been a middle school teacher in the district for 24 years. She taught a class in the high school a long time ago. Keri also expressed discomfort with the frequent changes in administration, “...you just don’t know what the new philosophy is going to be...what direction people are going in...” She shared that the vision keeps changing continually and no one knows what to expect which has affected the staff’s morale.

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Data

The data in this phenomenological case study consisted of semi-structured interviews with nine participants and the following documentation: Administrative flow charts, Board of Education reports, district curriculum guides and course maps, lesson plan templates, district and department goals as stated in summative evaluations and meeting memos.

The data are organized and presented in this dissertation based on the themes of my conceptual framework and one newly identified theme based on the interview data: Frequent Administrative Turnover, Lack of Sustainable Leadership, Lack of Trust, Lack of Communication, Resistant Culture and Lack of Sustainable Improvement. The newly identified theme is Lack of Communication.

Frequent Administrative Turnover

The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district. Documentation from the school district relative to frequent administrative turnover included Administrative flow charts and Board of Education reports. The documentation indicated that 51 individuals have held the 11 administrative positions over the past sixteen years. Figure 1 on page two of the Introduction provides a brief overview of the number of administrative turnover for each position. However, due to changes in the number of positions in some of the administrative roles, Figures 4 serves to clarify and provide more detailed data. A few of the administrators held their positions for a longer period of time than indicated in the chart, since this study focused specifically on the past 16 years, it is not indicated in the documented data.

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Figure 4

Position	Individual	Number of years in position
Assistant Superintendent	AS #1	2
	AS #2	2
	AS #3	7
Director of Counseling *The position was unfulfilled for two years.	DC#1	2
	DC#2	7
	DC#3	3
	DC#4	1
	DC#5	>year
Directors of Instruction: One position	DI#1	2
	DI#2	3
	Two positions	
	DI#3	2
	DI#4	2
	Three positions	
	DI#5	9
	DI#6	7
	DI#7	2
	DI#8	2
	DI#9	2
	DI#10	3
	DI#11	2
High School Principal	HSP #1	8
	HSP#2	2
	HSP#3	1
	HSP#4	2
	HSP#5	3
Middle School Principal	MSP#1	2
	MSP#2	5
	MSP#3	3
	MSP#4	3
	MSP#5	3

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Figure 4 continued

Position	Individual	Number of years in position
High School Assistant Principal (Three positions)	HSAP#1	2
	HSAP#2	2
	HSAP#3	4
	HSAP#4	7
	HSAP#5	2
	HSAP#6	2
	HSAP#7	2
	HSAP#8	3
	HSAP#9	6
	HSAP#10	2
	HSAP#11	2
	HSAP#12	3
	HSAP#13	2
	HSAP#14	2
Middle School Assistant Principal Two positions One position	MSAP#1	8
	MSAP#2	7
	MSAP#3	1
	MSAP#4	2
	MSAP#5	1
	MSAP#6	1
	MSAP#7	4
	MSAP#8	2

One of the criteria for the participants in the study was that they needed to have been employed by the district for at least ten years. In the past ten years, one administrator had been re-assigned to three different administrative positions, one individual served in two administrative positions and 22 of the administrators left the district entirely. The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to provide a voice to teachers who have experienced this phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover.

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Revolving Door

All of the participants recognized a frequent administrative turnover and several stated that it is expected by the staff. Peter commented, “You almost expect somebody to be here only three to four years and move on...” He stated, “The joke is always the turnstile...that’s what it’s called – the turnstile...another one through the turnstile...or the turnstile is moving again.” Maggie concurred, “there is constant turnover...it’s sort of like a joke.” Alexandra commented, “I’ve had five Directors in ten years” and referred to the phenomena as “...the revolving door of administration.” Keri shared, “...you just learn what someone is about and what they like and how to work with them and somebody else comes along and you are just learning all over again.”

No Sense of Permanence

Anticipating the frequent administrative turnover and not expecting administrators to remain in the district for a significant period of time leaves faculty feeling unsure. Peter stated that, “The staff has no sense of permanence.” Tim commented that having new administrators so frequently causes turmoil in the staff, “...because you don’t know who you are getting.” Frank explained, “...we kind of have a wait and see attitude. How long is this person gonna stick around?” Getting accustomed to working with new administrators on such a frequent basis is unnerving because they hold supervisory roles, not those of colleagues. Several participants also expressed resentment at “grooming” administrators for positions in other districts. The administrators remain approximately two to three years before almost always obtaining much higher paying positions in other districts.

Changing Vision

Several of the participants expressed frustration because many of the new administrators bring ideas from their previous districts and attempt to impose their ideas on the school before

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really getting to know the district culture. Keri said, "...it presents a level of discomfort...you don't know what the new philosophy is going to be..." Tim commented, "When you get new people coming in – it's like, well...this is how we do it now." Alexandra shared, "...they aren't here long enough to learn about our students and that's really sad."

Why?

Many of the participants posed possible ideas as to why such frequent administrative turnover exists in the district. Opportunity for advancement was the first obvious choice. Some acknowledged that lower salaries may be the cause; simply traveling to a different nearby county elevates salaries significantly. Many of the administrators who have left the district have secured similar positions in a county approximately fifteen minutes north and are reportedly earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000 more. Other participants believe that some administrators have left because they "don't fit the mold." It was suggested that some may have "clashed with other administrators" "for a variety of reasons" while others have not been successful working within the culture of the district.

Analysis

The specific data in Figure 4 illustrates how long each of the administrators was employed in the past sixteen years. I acknowledge that the chart is lengthy and expands to several pages. However, I believe it is a powerful illustration of the administrative turnover. Neither Figure 1 nor Figure 4 was shared with any of the participants; yet, all nine of them acknowledged that the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover exists in the district. The participants described feeling "unsure," "uncomfortable," and "frustrated." Mark simply stated, "I think the district could be a lot better without all of the turnover."

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As noted earlier, transition from one school leader to another is a significant event in the culture of a school (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011). Although the participants have come to expect the “revolving door” of administrators, with each new leader, they are left feeling unsure because they do not know what to expect. Teachers rarely feel indifferent regarding changes in leadership regard leadership succession with indifference (Hargreaves & Fink; 2003; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003) because it is often followed by change in the schools and change in their day to day operations. Succession is disruptive because it changes the lines of communication, affects relationships of power and disturbs normal activities (Macmillan, 2000).

Lack of Sustainable Leadership

Although the same Superintendent has led the district for over 20 years, teachers shared during the interviews that the frequent administrative turnover has led them to feel there is an “ever-changing vision.” The participants’ reference to vision included the focus of the district, the expectations despite the fact that the district mission statement has remained consistent for the past ten years with minor revisions. However, according to teachers’ annual summative evaluations, the district goals have changed significantly in the past ten years. During this time, there was a similar focus for three of the years as the goal related to various stages in the “Understanding by Design” model. For the past two years, there has been some similarity in the district goal as well. For five of the ten years, there was a different district focus each year. In addition, district documents indicate that the curriculum format and focus has changed several times over the past ten years in conjunction with a change in administration. Previously, under the leadership of one Assistant Superintendent, the curriculum format was a basic scope and sequence of the courses. With a new Assistant Superintendent, the required format became a

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version of “Understand by Design” and broader course ideas were the focus and details were not required. After two years, the same format was used, but all newly revised curriculum required weekly plans for each course. In addition, the expectation for submission of lesson plans, attendance and documentation of attendance at faculty meetings, and content of professional development also changed significantly with new administration. Previously, lesson plans were required to be submitted, and then after a change in district administration no lesson plans were required for a few years. With a new district administrator, a new lesson plan format was not only required, but teachers receive feedback often requiring more detailed explanations of their lessons. In the past ten years, the expectation regarding attendance and participation at faculty and department meetings has also changed. Teachers have a contractual obligation to attend three afterschool meetings each month; often resulting in two department meetings and one faculty meeting. Staff members with coaching responsibilities are responsible for the content of the meetings, but meeting attendance is not obligatory. Previously, attendance at faculty meetings and department meetings for teaching staff without coaching responsibilities was required but not documented. Then, with the addition of new administration, teachers were encouraged to attend, but not required to do so. With another change in administration, teachers were not only required to attend faculty meetings, but were also required to sign in so as to have documentation of their attendance. The focus on professional development also changed with new administrators. In the past, professional development days were dedicated to various topics presented to large groups. With new administration, there was a change in philosophy and professional development days were devoted to team building and often focused on healthy living. Teachers were encouraged to participate in after-school professional development courses offered by their colleagues. Participating teachers had the ability to earn professional

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development credits, which enabled them to skip other professional development days. After another change in administration, the after-school courses were no longer offered. The philosophy changed again and the focus of most professional development days is now to provide teachers the opportunity to collaborate in their content teams improving lessons, and developing and assessing common assessments.

Ever changing

Many of the participants indicated feeling uncomfortable with the lack of consistency in vision and focus of the district. Mark explained, "...people are frustrated...if you've been here for 10 years, you've had three different Assistant Superintendents with three completely different styles." As noted previously, the Assistant Superintendent position is one of eleven administrative positions experiencing frequent change. Frank shared, "It's ever changing. We've had so many changes; the vision keeps changing with it. We just don't know that the plan is going to be, how long it's going to be in place and what the next great idea is." Many of the teachers indicated that when a new administrator joins the district, there is a new way many things must be done, both regarding academics and building procedures. Alexandra commented, "...when somebody new comes in, what preceded is invalid so we have to do something different..." The participants feel that it is impossible to have true consistency in leadership with such frequent change in administration.

Leaderless

Many of the participants expressed frustration with how many different administrators have evaluated them in the past ten years and how many Directors have been their supervisors. Alexandra stated, "We feel leaderless...we are basically leaderless." Although the purpose of the study was to interview teachers who have been in the district for the past ten years, Michael

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elaborated further, “That’s all they (untenued teachers) have ever seen...they don’t necessarily look to administrators as leaders because it constantly changes...no help and support...” Peter commented that sustainable leadership exists in the district, but not from administrative sources. He explained, “You have informal leaders all the time. I think sometimes the informal leaders hold the district together.” The instability in leadership due to frequent administrative succession results in informal leaders having a critically important role with staff. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) found that informal leaders were more prominent during periods of frequent principal succession. Schools and teachers need leaders and if a lack of consistency exists administratively, teacher leaders often come forward and take an informal role to reassure staff.

Analysis

Leader succession is inevitable in every school; however, frequent administrative turnover presents significant challenges for schools (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010).

All of the teachers interviewed in this study indicated that the frequent change in administration has left them feeling frustrated due to the lack consistency in formal leadership. Frequent administrator succession disrupts the initiatives of a district, school or department when the administrator supporting the effort departs and is replaced by someone with different priorities (Corbett, Dawson, & Firestone, 1984). Many new administrators result in many different procedures and many different expectations. This becomes very frustrating for teachers who may be unsure of the current expectations due to so many changes. To compensate for the lack of sustainable leadership, teachers often seek the support of colleagues who are the teacher leaders of the school.

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Lack of Trust

When addressing the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover, I asked the participants if they trusted the administration. Some of the teachers did not even let me finish asking the question before responding with an emphatic “No!” Despite my assurance of maintaining confidentiality and my established relationship with the participants, Jessica shared, “I would say that probably most of the staff would think I’m an idiot for sitting here and letting you record what I’m saying.”

It is reciprocal

Many of the participants expressed that their lack of trust in administration is because they feel the administration does not trust them. Alexandra shared, “I think it’s reciprocal.” Keri affirmed, “I don’t think the faculty has trust in the administration...that’s the biggest problem...we don’t feel that people are honest with us...consequently, we don’t feel there is trust.” Michael noted that teachers’ first reaction in the current culture is one of distrust. When a new initiative is introduced, he confessed the staff questioning, “What’s the motive?”

Teachers indicated that they do not feel they are treated with respect and valued as professionals. Alexandra suggested, “I think the feeling is that we can’t be trusted to do a good job on our own.” Maggie explained that as a teacher, she prefers to believe that her students tell her the truth; she gives them the benefit of the doubt until they prove otherwise. She expressed dismay that the administration does not afford the teachers the same benefit. Maggie remarked, “Give me some credit here...I’m a professional...let me screw up and then treat me like crap.”

Fearful

All of the participants in the study had been employed by the district for at least ten years. This experience in the district afforded these tenured teachers the ability to express their feelings

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regarding the effects of frequent administrative turnover. Despite having tenure in the district, many of the participants expressed feelings of fear. Jessica prefaced her comment with, "I'll tell you this since it's all confidential..." and then continued, "We don't think there is trust because some people have been singled out..." before describing negative experiences of several of her colleagues with new administrators. Frank expressed similar thoughts, "I think people have been betrayed...the administrators treat teachers differently...some people can get away with something, while others can't."

Having experienced so many different supervisors led two of the participants to express fear in regards to their classroom observations. Tim volunteered, "You don't know what's going to happen...you don't know if that person is going to like me or if that person is not going to like me? Not that that's a big thing, but it is because of your observation..." Keri described similar feelings regarding administrators, but did not reference the frequent turnover as a concern. She commented, "We feel more like they (administrators) are out to get people...that's how people feel...it's so subjective with observations and...your job is on the line..."

Several of the participants expressed fear of retribution for sharing their opinions or speaking up. Keri acknowledged that in the past, she felt that the administration and teachers shared a common goal of wanting students to succeed and she was comfortable sharing her ideas with previous administrators. She admitted that in the past, "I never felt threatened or uncomfortable, but as of late, I don't feel that way...I really feel that you have to be careful about everything you say or every idea you have...I need to keep my mouth shut and do what I need to do." Peter agreed that in the past, although an issue or concern may not have been taken care of to a teacher's satisfaction, there was no fear that, "...anything bad was going to come to you because of what you said..." He maintained that currently, "...people are very fearful of

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repercussions.” When prompted to elaborate due to his tenured status, Peter answered, “You can always screw us with our schedule, take away our clubs and give them to someone else...” He mentioned the circumstances of several teachers who recently retired and suggested the teachers’ perception is that administrators asked themselves, “How do we get that person to leave?” Peter explained, “...people fear they are going to become the next person on the list.” He confessed, “I don’t trust my supervisor at all...if I ever pissed her off I’d have the shittiest schedule next year...that’s why I handle her with kid gloves...”

Lack of relationships with administrators

Many of the participants acknowledged that the frequent administrative turnover has made it more difficult to build a relationship with their supervisors simply because they do not remain in the district long enough. Michael theorized, “...trust develops... the more you interact with someone, the more quickly you will get to know them and trust them...the problem here is that there has been so much turnover that by the time it develops, the person is gone.” Some of the participants stated that they experienced more trusting relationships with administration in the past. Jessica commented, “People used to trust their supervisors in the past...it’s really been in the last five to six years.” Peter agreed, “There is less trust now...I think that has something to do with people not having been around as long because you don’t know them as well...when somebody is here for ten years...you may not like them, but you know them. When somebody is here for only two to three years, how well do you really know them?” When asked to comment about relationships with administration, Mark responded, “The feeling is that there are a large number of administrators that would sell you down the river to advance themselves to get themselves in the good graces of their bosses.”

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Communication

Although participants acknowledged that the frequent turnover in administration contributed to a lack of trust, they also identified a lack of communication contributing to a lack of trust. Michael observed, “In addition to the turnover, the lack of trust comes from the failure to explain the reasons behind the changes.” Frank recalled a group of teacher leaders in the high school referred to as “The Faculty Council.” This elected group of teachers collaborated with administration regarding many procedures and contributed to the decision making process. The group was in existence for approximately five years and was abruptly disbanded by new administration. Frank asserted, “...we had greater trust when we had the faculty council because there was a communication tool...now you just don’t trust them (administration).” He concluded, “There is just a lack of communication so there is a lack of trust.”

Analysis

The data suggest that there is a significant lack of trust in the district. The majority of the teachers do not trust the administration and many do not even trust their own colleagues. It takes time to learn to trust someone. People develop trusting relationships after witnessing behaviors over a period of time. It is difficult to trust someone that you do not know. The frequent administrative turnover contributes to this lack of trusting relationships in the district. Teachers also identified a lack of communication between leadership and staff as contributing to the lack of trust. The participants did not identify a possible reason for the lack of communication. Perhaps, due to such frequent administrative turnover and lack of consistency in leaders, there is a lack of clear communication coming from school leadership. The significant lack of trust in the district has had a negative impact on the morale of the teachers and the school culture.

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The participants unanimously stated that the teachers do not trust the administration. Many of the participants explained that teachers do not trust administration because the administration does not trust the teachers. It is a mutual circle of distrust. Despite their tenured statuses in the district, many of the teachers interviewed expressed fear of retribution for sharing their opinions with administration. They do not feel they have trusting relationships with administration. Many of the participants indicated that the frequent administrative turnover has contributed to the lack of trust in administration because when teachers begin to trust an administrator, they leave the district for another place of employment. Other participants identified a lack of communication that has directly affected the lack of trust among the staff. How a school functions depends on the relationships that exist between school leaders and staff (Adams, 2008). It is important for faculty to trust their leaders and it is not easily accomplished because earning trust takes time. Frequent administrative turnover does not allow enough time necessary for relationships to develop between school leadership and staff. Frequent succession does not permit the faculty time to earn the trust of the new principal or the principal enough time to earn the trust of the faculty (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

Lack of Communication

Prior to the data collection, my conceptual framework focused on the following topics: Frequent Administrative Turnover; Lack of Sustainable Leadership; Lack of Trust; Resistant Culture and Lack of Sustainable Improvement. Throughout the interview process another topic emerged from many of the teachers: Lack of Communication. Even though early in the data collection phase, several of the teachers identified lack of communication as an “issue,” at no time did I revise my protocol to include questions related to communication.

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Trust

When interviewing participants about trust in the district, many of them acknowledged the lack of trust and attributed some of it to a lack of communication. They revealed that a lack of communication in the district specifically related to change causes them not to trust administration. Frank stated, "...there is a lack of communication so there is a lack of trust." Michael shared, "If you are going to change a policy, you need to start out by explaining...I think that the lack of trust comes from administrative turnover but also from the failure to explain the reasons behind the changes."

We don't know

Every week during the school year, the high school and middle school principals send bulletins with important information to all staff members. However, many of the participants shared that they still do not know what is going on in the district. As an example, several participants referred to the change in bell schedule for the 2013 – 2014 school year. A committee of teachers and administrators recommended lengthening the school day during the spring of 2013, but the exact times had not been approved by the superintendent nor communicated to the staff. During the summer of 2013, many teachers were still waiting for official confirmation of the school day. They were extremely concerned as to how changes would affect their child care. In August of 2013, notification of the new bell schedule was announced on the school website. Many teachers were offended and upset with the way the information was disseminated. They believed they should have received a direct correspondence as notification from the administration regarding the final schedule – bell schedules, report time in the morning and ending time for teachers. Jessica begged, "Just tell us things...we feel like everything is a secret...we don't know what's going on...I think the thing that people complain

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about the most is the communication.” Tim agreed by stating, “...the big issue...it’s that communication aspect.” Keri also shared, “...we don’t really know...it’s a lack of communication...the idea that maybe if things were presented...nothing is communicated in advance...it’s so much about communication. If only things weren’t always coming out as surprises.”

While responding to questions concerning their experiences related to frequent administrative succession, teachers identified a lack of communication on the part of administration as a major concern. The participants expressed they are not receiving explanations as to why procedures and protocols change and they are advised of any changes very late in the process. The experienced teachers’ expressed frustration that their opinions are not sought out as in the past and they are no longer consulted prior to change occurring. The participants feel that they do not know what is going on in the district or why changes are occurring. This “lack of communication” expressed by the teachers indicates they do not feel valued by administration. Changes occurring without explanation makes them feel devalued and disrespected by school leadership which in turn impact school culture negatively.

Analysis

Despite my not asking about communication, most of the participants shared that one of the major issues in the district is a lack of communication. The protocol question surrounding trust is what primarily prompted teachers to identify a lack of communication in the district. They acknowledged there is a lack of trust in the district due to the frequent administrative turnover as discussed in the previous section, but they also acknowledged that a lack of communication also contributes to the lack of trust. None of the participants postured reasons for the lack of communication in the district.

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Schools are highly interactive environments that depend on the quality of communication that occurs between administration and teachers (Adams, 2008). A lack of communication between school leaders and teachers negatively impacts the school environment because it leads to a lack of trust. Teachers trust leaders who communicate consistently, accurately and explain why decisions are made (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). When decisions are not explained and information is not forthcoming in a timely manner, teachers become suspicious regarding the motives for withholding information. Information may be withheld because the decisions were not made very much in advance. Other times, information may be withheld because the decisions will not be supported by the staff and it is less time they will have to voice their concerns. School leaders who engage in open communication are more likely to earn the trust of their staff (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Resistant Culture

The participants were asked to describe their perception of the culture of the district and/or their particular building (high school or middle school). Many of the participants referred to the past and described a familial feeling, but indicated that no longer exists in the current culture. Tim shared, “It doesn’t seem that there can be a collegial relationship between teacher and administration...” Participants maintained the frequent administrative turnover has had a negative effect on the district culture.

Nobody knows

Most of the participants expressed frustration because they feel they have no one to whom they can share their concerns and issues or provide them answers. Their direct supervisors change so often that they are unwilling or unable to address teachers’ concerns. Frank suggested, “If we had greater communication, things would work a lot smoother...the staff

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makes up reasons why we are doing something.” But, without communication on the part of administration, Frank acknowledged, “...these changes in the administrative staff have forced us to adapt...but you know there is that resistance right away when somebody comes in and says...oh we aren’t going to do it that way anymore.” He referenced a new initiative that was introduced to the entire staff during a professional development day that left many teachers feeling resistant because of the manner in which it was introduced, “And then you have an administrator get up and tell people that ‘I’m not going to answer your questions. You are going to do this no matter what.’ People are just going to say...ah...ok...I’ll do it but I’m not going to make your job easy.” The lack of collaboration and explanation from administration has left teachers feeling confused. Jessica admitted, “Nobody knows...nobody seems to know what’s going on and it seems to be changing all the time.” She shared that she had previously tried to elicit clarification regarding various initiatives, but received no answers from her supervisors. Jessica commented that the atmosphere is, “People everywhere are supposed to feel grateful if you have a job. Keep your mouth shut. Be happy you have a job.”

Not respected as professionals

Many of the teachers expressed that prior to the frequent administrative turnover; there was a more collaborative decision-making process. There was the perception that there was mutual respect between the administrative leadership and the staff. Alexandra identified that the change in culture has led teachers to feel that, “...our opinions or input is not valid...very few teachers feel we are respected as professionals here.” Keri agreed that previously teachers felt they were part of the decision-making process or at least their suggestions were considered. However in the current climate she feels, “...it’s almost like...you don’t feel that what you say matters at all...this is the decision, this is what we’ve done and we don’t want to hear

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anything...” The participants shared that although they have been in the district for a significant time, there do not feel that that has earned them respect from administration. Maggie expressed, “Being here for a while is not an advantage...it doesn’t matter what I think or say because it only matters this is how we are going to do it.” The participants expressed frustration because many of the new administrators attempt new initiatives without getting to know the culture and investigating to determine what has been implemented in the past and what may or may not have worked. One example shared was that of passes. Many new building administrators have implemented new procedures for the different types of passes: hall, nurse, locker, guidance, etc. As a result, any of the same procedures have been implemented periodically throughout the years because there was no investigation as to the previous procedures. Peter affirmed that most teachers feel that they have no input and due to the frequent administrative turnover, “what happened in the past isn’t valued.”

Low morale

Many participants noted that there is a low morale in the district and believe the problem lies with the leadership or lack thereof. Alexandra shared “...the constant administrative turnover has had an effect on the school culture and morale.” Maggie asserted, “The morale here is just very low and I think that morale is built by leadership...” Jessica declared, “I think it’s bad management and it’s tremendously detrimental to morale...the morale of the teachers is getting bad.” Keri explained that not knowing what to expect affects the morale of teachers, “...it just makes you always be on edge and not know where you are going, what you can say, what you can’t say...” Michael noted that because there has been frequent administrative turnover for so long, most of the current teachers are accustomed to it. The teachers who have been in the district for a long time have had an influence on the newer teachers in the absence of

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stable administration. Unfortunately, some of these teachers have had a negative influence on the newer staff due to their experiences. Several of the participants indicated that the low morale of the district contributed to the early retirement of many individuals, “A lot of people decided...I’m just out...most of the people hadn’t planned on retiring...it was a mad dash.” Tim remarked, “When people retire from this place – they aren’t retiring happy. They are retiring very bitter.”

Several of the participants shared that some staff members have become resentful towards new administrators because they do not expect them to stay in the district. Many of the administrators have moved on to higher paying districts maintaining the same position or have received a promotion to a higher position in another district. Alexandra maintained, “There is a lot of cynicism that has crept in over the revolving door of administration...one of the perceptions is that this is just a place to get your experience before you move on...” Tim declared, “...the administrators are not out for the betterment of the school, they are out for the betterment of themselves...”

In my classroom

The teachers interviewed advised that many of their colleagues do not want to concern themselves with initiatives, procedures or new administrators. They want to be left alone to teach their students their way. Keri admitted, “...a lot of people have given up in terms of trying to change things.” She begged, “...let me go into my classroom, close my door and do what I need to.” Peter observed, “They... (teachers) go in their room...they do what they have to do in their room to be successful...they do what they consider to be their job and leave...” Teachers shared that closing their classroom doors isolates them from others, but at the same time provides them autonomy. Jessica affirmed that she does not have contact with teachers from most other

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departments unless their classes are in close proximity to her room. She shared, “I think a lot of people just think...I close my door and I’m with my kids...I teach them and I do what’s good for them...” Several of the participants also admitted the importance of administrative perception. Mark explained, “You do what you have to so your boss thinks you are doing a good job and then you close your door and do what you feel is right by the kids.” Tim admitted, “Teachers only care about two things: good observations and a good summative evaluation...besides that...leave me alone, let me be in my classroom, let me do what I want.”

Wait and see

Participants indicated that due to the frequent turnover of administrators, the staff has become somewhat jaded in their response to change. Frank confided, “We’ve had so many changes that we kind of have a wait and see attitude...How long is this person gonna stick around?” Tim disclosed, “The feeling is that we’ll just wait until somebody else comes along with some new ideas and if we like them, we will buy into them...but if we don’t, we’ll just sit there and wait you out too until the next person comes along.” Michael remarked, “The older teachers say...the administrators are going to be gone anyway so just bear with it and get through it for now...”

Analysis

All of the participants acknowledged that the frequent administrative turnover has had a negative impact on the culture of the district. The culture has become resistant because teachers have no one who is willing or able to respond to their concerns and questions. They do not feel respected as educators because they no longer have input into any decision-making. Previously, teachers described the district as having more of a family feel and they felt comfortable voicing concerns or posing questions. This is no longer the case. The teachers interviewed disclosed

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that the staff suffers from low morale due to a lack of leadership and many resent new administration for using the district to simply gain experience. Many of the teachers also have a “wait and see” attitude because they know that with new administrators come new initiatives and they are not sure how long they will remain in the district.

Fink and Brayman (2006) concluded that rapid and repeated principal succession affected the culture of the schools. Teachers exhibited increased resistance to change and invest their energies in new practices that they anticipate will change in two to three years. Teachers became cynical about leaders and the “revolving door” (p. 84) leadership due to frequent succession. Additionally contributing to the resistant culture is the lack of trust between administration and teachers. A strong, healthy culture is one where shared attitudes and goals exist resulting in trusting relationships among the administration and faculty (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Resistant cultures exist in “low trust schools” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Lack of Sustainable Improvement

When asked to identify the experiences of tenured teachers regarding sustainable improvement, all of the participants believed the district must have a consistent vision in order to improve. The participants wavered between not being able to identify any vision for improvement and believing there is ever-changing vision due to the frequent administrative turnover resulting in no consistent or sustainable improvement.

No vision

Some of the participants referenced the lack of communication contributing to the lack of a vision. Frank offered, “I just don’t see us making any progress as a school because we don’t communicate with each other.” Mark commented, “There is no vision...there is a lot of sayings and mottos, but no real vision.” Jessica believes, “Nobody knows what the vision is...nobody

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knows anything...” Tim responded that the district is, “...stuck in a quagmire...we aren’t going anywhere...not better...not worse.”

Ever-changing vision

Peter explained that if an administrator only stays in the district for two to three years, it is hard to have much sustainable improvement because his or her replacement does not usually continue with the initiative. He referenced the Accreditation for Growth (AFG) initiative and indicated that specific initiatives were delegated to certain administrators who are gone and the initiatives were never transferred to someone else. As a result, the initiative was never realized. Maggie referenced so many changes with so many different administrators and said, “I think there is a perception that there is a vision, but I don’t think that everybody has the same vision...” Alexandra agreed that there is an ever-changing vision, “Somebody new comes in...and we have this knee jerk reaction to do something different...” She suggested that new administrators learn about the school, the sending districts, and the students prior to determining what changes for improvement need to be made. Alexandra feared that many of the changes “for improvement” have been implemented more to “add to someone’s resume” than to do what is in “the best interest of the students and staff.” Keri affirmed that the vision keeps changing, “...just when you think we are going one way, we are going another way...and it just seems to be changing continually.”

Analysis

The participants were unable to identify any consistent vision for school improvement. When asked about sustainable improvement, many of them laughed aloud when providing their responses. When asked why, they responded that their laughter was prompted by the word sustainable. Michael explained, “The frequent administrative turnover has made some of those

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more experienced teachers more cynical about administration and any prospects for improvement.” None of the participants were able to identify any sustainable improvement.

Frequent turnover presents significant challenges for schools (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). Fink and Brayman (2006) found that schools experiencing frequent leader turnover suffer from a lack of shared purpose and an inability to maintain a school improvement focus long enough to accomplish any meaningful change. Successful implementation of initiatives requires there be a trusting relationship between the staff and administration (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It takes many years for a leader and staff to build a relationship and collaborate on improvement efforts. Frequent administrative succession does not provide time for teachers to build trusting relationships with school leaders. Therefore, an organization or school cannot endure sustainable improvements if it lacks sustainable leadership.

Data collection summary and analysis

The data consisted of semi-structured interviews of nine participants who have all been employed by the school district for a minimum of ten years. Seven of the participants have been teaching in the high school most recently, however five of them have some experience teaching in the middle school. Two of the participants have been teaching in the middle school for over twenty years.

All of the participants demonstrated a willingness to respond to the semi-structured questions and responded similarly despite their varied content areas and years of experience. In addition, as previously mentioned all of the participants expressed a preference to participant in individual interviews and were unwilling to participate in focus group interviews. They indicated a lack of trust in their colleagues’ abilities to maintain confidentiality. Member checks

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with participants were conducted and they all received a copy of the transcriptions to review.

None of the participants revised their statements, only one corrected my spelling.

Additional data consisted of documentation which included: Administrative flow chart, Board of Education reports, district curriculum guides, course maps, lesson plan templates, district and department goals as stated in summative evaluations and meeting memos. As an “insider” in the school district, I also kept a journal in order to bracket my feelings. Although my journal may also be considered data, I feel it is more appropriate to share my personal feelings in the conclusion chapter.

The data suggests that the frequent administrative succession in the district has led teachers to feel “leaderless” and frustrated with the “revolving door” of administrators. As a result, teachers often seek support in each other and unofficial “teacher leaders.” The teachers indicated they do not trust the administration. Trust is developed over time and the majority of administrators do not remain in the district long enough to develop trusting relationships with the staff. Succession is disruptive because it changes the lines of communication, affects relationships of power and disturbs normal activities (Macmillan, 2000). The participants also identified a lack of communication from the administration as contributing to the lack of trust. The reason as to why teachers believe there is a lack of communication was not stated. However, the participants indicated that by not sharing information with them, it appears the administration may have something to hide. The lack of trusting relationships coupled with the lack of communication has led to a resistant culture. A continued lack of consistency in leadership prohibits teachers and leaders from developing trusting relationships and a shared vision for sustained improvement (Fullan, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Without the

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teachers' support and consistent leadership, improvement efforts will not be successful. The micropolitics of the district are impeding sustainable improvement.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district. This dissertation focused on the scant literature available regarding frequent administrative succession as well as sustainable leadership, trust, communication, resistant culture, and sustainable improvement. By bringing to life the participants' perceptions in their own words, Chapter IV revealed how tenured teachers in one specific district experienced the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover and explains the data. The first section of this chapter summarizes the findings of this dissertation in light of the dissertation's conceptual framework. The second section of this chapter revisits and attempts to answer this dissertation's research questions. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of this dissertation, as well as implications for practice, policy and future research.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I included at the end of the first chapter (Figure 2) was developed after analysis of initial data from my pilot study regarding the impact of frequent administrative succession on school culture and a review of the minimal literature regarding frequent administrative turnover. In the pilot study, an online survey was the limited vehicle for collecting participants' responses. The initial conceptual framework was structured as such: Frequent administrative turnover leads to a lack of sustainable leadership; a lack of sustainable leadership leads to a lack of trust between administration and staff; the lack of trust leads to a

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resistant culture, and a resistant culture also contributes to a lack of trust; a resistant culture leads to a lack of sustainable improvement; a resistant culture and lack of sustainable improvement contribute to a frequent administrative turnover.

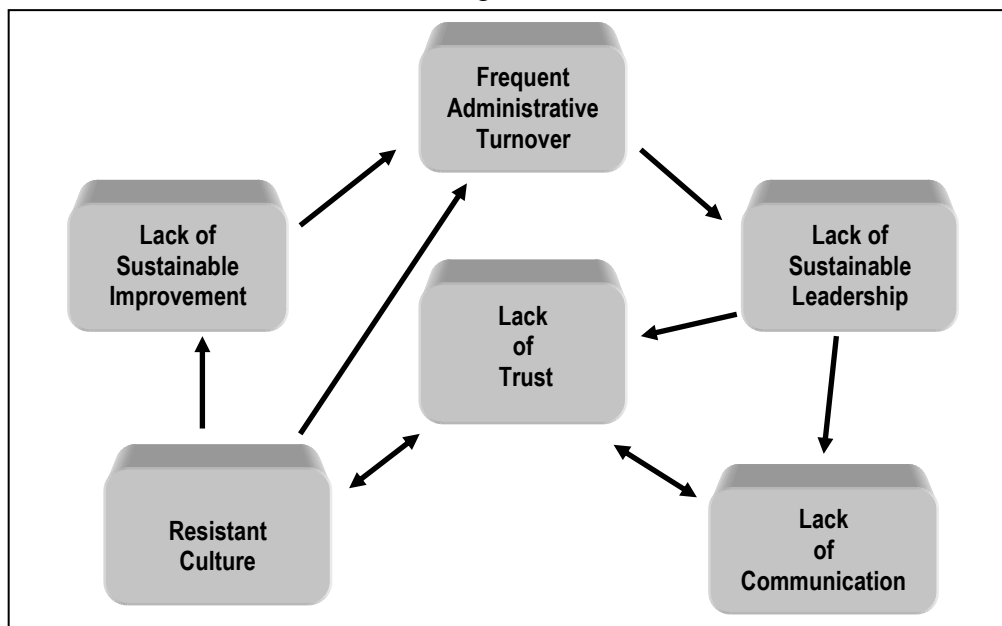
The collection of data for this dissertation study afforded me as a researcher the ability to conduct individual interviews with each of the nine participants. After transcribing and analyzing the participants' responses to the research questions, it became evident that an additional component must be added to the conceptual framework – lack of communication. All of the participants referred to a lack of communication as a major component. As a result, I have revised the structure of the conceptual framework for this dissertation as the following: Frequent administrative turnover leads to a lack of sustainable leadership; a lack of sustainable leadership contributes to a lack of communication and to a lack of trust between administration and staff; there is a reciprocal relationship with the lack of communication and the lack of trust; the lack of trust leads to a resistant culture, and a resistant culture also contributes to a continued lack of communication and lack of trust; a resistant culture leads to a lack of sustainable improvement; a resistant culture and lack of sustainable improvement contribute to a frequent administrative turnover (Figure 5).

Frequent Administrative Turnover

All of the participants recognized a frequent administrative turnover and several stated that it is expected by the staff. Anticipating the frequent administrative turnover and not expecting administrators to remain in the district for a significant period of time leaves faculty feeling unsure. Teachers indicated that the frequent changes in administration leave them with a feeling of “discomfort” because they do not know what to expect from the new administrator.

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Figure 5



Bolman and Deal (2008) offered that change often creates ambiguity and confusion. Many of the participants also expressed frustration because new administrators often “impose” new ways of doing things without first taking the time to observe the organization. Participants indicated they do not feel the administrators remain in the district long enough to become familiar with the staff and the culture. Knowing and recognizing the past is essential before moving forward (Deal & Peterson, 2009).

Several of the participants hypothesized as to why frequent administrative turnover exists in the district. The ability to earn a greater salary in nearby district was noted as a reason that administrators may leave. Some participants suggested possible conflict with other administrators and the resistant culture of the staff as a reason administrators may become frustrated and leave the district.

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Lack of Sustainable Leadership

Frequent administrative turnover has led to a lack of sustainable leadership in the district. The participants indicated that it is impossible to have true consistency in leadership with such frequent change in administration. Despite the fact that the superintendent has been in the district for over twenty years, the participants acknowledged they feel “leaderless” because of the “revolving door” of administrators with whom they have more direct contact. In Chapter four, figure 4, the data demonstrates the frequency and quantity of the administrative succession by position. Other than the Superintendent, all other administrative positions have experienced significant succession.

With the frequency of administrators coming and going in the district, many participants indicated they have not had the opportunity to build a relationship with their supervisor and other administrators. It takes time to build a trusting, working relationship with someone and most of the administrators do not remain long enough in the district to do that. In addition, with the frequent influx of new administrators, teachers experience different procedures and different expectations with great frequency. All of the teachers interviewed in this study indicated that the frequent change in administration has left them feeling frustrated due to the lack consistency in formal leadership.

In order to reduce the potential disruption caused by new administrators, teachers may marginalize the new leader’s role by developing ways of handling issues that do not require the leader’s involvement (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011). Some of the participants referenced specific teachers in the district serving as “informal leaders” and indicated that staff often seeks guidance and support from them. Participants also indicated that some staff

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members are not comfortable seeking guidance from anyone so they stay to themselves and work in isolation.

Lack of Trust

Teachers are dependent upon school administrators to provide an orderly and supportive learning environment (Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011). A lack of trust in school administration does not permit teachers to experience a supportive learning environment. As defined by Tschannen-Moran (2014), “Trust is one’s willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (p. 19). Trust is a core component of leadership (Hanford & Leithwood, 2013). Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) identified five components of faculty trust as “benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness” (p. 186). Being able to feel reliability in a leader is having the confidence and knowledge in the leader’s actions. Without experiencing a leader’s behavior consistently, it is difficult to rely on them. Building trusting relationships and a sense of reliability takes time. Frequent administrative turnover does not afford teachers time to develop relationships with administration. Many of the participants acknowledged that the frequent administrative turnover has made it more difficult to build a relationship with their supervisors simply because they do not remain in the district long enough.

Frequent changes in leadership often leave people feeling distrustful because they do not know what to expect (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The lack of sustainable leadership in the district has left many teachers feeling alone, unsupported, and distrustful. Lack of trust in an organization and its leaders have been associated with anxiety and isolation (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Many of the participants expressed that their lack of trust in administration is because they feel the administration does not trust them; it is reciprocal. Teachers indicated that they do

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not feel they are valued as professionals because administration does not trust them to do their job. The frequency of new administrators contributes to this mutual distrust. If no relationship has been developed between new administrators and teachers, there is no interdependence and no need for trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). New administrators who have not established trusting relationships with staff are often not willing to consider the input of teachers for important decisions. New administrators are not willing to risk losing control of decisions yet still remain responsible for the outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Some participants expressed feelings of fear. Fear of not knowing their evaluators and not knowing what to expect from them with classroom observations. Participants stated that they have had many different advisors in the past ten years and expressed concern at the lack of consistency in expectations. Several of the participants also expressed concern regarding retaliation from administration for voicing their opinions regarding initiatives. There is a concern that some teachers have been “singled out” and specific administrators have treated teachers differently. The participants expressed that many teachers regard decisions and initiatives with suspicion. The lack of consistency in administration has contributed to the lack of trust. It takes time to develop trusting relationships and without consistency in administrators, the lack of trust between staff and administration is evident and likely to continue. It is difficult to eradicate a culture of distrust. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) posit that once distrust is established, it is often self-perpetuating.

Lack of Communication

Participants acknowledged that the frequent turnover in administration contributed to a lack of trust, but also identified a lack of communication as contributing to the lack of trust. In reference to communication in business, Thomas, Zolin, and Hartman (2009) acknowledged that

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communication contributes to trust in organizations. Although teachers did not specifically identify the evident lack of trust contributing to the lack of communication, educational research recognizes a lack of trust as contributing to a lack of communication. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) establish that trust is necessary for effective and open communication in organizations and relationships. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) identified five components of faculty trust as “benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness” (p. 186). Openness, the sharing of information is communication (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1999). The lack of communication is affected by the lack of trust and the lack of trust has contributed to the lack of communication in the district. People who are reluctant to share information arouse suspicion in other. Providing clear and timely information allows the teacher the opportunity to develop trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) and a lack of information can reduce trust (Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009).

Teachers may be unwilling to share information with administration as much as administration is unwilling to share information with staff. Tschannen-Moran (2014) determined that, “trust facilitates communication” and “communication is hindered in a climate of distrust” (p. 18). Neither group wishes to be vulnerable to the other and release control, but wishes to protect their interests (Tschannen-Moran, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). A mutual level of distrust exists.

In addition to the lack of trust contributing to the lack of communication and vice versa, the lack of sustainable leadership due to the frequent administrative turnover has also contributed to the lack of communication. The frequency of new administrators presents challenges for communication to staff. Many of the participants acknowledged that the frequent administrative turnover has made it more difficult to build relationships with their supervisors simply because

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they do not remain in the district long enough. The lack of relationships between administration and staff has affected the lack of communication in the district.

Resistant Culture

Deal and Peterson (2009) assert that culture consists of "...underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time" (p. 6). They maintain that, "Culture develops as people cope with problems, establish routines..." (p. 52). Schein (2010) proclaims that culture is composed of dominant values and beliefs that inform members of an organization how to behave especially in relation to dealing with problems commonly encountered in their work. Over at least the last ten years, the district has experienced the problem of frequent administrative turnover. The instability in leadership due to frequent administrative succession results in informal leaders having an important role with staff. Other staff members cope differently. They prefer to isolate themselves; marginalize new administrators and develop their own routines. Participants shared that closing their classroom doors isolates them from others, but at the same time provides them autonomy. Teachers may marginalize the new leader's role by developing ways of handling issues that do not require the leader's involvement (Macmillan, Meyer, Northfield & Foley, 2011).

The participants shared that a lack of trust has become prevalent over time. Kochanek claims that "...trust exists as a characteristic of the school and is maintained as part of the school culture" (p. 6). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) and Smith, Hoy and Sweetland (2001) affirm that trust has been associated with a positive school culture. Teachers want to work in a trusting environment (Smith, Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Hence, a culture of distrust contributes to low staff morale and an uncomfortable work environment (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). This contributes to a resistant culture in the district. As previously mentioned, the participants were

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reluctant to participate in focus group interviews because they did not trust their colleagues to maintain confidentiality of their identities. Not only do the teachers not trust the administration, but many do not trust each other. Whether or not teachers trust each other can have a significant impact on the culture of a district (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Experiencing a lack of trust in colleagues or leaders prohibits someone from completely engaging in their work environment (Solomon & Flores, 2001) and contributes to a negative culture. Culture affects all aspects of a school, particularly school improvement (Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006).

Lack of Sustainable Improvement

None of the participants were able to identify any sustainable improvement. District personnel must trust each other in order to realize a common goal or vision (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) and they do not. Teachers and administrators need time to building trusting relationships in order to work together to develop common goals, implement and maintain initiatives. Sustainable improvement requires that staff and leadership experience trusting relationships in order to collaborate effectively. The participants indicated they do not have time to develop trusting relationships with administrators because they leave the district after a few years. Without trust in their supervisors, employees are hesitant to involve themselves in supporting organizational goals (Thomas, Zolin & Hartman, 2009). Trusting relationships allow meaningful collaboration between administration and teachers regarding instructional reforms (Kochanek, 2005).

A culture of trust is required for sustainable improvement. In a culture of trust, teachers have no fear of trying something new because they have the support of their leadership (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy, Gage & Tarter, 2006). Reciprocally, in a culture of trust, leaders have no fear of introducing new initiatives or permitting teachers to try something new because they trust

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the teachers. Participants shared that there is a reciprocal culture of distrust in the district. Without trust, schools are unlikely to be successful in their efforts to improve (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). The quality of the relationships among teachers and leaders is essential to initiating meaningful change and sustaining it over time (Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton & Luppescu, 2006). Developing relationships is challenging with frequent administrative turnover. New administrators often bring new initiatives. Tschannen-Moran (2014) states, “The ‘flavor of the month’ syndrome creates cynicism and damages trust, rather than leading to positive, sustainable change” (p. 26). Lack of trust contributes to a resistant culture and a resistant culture contributes to a lack of sustainable improvement.

Frequent Administrative Turnover

The participants in this dissertation study were teachers in the district, not administrators. Therefore, without having interviewed any of the previously employed administrators, I can only speculate as to why frequent administrative turnover exists in the district. As previously mentioned, some of the participants hypothesized as to the reason for the frequency with which so many administrators leave their positions. Some participants suggested the resistant culture of the staff as a reason administrators may become frustrated and leave the district. Other participants expressed the reciprocity of distrust. Another possibility for administrators departing the district with such frequency may be their inability to affect change due to the resistant culture.

Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation study was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their

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experiences have shaped the culture of the district. The nine participants, although interviewed individually, provided similar responses to most of the questions. The research questions for this study were:

1. How do tenured teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover/succession?
 - a. What are the perceptions of tenured teachers regarding the vision of the district?
 - b. What are the experiences of tenured teachers regarding consistency of administrative expectations?
 - c. What are the perceptions of tenured teachers regarding who holds the power in the district? Who really makes the decisions? Regarding policy? Regarding instruction?
 - d. What are the experiences of tenured teachers regarding sustainable leadership?
2. How do tenured teachers perceive the effect of frequent administrative turnover/succession on district culture?
 - a. How do tenured teachers describe the culture of the district? Their building?
 - b. What are the experiences of tenured teachers regarding trusting relationships with administrators?

Vision

All of the participants expressed that they did not believe there was a vision of the district or that if there was a vision, it was ever-changing. They stated that the vision continues to change so often because there are so many changes in administration. Teachers indicated that if there is a vision, most staff do not even know what it is.

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Administrative expectations

None of the participants experienced consistency of administrative expectations. They shared that the “revolving door” of administrators has contributed to a lack of communication. The teachers do not believe that there will be consistency as long as there are new administrators with great frequency. They indicated that among the current administrative team, there are discrepancies in how different administrators supervise and interact with teachers.

Power

When asked who really holds the power in the district, the participants expressed frustration at not having any input in regards to decision-making. Many expressed that they did not feel valued by administration due to the lack of collaboration between administration and staff. Teachers indicated that in years past, their opinions were frequently consulted even though the final decisions always rested with administration. All of the participants shared their beliefs that currently, the decision-making power in the district rests with central administration.

Sustainable leadership

All of the participants acknowledged that the superintendent having led the district for over twenty years would be considered a sustainable leader. However, because the superintendent does not interact daily with teachers or directly supervise teachers, most of the participants indicated that they feel “leaderless.” The participants shared their experiences with frequent administrative turnover and noted how many immediate supervisors they have had in the past ten years. Some of the participants discussed the existence and importance of informal leaders, teacher leaders who are well respected by the staff.

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Culture

Many of the participants hesitated when asked to describe the district's culture and/or the culture of their specific buildings. Many of the participants commented that "we have great kids" and one participant stated, "I wouldn't tell anyone to come work here – not in a million years." When asked to elaborate, the participant offered the lack of communication and lack of sustainable leadership as reasons. Other teachers commented that there used to be a feeling of "family" in the district, but that no longer existed. Again, the frequent administrative turnover was identified as a reason along with an increase in teacher turnover. Participants commented that few people stay at the same job for life as often was the case in the past; it may be a reflection of society. Many of the participants referenced low morale among the staff in both buildings. Some attributed it to frequent administrative turnover and lack of sustainable leadership. Many also attributed the low morale to a lack of communication from administration and a lack of trust.

Trusting relationships

When asked to describe the experiences of tenured teachers regarding trusting relationships with administrators, all of the participants were very adamant in their responses. They emphatically shared that overall the staff did not experience trusting relationships with most administrators. Participants explained that most teachers do not feel they have any relationship with administrators. Participants cited lack of communication from administration, previous contract negotiations, feeling that the administration does not trust the staff, and frequent administrative turnover which has resulted in a lack of sustainable leadership. Teachers have not been afforded the time to develop relationships with most administrators due to the frequent turnover.

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Significance of the Study

This dissertation is significant because although it is an important topic for practitioners and policy makers, there is little research documenting US teachers' experiences with frequent administrative turnover. Additionally, existing research is limited to frequent turnover of the principal position (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Hargreaves & Fink; 2003; Hart, 1991; Macmillan, Meyer & Northfield, 2005). Districts and schools have become complicated enterprises with increased accountability. Rarely does all of the leadership responsibility lie with one individual (the principal) as in the past. In this district, a range of other administrators, such as assistant principals, directors of curriculum and instruction, directors of guidance and directors of special education work closely with faculty. When any new administrator joins a school, issues of power and influence play a crucial role in the development of relationships (Meyer, Macmillan & Northfield, 2011). This phenomenological case study added to the established literature by examining the effects and teachers' perceptions of frequent turnover of 11 administrative positions (district and building-based).

Implications for Future Research

This dissertation study focused on how frequent administrative turnover affects school culture. Many districts are experiencing frequent turnover in their administration and especially the role of superintendent. As more administrative positions are experiencing frequent turnover, it is imperative that researchers continue to investigate this phenomena to add to the body of research from schools in the United States.

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The participants in this dissertation study were teachers in the district, not administrators. Therefore, without having interviewed any of the previously employed administrators, we can only speculate as to why frequent administrative turnover exists in the district. To add to the research in this area, I suggest that future studies include interviews with administrators as well. Perhaps with this additional data, districts can better support administrators and minimize the amount of administrative turnover.

In addition to how frequent administrative turnover affects teachers and the culture of the school, investigating how frequent administrative turnover affects other stakeholders such as parents and students is essential. Schools are communities and I posture that the entire community feels the effects of frequent administrative succession. In the age of increased accountability, conducting studies regarding the effects of frequent administrative turnover on student achievement would also be of great interest to many.

Implications for the District

The literature on the effects of administrative succession on teachers indicates that the pain of succession can be eased by grooming insiders for administrative positions. Insiders often have established trusting relationships with colleagues (Hargreaves & Fink, 2011). The culture of a school and district is greatly affected by its educational leaders. As a result, districts must plan carefully for leadership succession, regardless of the administrative position. Districts must insure teachers are supported consistently throughout leadership succession. Districts must adequately prepare and consistently support administrators in their new positions through induction programs, regardless of whether the leader is a new administrator to that school, or an experienced insider.

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The micropolitics of a school involves leaders and teachers working together to improve the organizations' effectiveness (Blase, 1991). The successful operation of schools depends on effective relationships between teachers and administration (Adams, 2008). Teachers are more comfortable when they can predict the actions of school leaders (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). A continued lack of consistency in leadership prohibits teachers and leaders from developing trusting relationships and a shared vision for sustained improvement (Fullan, 2005).

Limitations

There are specific limitations to the study. The study was conducted at my place of employment. I have also lived in one of the four sending districts for the past 31 years and my three children attended both the middle and high schools. Therefore, although I did "bracket" my feelings and share my initial analysis with academic colleagues, a possibility for bias exists. I recognize the limitation of conducting my study in one site. As a phenomenological case study, it was not conducted for the purpose of generalizability, but rather to provide a voice to the teachers working in a specific district with a great deal of frequent administrative turnover (Yin, 2009).

The participant interviews were limited to nine teachers, seven from the high school and only two from the middle school. Although several of the high school teachers previously taught in the middle school, only two current middle school teachers agreed to participate in the study. The teachers' voices for this study are limited to the nine participants. Additionally, the only participants interviewed for this study were tenured teachers. Having interviewed administrators who have left the district may have answered why such frequent turnover exists.

My presence as the interviewer and an administrator in the district may also be a limitation. Although I enjoy a collegial and trusting relationship with the participants and

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promised to maintain confidentiality, their responses may have been affected by me conducting the interviews (Patton, 2002).

While the findings are not generalizable because of the uniqueness of the site in which the study was conducted, they may be transferable and of interest to administrators and boards of education in other districts experiencing frequent administrative turnover (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The purpose of this study was to acknowledge the experiences of the participants and hopefully, influence decision-makers to consider the possible important effects of this phenomenon.

Conclusion

One of the most significant events in the life of a school and a school district is a change in leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). The purpose of this phenomenological case study was to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district.

The data suggest that the frequent administrative succession in the district has led teachers to feel “leaderless” and frustrated with the “revolving door” of administrators despite the longevity of the superintendent. The teachers indicated they do not trust the administration. Trust is developed over time and the majority of administrators do not remain in the district long enough to develop trusting relationships with the staff. Succession is disruptive because it changes the lines of communication, affects relationships of power, and disturbs normal activities (Macmillan, 2000). The participants also identified a lack of communication from the administration as contributing to the lack of trust. The lack of trusting relationships coupled with the lack of communication has led to a resistant culture. A continued lack of consistency in

EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

leadership who directly supervise teachers, prohibits teachers and leaders from developing trusting relationships and a shared vision for sustained improvement (Fullan, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Without consistent leadership, open communication and staff support, sustainable improvement efforts will not be successful.

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APPENDIX A: TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Graduate School of Education

New Brunswick, New Jersey

Sally A López

Effects of Frequent Administrative Turnover on District Culture

Problem

One of the most significant events in the life of a school and a school district is a change in leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). The practice and frequency of leadership succession in schools and the central administration varies greatly from district to district. The purpose of this phenomenological case study is to examine how tenured teachers have experienced frequent administrative succession in one specific school district and how their experiences have shaped the culture of the district. My interest in the topic stems from the fact that I work in an environment with frequent leadership changes. Unfortunately, there is little research documenting teachers' experiences with frequent administrative turnover. I intend to examine this phenomenon of frequent change in leadership in my school district (referred to as succession in the literature) through a micropolitical framework.

Research Questions

Interviews with teachers will focus on the following research questions:

How do tenured teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover/succession?

How do tenured teachers perceive the effect of frequent administrative turnover/succession on district culture?

Methodology

Using a qualitative approach, this study will explore how teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover. I will interview and examine the responses of ten middle and high school teachers from one school district who have been employed in the same school district for at least ten years and have experienced frequent changes in leadership. As I intend to study teachers' personal experiences in a specific school district, this proposed dissertation is defined as a phenomenological case study. I will recognize my insider role as a limitation of the proposed dissertation and in order to compensate for this limitation, specific safeguards will be implemented. In an effort to triangulate the data, collection procedures will include focus group and individual interviews, as well as the analysis of district documents and published accounts.

EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

Significance

This proposed dissertation is significant because there is little research documenting US teachers' experiences with frequent administrative turnover. Additionally, existing research is limited to frequent turnover of the principal position. While the findings will not be generalizable, they may be transferable and of interest to researchers, administrators and boards of education in other districts experiencing frequent administrative turnover (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Procedures: One focus group interview with ten tenured teachers who have taught in the district for at least 10 years belonging to departments not supervised by Sally A López and at least five individual interviews with participants who volunteered from the focus group. The interviews will be at a time and location of mutual convenience not during the school day or on school premises. The focus interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be audio taped. The individual interviews will take approximately 40 minutes and will be audio taped.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

If you are interested in participating in the study and meet the criteria, please contact me by June 15, 2013.

Thank you,
Sally Lopez
slopez@nburlington.com - work
slopez64@comcast.net - home
609-298-3900 x 2008 - work
609-314-7111 - cell

EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT AND AUDIO ADDENDUM FORMS

Informed Consent Form
Effects of Frequent Administrative Turnover on School Culture

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Sally A López, M.Ed., who is in the Doctoral Program for Educational Administration program at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine how frequent administrative succession affects school culture.

The study will collect data from tenured teachers who have been employed in the district for at least ten years. The study procedures include the following: Individual interviews with tenured teachers who have taught in the district for at least 10 years belonging to departments not supervised by Sally A López. The interviews will be at a time and location of mutual convenience not during the school day or on school premises. The initial interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be audio taped.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some information about you includes your name, position in the district, and length of time employed in the district. I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated, unless you have agreed otherwise. All study data will be kept for seven years, until December 2020.

Subject's Initials _____ Date _____

EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

There may be foreseeable risks or discomforts that are anticipated from your participation in the study. Some of the questions may deal with challenging issues, such as relationships with administration. If you feel upset, you may discuss your concerns with Sally A López who will refer you to appropriate counseling.

The benefits of taking part in this study may be an opportunity to voice your experiences regarding frequent administrative succession. However, you will receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

If you have any questions about the study procedures, you may contact:

Sally A López, Principal Investigator

(609) 314-7111

316 Juliustown Rd.

Columbus, NJ 08022

slopez64@comcast.net

And/or

Catherine A. Lugg, Ph.D., Dissertation Advisor

908-507-3243

catherine.lugg@gse.rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

3 Rutgers Plaza

New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559

Tel: 848-932-0150

Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator _____ Date _____

Subject's Initials _____ Date _____

EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

Audio Addendum to Informed Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: Effects of Frequent Administrative Turnover on School Culture conducted by Sally A López. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape (record sound) as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used in order to capture the exact words of the participants and facilitate the analysis of the participants' experiences

The recording(s) will include the participants' name, position in the district, and length of time employed in the district.

The recording(s) will be stored in Sally López's home in a locked file cabinet. Audio-tapes of interviews will be stored on Sally López's personal computer in password-protected files. To prevent a loss of electronic data, the information will also be saved on a flash-drive used only for the data for this proposed pilot study. The flash drive will be encrypted to protect data with an enforced complex password. The flash drive will be stored in a locked filing cabinet along with the hard copies of the transcriptions. After the interview, audio-recordings will be immediately transferred from the audio- recording device to the hard drive of Sally López's home computer and a securely stored encrypted flash drive. These sound files will be deleted in December 2020.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

EFFECTS OF FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How do tenured teachers experience the phenomenon of frequent administrative turnover/succession?
 - a. What are the perceptions of tenured teachers regarding the vision of the district?
 - b. What are the experiences of tenured teachers regarding consistency of administrative expectations?
 - c. What are the perceptions of tenured teachers regarding who holds the power in the district? Who really makes the decisions? Regarding policy? Instruction?
 - d. What are the experiences of tenured teachers regarding sustainable leadership?
2. How do tenured teachers perceive the effect of frequent administrative turnover/succession on school culture?
 - a. How do tenured teachers describe the culture of the district / their building?
 - b. What are the experiences of tenured teachers regarding trusting relationships with administrators?

APPENDIX D: IRB INITIAL APPROVAL
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

97

June 18, 2013

P.I. Name: Lopez
Protocol #: 13-565M

Sally A. Lopez
316 Juliustown Road
Columbus NJ 08022

Dear Sally Lopez:

✓
(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)

Protocol Title: "Effects of Frequent Administrative Turnover on District Culture"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Approval Date:	4/16/2013	Expiration Date:	4/15/2014
Expedited Category(s):	7	Approved # of Subject(s):	10

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

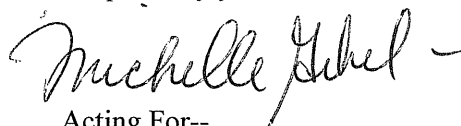
- **This Approval**-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting**-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications**-Any proposed changes **MUST** be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)**-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review**-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Additional Notes: Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,



Acting For--
Dr. Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Rutgers University Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Catherine A. Lugg

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

March 7, 2014

P.I. Name: Lopez
Protocol #: 13-565Mx

Sally A. Lopez
 316 Juliustown Road
 Columbus NJ 08022

Dear Sally Lopez:

(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)

Protocol Title: "Effects of Frequent Administrative Turnover on District Culture"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Approval Date:	2/17/2014	Expiration Date:	2/16/2015	Expedited Category(s): 8c
Approved # of Subject(s):	10	Currently Enrolled:	9	

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval-**The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting-**ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications-**Any proposed changes **MUST** be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)-**Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review-**You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

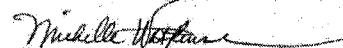
Additional Notes: - Continuation Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110.

- IRB Approval has been provided for data analysis only. PI is to contact the IRB prior to the recruitment of additional subjects or further interactions/interventions with subjects.

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,



Acting For,
 Dr. Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.
 Professor
 Chair, Rutgers University Institutional Review Board
 (MW: lb)

cc: Dr. Catherine A. Lugg