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Exploring distributed instructional leadership : case studies of assistant principals in an urban school district.

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EXPLORING DISTRIBUTED INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: CASE STUDIES

OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS IN AN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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A Dissertation Approved on

June 16, 2016

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Heavenly Father

It is through Him I can do all things.

Also to my husband

Marcellus Brandon Howard.

You are my hero. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am so thankful for my dissertation chair, Dr. Gaetane Jean-Marie. Had it not been for you, I would still be the same pitiful woman with an unfinished manuscript who walked into your office in March 2015. You have pushed me to finish this paper that is simultaneously my opus and my nemesis. There is no way on earth that I could ever repay you. Thank you. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Bradley Carpenter for seeing potential in me when no one else did. Dr. Georgia Hampton, you have been my number one cheerleader since I met you at my interview at Indian Trail Elementary! Your love and friendship have been invaluable and I could not have done it without you. Dr. Mikkaka Overstreet, we have known each other a long time and have joked about how you were my protégé. Well, now you have become a role model of mine and I truly appreciate you. Thank you for standing in the gap and taking time to help me through this process. Last but not least I would like to thank my family (biological and earned) there are too many of you to name but you have lifted me up and surrounded me. Thank you for putting up with me.

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING DISTRIBUTED INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: CASE STUDIES

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June 16, 2016

This study examined the role of instructional assistant principals in distributed

instructional leadership in three middle schools in a large urban school district. Using the

leadership functions in Hallinger's (2011) framework of instructional leadership, the

distribution of instructional leadership functions were examined. Interviews, document

analysis, and an observation determined that the assistant principal in only one out of

three cases was engaging in distributed instructional leadership. One was named an

instructional assistant principal and functioned as an operations manager and the third

was called a "lead" assistant principal and also spent most of his time on

operational/management functions. Conclusions and implications for practice and future

research were also discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education policy in the United States is constantly evolving and rarely is there public conversation about the education of American students without the discussion of policy and reform. The increasing diversity of the U.S. necessitates an ongoing evaluation of the ability of the education system to support all of its beneficiaries, especially those who struggle academically. Since the inception of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the federal government has been actively involved in creating (and enforcing) policies intended to support improved academic achievement for diverse student groups, particularly students from low-income backgrounds (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003; Borman, 2005; Plunkett, 1985; Puma & Drury, 2000; United States Department of Education, 2014). Over the years, these policies have changed from options, to suggestions, to mandates that carry major implications for local educational organizations (Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Schools and districts receiving federal funding are required to produce a certain percentage of students (both middle class and low income) who achieve at the proficient level and demonstrate college and career readiness (Thomas & Brady, 2005; USDOE, 2009). In spite of these requirements, there are still schools and districts receiving federal funds that fail to consistently produce achieve this and who continue to show gaps in achievement based on race, income level, and special education status (Herman, 2012).

The primary purpose of educational accountability is to ensure that each child learns and can demonstrate their learning to a satisfactory level (Gardner, 1983; Bell, 1993; Puma & Drury, 2000; NEA, 2002; Jorgensen & Hoffmann, 2003; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Beginning in 2002, the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – an iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) – required schools to report data as proof that each child was learning at the level dictated by each state's standards. NCLB regulations demanded that each state develop an assessment system and use standards based methods to track student achievement in Reading and Math. All students were required to be proficient in these subjects by the year 2014 (NCLB, 2002).

Although the year 2014 passed without 100 percent proficiency, schools and districts are still held to strict standards of accountability that align with the NCLB Act. Educational organizations are still required to demonstrate by way of annual assessment data that they have produced a certain number of students who show growth, who meet minimum state requirements for proficiency, and who demonstrate college and career readiness (USDOE, 2010). Districts are rewarded for success but failure to achieve adequate progress results in severe consequences for both the school and the district. These consequences vary from mandatory tutoring to complete school restructuring. One common penalty is principal removal (Meyers, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; NEA, 2002; USDOE, 2009; 2010).

In his 2010 reauthorization of the ESEA, Secretary Duncan described "Challenge" schools, states, and districts as those that "are not closing significant,

persistent achievement gaps (p. 10)." After Challenge schools and districts fail to show significant progress they are required to select one of the following turnaround models:

1. Transformation - replace the principal, strengthen staff, implement changes to the instructional program

2. Turnaround – hire a new principal, replace up to 50 percent of the staff, change the instructional program and the governance

3. Restart – change or reopen the school under the supervision of an Education Management Organization

4. School Closure – close the school and send students to a more high performing school.

All of these models have personnel implications and could translate to a change in school leadership. Even though principals are not teaching every class or even running the school alone, they are held responsible for the educational program at their school. This creates a high pressure situation for school and district leaders, especially those in urban areas with high numbers of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students with special needs.

The ability of a school to educate all students is crucial for both the success of the school and for the principal; they are not only fighting to save the school but also for their job. Although the principal is not the sole person responsible for educating students, research is clear on the relationship between effective leadership and student outcomes; leadership has a powerful influence on student learning, second only to classroom teaching (Coelli & Green, 2012; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009; Portin,

Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson, & Yeh, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). But in order to be effective, leadership must also influence classroom teaching. An effective principal prepared to change his or her school is going to view their school as a "learning organization" through the lens of an instructional leader. (Aladjem et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009).

Current accountability measures base the success of schools on student achievement. Improving instructional capacity is essential to increasing and maintaining student achievement. Thus, it is imperative that school leadership be focused on improving the instructional capacity of the staff (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Although instruction is presented by teachers in classrooms, its quality is enforced by school leaders. Effective school leadership has a major influence on the improvement of instruction (Herman, 2012; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

The Role of Instructional Leadership through a Distributive Approach

Instructional leadership is "learning-focused leadership" (Portin et al, 2009, p. 6). It amounts to the particular practices that influence the instructional atmosphere of the school. At its core are the practices of defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning environment (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2001, 2003, 2011). Instructional leaders, such as principals, use a data driven approach to ensure that they have a coherent instructional program (Aladjem et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009). They also prioritize areas of instruction, focus professional development, collaborate for curriculum review, make sure that everyone is monitoring progress regularly, protect instructional time, are highly visible, and they provide incentives for effective teaching

and learning (Hallinger, 2005; Herman, 2008). The role of the principal as an instructional leader is extensive and time consuming. When combining this with other roles – managerial, political, institutional, human resource, and symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 1992) – the job of the principal becomes impossible to accomplish alone. Because of this, many scholars outline a distributed framework for leadership.

The distributed leadership perspective describes how leadership activity is stretched across two or more individuals to accomplish a common goal (Spillane, 2000; Gronn, 2000). While task distribution is part of distributed leadership, it is different from mere delegation Rather than being focused on what leaders do, distributed leadership is focused on how leaders, followers, and the situation interact to lead in collaborated, coordinated, or collective patterns (Spillane, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita; 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004; Torrance, 2013). Distributed leadership is not a stand-alone method or tactic; it is a vehicle through which to implement leadership actions. In the cases presented here, the actions are those germane to instructional leadership. The broad nature of instructional leadership lends itself to a distributed approach; it is very difficult to provide effective instructional leadership in isolation.

Statement of the Problem

Effective instructional leadership is the catalyst for student achievement. If instructional leadership is ineffective, student achievement suffers. When students do not score adequately on achievement tests, schools are sanctioned. These sanctions ultimately result in major changes to the school's educational program that could (and often do) result in principal removal (Meyers, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; U.S. Department of

Education, 2009). Principals must be effective instructional leaders; however, due to time constraints and a wealth of responsibilities, it is difficult for principals to implement quality instructional leadership alone. In recent years, many principals have used a distributed model to encourage staff to share in instructional leadership responsibilities (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hulpia et al., 2011; Spillane & Healey, 2010). Teacher leaders and other school staff have begun to play an instrumental role in instructional leadership (Klar, 2010, 2011; Lashway, 2002; Timperley, 2005). Teachers are called upon to act as specialists in their content, resources to other teachers, leaders of Professional Learning Communities, and facilitators of teamwork. Assistant principals have also been called upon to share in the principal's leadership responsibilities; the job was created to lighten the workload of the principal (Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014). Traditionally, however, assistant principals have usurped more of the management responsibilities as opposed to those pertaining to curriculum and instruction (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Hulpia et al, 2011; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Petrides et al., 2014). In recent years, however, accountability pressures have pushed instructional leadership to the forefront and assistant principals are now being asked to share in instructional leadership with the principal. Since they are often allotted multiple assistant principals, some secondary principals have even gone so far as to appoint an assistant principal whose primary role is to help carry the instructional leadership load.

The advent of this new position adds another dimension to the distributed landscape. Much of the research on distributed leadership focuses on the relationships between formal and informal leaders (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; MacBeath, 2005; Spillane et al., 2007) and even when dynamics of formal leaders

are discussed, the focus is on the relationship between the principal and formal teacher leaders (department heads, instructional coaches, etc.) (Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2010; Klar, 2011; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007). In addition to being teacher focused, much of the empirical literature on distributed leadership is either geared toward elementary or high school (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2011; Klar, 2012; Mayrowetz, Murphy, Seashore Louis, & Smylie, 2007). This is important because leadership is influenced by context (Klar & Brewer, 2013; Heck & Moriyama, 2010) and what works at one level may not be effective at another. Few studies are focused on the implementation of a distributed leadership model for instructional leadership in middle school (Angelle, 2010; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Seashore Louis, 2009). Fewer still examine assistant principal involvement in distributed instructional leadership practices in any capacity or at any level – elementary, middle, or high school (Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to examine the role of instructional assistant principals in middle schools in a large urban school district. The role of the principal as an instructional leader has been well defined (Aladjem et al., 2010; CCSSO, 2008; Gulcan, 2012; Hallinger, 2003; Herman et al., 2008; IEL, 2000; Leithwood et al., 2008; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009; Portin et al., 2009); however, the role of the assistant principal as an instructional leader has not been examined in depth (Cranston et al, 2004; Glanz, 1994; Hausman et al, 2002; Kwan & Walker, 2012; NASSP, 1991; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Marshall, 1992; Mertz, 2006; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993), especially at the middle school level (Angelle, 2010; Murphy et al., 2009; Klar & Brewer,

2013) and a model of instructional leadership including both has not been presented. In addition, the role of the niche "instructional" assistant principal is one that has recently taken shape and bears study, particularly in the distributed leadership context. This study aims to do just that.

Research Questions

This study explores the instructional role of the assistant principal in middle school in a large urban district. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What is the nature and function of the assistant principal engaging in instructional leadership?

    a. What are the formal and informal responsibilities that support this role?

2. How does the instructional role of the assistant principal interact with the instructional responsibilities of the principal?

3. How does the instructional role of an assistant principal influence the broader vision of instructional leadership in the school?

Through the use of a qualitative multiple case study design I will use interview, observation, and document analysis to examine the distributed instructional leadership role of assistant principals in three middle schools in a large urban school district. The purpose is to gain an understanding of the increasing role of the instructional assistant principal in this context and contribute to the literature on both distributed instructional leadership and assistant principals.

Background and Role of Researcher

This topic is important to me because of my role as a middle school assistant principal. I have been an administrator for nine years, four as an elementary school counselor who worked alongside the principal with no assistant principal and five years as an assistant principal who served with three other assistant principals and the principal. I served under two principals at the middle school level. I was hired by the first in order to allow another assistant principal to assume the role of instructional assistant principal. During that time, I performed very few instructional leadership functions. I evaluated teachers but that was about it, it was the same for all of the "non-instructional" assistant principals. After two years, that principal left and the instructional assistant principal became the principal. Although she hired another instructional assistant principal, my role as an instructional leader increased. My primary instructional leadership function was still teacher evaluation, but I was also responsible for doing walkthroughs and coaching teachers in a way that I had not been before. I was also included in planning in a way that I had not experienced. Although it was difficult to effectively be a part of the distributed instructional leadership landscape with my responsibilities as a disciplinarian, I was pleased to be considered an instructional leader and this experience changed my perspective on what an assistant principal could be.

Assumptions of the Study

The following are assumptions that were made in this study:

1. The participants understood and answered the questions honestly to the best of their ability.

2. The participants answered the questions based on their personal experiences and perspectives. Any contradictory information is based on differences in experience and perspective.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were as follows:

1. This study was delimited to middle school assistant principals whose primary responsibility is instructional leadership, which created a small boundary for participant selection.

2. The participants in this study were selected using purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. So once the assistant principals were identified, they identified the principal and teacher leaders who were interviewed.

Limitations

The limitations of this study were as follows:

1. The sample may not represent the entire population and the perspectives presented may represent bias of the participants and thus not be attributed to the entire population.

2. This study was limited to the information collected by the researcher. The research was limited by access provided by participants.

Definition of Terms

Instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is learning focused leadership. It is leadership that "increases the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional capacity" (Heck & Hallinger, 2014, p. 658).

Distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is the convergence of leaders, followers, and the situation to create concertive leadership action. While it includes task distribution it goes beyond delegation to provide a holistic perspective on the enactment of leadership actions spread across multiple leaders in the same context (Gronn, 2000; Spillane 2001).

Distributed instructional leadership. Distributed instructional leadership is instructional leadership activity that is spread across multiple leaders.

Assistant principal. An assistant principal is a school administrator who has completed a degree program in principalship and who has passed national and state certification exams who is currently serving as a subordinate to the school principal.

Instructional assistant principal. An instructional assistant principal is an assistant principal whose main responsibility is instructional leadership as opposed to student discipline.

Goal clarity coach. A certified teacher who does not teach classes but is present to provide instructional support through data analysis, professional development, teacher coaching, planning, and working collaboratively with school and district personnel to improve the instructional program.

Resource teacher. A certified teacher who does not teach classes but is present to provide instructional support in area of expertise (English, History, Math, Science). Provides training and feedback to teachers and assists works as a liaison between classroom teachers and the administration to organize systems to improve instruction in their assigned area.

Middle school. A middle school is a school that serves students grades six through eight.

Summary

This chapter explained how increased measures of accountability have influenced the focus and scope of school leadership. Since instructional leadership is so crucial to increasing positive student outcomes, it is imperative that school leaders focus on leadership that increases teachers' capacity to teach. This focus, in conjunction with accountability measures and the vast array of responsibilities attributed to principals, has given rise to a distributed perspective for school leadership. Principals are increasingly sharing instructional leadership with school staff. In spite of this, there is a dearth of research on the distribution of instructional leadership amongst principals and assistant principals. This study aims to examine the role of assistant principals who have been assigned instructional leadership duties in the distributed landscape of their school. Chapter Two includes a review of the literature on instructional leadership and distributed leadership as well as the role of the assistant principal in distributed instructional leadership. The conceptual framework for this study is also included. Chapter Three outlines the methodology behind this study including research questions, research design, and setting as well as information on the sample, data sources, procedures, data collection, and analysis.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

For decades, research in education has been focused on the link between effective

school leadership and positive student outcomes. Time and time again, effective

principals have been found to significantly impact school effectiveness and student

learning. School leadership is crucial to achieving positive student learning outcomes,

second only to curriculum and classroom teaching (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Dwyer et al.,

1985; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood, Harris, &

Hopkins, 2008; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009; Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman,

Russell, Samuelson, & Yeh, 2009; Smith & Andrews, 1989). What makes leadership so

effective, however, is its influence on curriculum and instruction (Aladajem, Birman

Orland, Harr-Robins, Heredia, Parrish, & Ruffini, 2010; Heck & Hallinger, 2014;

Herman, 2008, 2012; Portin et al., 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Instructional

leadership is the crux of student achievement and is critical to producing positive student

outcomes.

Instructional leadership is leadership that influences the instructional capacity of

school staff (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). It includes a wide array of leadership actions that

support creating and promoting a mission and vision, managing and monitoring the

instructional environment, and promoting a positive learning climate (Hallinger, 2011).

Although it is of utmost importance, instructional leadership only makes up a portion of a

principal's responsibility. In addition to instructional leadership, principals are also responsible for a litany of other things including but not limited to the day-to-day management of the school, accountability measures, and their obligations to the district and community (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The relationship of these responsibilities to school accountability is an especially stressful one considering that its results can influence the principal's continued ability to lead his or her school (Lashway, 2004; NEA, 2002). This pressure coupled with the increase in responsibility has forced principals to view instructional leadership differently. It is virtually impossible for a principal to manage this increased workload in addition to their traditional roles and responsibilities alone. As a result many principals are using a distributed model in order to more effectively implement instructional leadership (Elmore, 1999; Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2013; Lashway, 2003; Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, & Yashkina, 2007; Klar, 2011; Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003; Spillane, & Healey, 2010).

Distributed leadership is the process of stretching leadership across two or more leaders (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). With a distributed model of instructional leadership principals can combine their skills with the expertise of other staff to accomplish leadership tasks. There are a plethora of individuals in a school who are capable of working interdependently with the principal to accomplish instructional leadership functions. In fact, research has found that a small group of individuals working together as a leadership team can produce more positive student outcomes than either the principal alone or a large group of individuals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998). Although much of the distributed leadership literature is focused on teacher leaders, assistant

principals are also included on these teams (Angelle, 2010; Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007). Teacher leaders are important but assistant principals are able to perform functions that teacher leaders cannot. In spite of this fact, there is a dearth of research on assistant principals' role in distributed instructional leadership.

This literature review will examine the research on instructional leadership and will use its most common definition to highlight what actions constitute instructional leadership. It will also expound on the distributed leadership literature and outline the common framework that this study will use as a lens through which to view how instructional leadership is enacted in a school setting. The role of the assistant principal in distributed leadership for instructional improvement will also be discussed.

Defining Instructional Leadership

The concept of instructional leadership has been fraught with dissention. For several decades researchers and practitioners have used the term but it continues to mean different things to different people (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008; Terosky, 2013). Since its inception it has evolved from a list of characteristics that describe the principal to a coordinated series of tasks that can be accomplished by multiple leaders (Hallinger, 2011; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Neumerski, 2012). In this section I discuss the first and second waves of instructional leadership literature as well as provide a definition of instructional leadership to guide this study.

First Wave of Instructional Leadership

The term instructional leadership coined by Ronald Edmonds (1979) is rooted in the Effective Schools Movement. Based on his research and that of colleagues

(Brookover & Lezotte, 1977; Edmonds & Fredrickson, 1978; Madden, Lawson, & Sweet, 1976; Weber, 1971) he argued that principals in effective schools were more likely to be instructionally focused than their less successful counterparts. They were intimately involved with curriculum, teaching, and in monitoring student progress (Neumerski, 2012). They were assertive in these actions as opposed to collegial and took personal responsibility for evaluating achievements. Tyack and Hansot (1982) defined an instructional leader as "a principal teacher…and mobilizer, departing from the tradition in American public education of separating management from practice and administration from teaching" (p. 256). Effective principals embraced being instructionally focused as a mission and passionately conveyed this mission to their stakeholders (Edmonds, 1982; Lezotte, 1991). Instructional leaders were authoritative and took the term "leader" to literally mean he/she who leads. Decisions were made at the top and dispensed down amongst the staff. This description was not prescriptive but it did provide interested parties with a framework to begin applying these tenets of instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership and effective schools. The education community immediately latched on to the Effective Schools model of instructional leadership and began finding ways to incorporate it for school improvement. Research from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) connected instructional leadership to learning expectancy and student achievement (Carter & Klotz, 1990). Principals who expected students to learn produced greater student outcomes. Others (Mendez-Morse, 1991) linked learning expectancy to vision and instructional leadership to several actions that principals could use to increase student outcomes (support instructional methods,

allocate resources, frequent instructional observations, instructional based

communication, and focus on instructional improvement) (Mendez-Morse, 1991).

Bamburg and Andrews (1990) examined the relationship between instructional

leadership, school goals, and student achievement. They described the principal as a

resource provider, an instructional resource, a communicator, and a visible presence.

Using survey data from school staff at 32 schools and student achievement scores from

the local annual assessment from over 1700 students, they concluded that effective

schools maintained a goal "all students can learn." In addition to this goal, effective

schools had principals who were both managers and instructional leaders. Unfortunately,

Bamburg and Andrews (1990) neither defined nor described instructional leadership

beyond creating and communicating a mission/vision, managing resources, and managing

oneself so that the previous could be achieved. They concluded with a call for

administrator preparation programs and professional development that trained principals

to be instructional leaders as well as to recognize the importance of instructional

leadership.

Further, early instructional leadership conceptualization was very principal-

centered. Research was based on failing elementary schools that required turnarounds and

this context birthed a brand of instructional leader that was directive, authoritative, and

appeared as a lone hero to save the school in crisis (Hallinger 2005; Murphy, 1988;

Murphy, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1983; Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983). Proponents of

Effective Schools continued to make a case for principals who led instruction with a

direct hands-on approach even though Edmonds (1982) admitted that researchers of

effective schools had not yet established a causal relationship between instructional

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leadership and school effectiveness. There was no proof that an instructional leader produced an effective school as opposed to the effective school producing an instructional leader. This and other factors inspired criticism.

Criticism of effective schools instructional leadership. Although the Effective Schools definition of instructional leadership was embraced by school districts and other lay educators, the reception from academia was lukewarm at best. Researchers supported the fact that schools could influence instructional outcomes but found conceptual and methodological problems with the use of the Effective Schools research to define instructional leadership (Duke, 1982, Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Not only did they reiterate Edmonds (1982) concern about causality, they also found issues with method (limited research base, lack of causal determination, poor research design, and no generalizability), measurement (definition, specification, and assessment), and concept (lack of context specific factors and misunderstanding of leadership. (Duke, 1982, Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983). The Effective Schools definitions of instructional leadership were often based on personality traits and did not account for situations, interactions of behaviors, or intent. They also ignored "environmental and organizational influences" (Murphy, 1988, p.124) including context, structure, size, level, technical clarity and complexity, and staff composition. Of these variables, school size and level (elementary vs. high) were of significance. There had been more research on instructional leadership behaviors in elementary schools than in secondary schools and oftentimes these behaviors were not transferrable to other levels (Duke 1982; Ginsberg, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1988; Murphy,

Hallinger, & Mitman, 1983). School size was relevant because it affected the percentage of direct versus indirect actions of the principal and depending on the type of research performed indirect instructional leadership behaviors were perceived as management actions and discounted.

In addition, the Effective Schools definition also had some practical flaws. Besides being called weak and based on flawed and narrow research (Ginsberg, 1988), this definition also created a misconception of instructional leadership. Behaviors considered instructionally based were completely separate from managerial behaviors. Instructional leaders were encouraged to spend large amounts of time choosing curriculum, doing classroom observations, and memorizing the reading levels of individual students to become instructional leaders making less time to tend to their "non-instructional" responsibilities. Hallinger and Murphy (1996) condemned this trend because while these actions were acceptable as instructional leadership behaviors, so were creating systems, aligning structures with the school mission, managing resources and other indirect actions (Hallinger & Murphy, 1996). Even if behaviors were not directly related to teaching and learning they could still be related to instructional leadership; management and instruction were not dichotomous but interconnected.

Early research on instructional leadership. Although researchers found multiple issues with the Effective Schools research, they still used its definition as a starting point for their frameworks of instructional leadership. Duke (1982) refused to use the term instructional leadership due to the controversy surrounding its definition. What he referred to as, "leadership functions associated with instructional effectiveness" were linked to teacher and school effectiveness research but in contrast to the early research he

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described these functions as context specific, mutualistic, and learned, not inherent (p.2). Principals' instructional leadership techniques were based on their environment. The principal and the environment both held an influence over each other and he described this influence in two ways, direct – interactions with stakeholders and indirect – creating systems that encourage instructional leadership. These leadership actions required a variety of learned skills and behaviors as opposed to natural prowess. Duke (1982) also outlined a framework for how to identify instructional leadership. He listed six factors for instructional effectiveness (competent teachers, adequate time for instruction, orderly environment, adequate resources, communication of high expectations, and continuous progress monitoring) and six ways that principals could address these factors. These actions were either direct (staff development, instructional support, resource acquisition and allocation, and quality control) or indirect (coordinating and trouble- shooting). This is where his framework ended because he argued that instructional effectiveness was based firmly in context. There was "no single leadership skill or set of skills…presumed to be appropriate for all schools or all instructional situations" (p.2).

Context was also a major factor for Dwyer (1984; 1985) who defined an instructional leader as one who created "schools where the climate is safe and orderly, where basic skills are emphasized, and where the instructional program is tied closely to monitored objectives" (p.4). After spending years shadowing multiple principals and interviewing them and their stakeholders he discovered that the actions of these instructionally focused principals fell into nine categories: (a) Goal Setting & Planning, (b) Monitoring, (c) Evaluating, (d) Communicating, (e) Scheduling, Allocating Resources, & Organizing, (f) Staffing, (g)Modeling, (h) Governing, and (i) Filling In.

The principals completed these tasks in order to maintain work structure, staff relations, student relations, safety and order, plant and equipment, community relations, institutional relations, and institutional ethos (p.10). While these common tasks/routines of the principals were important, Dwyer (1984; 1985) like Duke (1982) made sure to highlight that no two instructional leaders were just alike. He also made clear that in addition to routines/actions, context and personal beliefs were inseparable from instructional leadership. Due to this fact he did not go beyond task categories and describe specific actions.

Even with the absence of specific leadership actions, researchers came to some common conclusions.

1. Instructional leadership needed a more precise definition that included observable and measurable actions – definitions of instructional leadership were inadequate and often the research methods behind them were not sound (Duke 1982; Dwyer, 1984; Dwyer, 1985; Ginsberg, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy 1987; Ginsberg, 1988; Murphy, 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983).

2. Instructional leadership needed to be researched more extensively with more sound methods – research on instructional leadership was riddled with conceptual, measurement, and methodological problems. These issues needed to be addressed in order to move forward (Duke 1982; Ginsberg, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy 1987; Murphy, 1988; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983).

3. Instructional leadership was context specific – leadership actions were dependent on the beliefs, routines, and placement of the principal. Different actions were effective at schools of different levels, sizes, and socioeconomic statuses (Duke 1982; Ellis, 1986; Ginsberg, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Heck, 1992; Murphy, 1988).

4. Instructional leadership encompassed both direct and indirect actions – traditional observable leadership actions like teacher evaluation were not completely representative of instructional leadership. Development of policies and procedures in addition to management activities (resource allocation, staffing, student attendance, etc.) were important to instructional leadership (Duke 1982; Dwyer, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Heck, 1992; Murphy, 1988). This should be reflected in the definition.

In sum, the first wave of literature on instructional leadership depicts a list of personality traits and general descriptions to a broad spectrum of activities. As the conceptualization of instructional leadership expanded, the commonalities above emerged and it became apparent that early definitions underestimated the work of instructional leadership (Murphy, 1988). The inclusion of indirect leadership behaviors significantly expanded the role of the principal, making it so broad that the idea of the principal as the sole instruction leader began to fade into the background. Principals were not providing instructional leadership in isolation. While the principal might be the impetus behind the instructional leadership model implemented in his/her school, the actions within that model could be completed by someone other than the principal (Daresh, 1991; Duke, 1982; Ginsberg, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Murphy, 1988).

Through an awareness of personal beliefs, an understanding of how organizations

worked, sensitivity to alternative perspectives, consistency, the ability to understand

people, and by understanding that instructional leadership is a continuous process, a

principal could weave a fabric of leadership behaviors. The process of implementing

these instructional leadership actions was proactive and the responsibility of the entire

school community not only the principal. Several researchers went so far as to say that

instructional leadership as it had been previously been conceptualized was to be left in

the 1980s and that new leadership models should be based on the leader as a facilitator or

collaborator (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Daresh, 1991; Hallinger, 1992; Lane, 1991;

Leithwood, 1992). The next section outlines this next wave of instructional leadership

literature.

Second Wave of Instructional Leadership

As research progressed, the original top down paradigm of instructional

leadership was found to be flawed. According to Lambert (2002) "We no longer believe

that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for the entire school without

substantial participation of other educators" (p.37). Hallinger (2000) shifted the focus of

instructional leadership from an iconic principal figure who managed his school on his

own, to a leader who shared leadership with staff and distributed responsibilities for

instructional improvement. Hallinger's framework and the corresponding assessment tool

(the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale) eventually became the dominant

source for a definition of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger, Wang, &

Chen, 2013; Neumerski, 2013). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) went beyond the broad

categories and observations of the first wave to develop an action-oriented framework of

instructional leadership. Although the original framework was focused on the principal it was amended (Hallinger, 2000) to expand potential for shared leadership. For this study, I will use this framework to outline the second wave of instructional leadership literature.

Instructional leadership framework. Hallinger (2011) identified three dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school mission and vision, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate program. These dimensions were separated into ten instructional leadership functions that combined to present a comprehensive picture of what instructional leadership entailed.

Defining the school mission and vision. One of the most important factors in motivating a staff to change is a common purpose (Leithwood et al., 2008). An instructional leader must be able to rally his or her staff around a common goal of student success. A shared mission and vision set an expectation for all those involved in the school; teachers, parents, and students alike. If the staff believes all students will learn at high levels then they will be more likely to work towards ensuring this success takes place. Although it is not the sole responsibility of the principal to develop this mission, the instructional leader is responsible for taking an instructionally focused vision and making it a pervasive part of the school's culture (Gulcan, 2012; Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger (2003) included two functions under the mission and vision dimension, *framing school goals* and *communicating school goals*. In *framing school goals*, the principal facilitates the selection of specific goals for student achievement and the objectives by which these goals will be reached. It is important for the goals to be data driven, specific, and measureable so that school staff can focus its energy and not be spread in too many directions. Objectives should also include information on who is responsible for each

task. *Communicating school goals* can be accomplished using both formal and informal methods. The principal can post them on the school website, print them on t-shirts, and repeat them on the school announcements. S/he can also use conversations to familiarize staff, parents, and students with the school goals. Defining the school mission and vision are tangible ways to align the goals of all stakeholders and keeps school improvement on the right track.

    Managing the instructional program. This dimension is comprised of three elements: *coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, and supervising and evaluating instruction* (Hallinger, 2003, p. 4). These three functions require a depth of instructional involvement not required in the other dimensions. *Coordinating curriculum* is synonymous with curricular alignment (Hallinger, 2000). Effective instructional leaders ensure the curriculum taught in their schools is aligned with district standards and assessments (Herman et al., 2008). Most school leaders are not equipped with a comprehensive knowledge of curriculum but they are able to ensure that the curriculum is aligned through the use of shared leadership. By fostering leadership abilities in teachers who know the curriculum they can help ensure that it is properly aligned (Leithwood et al., 2008). *Monitoring student progress* helps instructional leaders keep track of the needs of students. Effective principals require teachers to use formative assessment to monitor student progress. They also analyze school level data for gaps in knowledge and use this information to set goals. They recognize that student achievement is an indicator of successful instruction and use student data to improve instruction (Herman et al., 2008; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009). Last*, supervising and evaluating instruction* allows a principal to effectively ensure that common school goals are translated into the

classroom. "Instructional leadership involves principals observing and understanding classroom teaching and learning" (Aladjem et al., 2010, p.2). An instructional leader provides support to teachers through formal and informal observations that include specific feedback related to instructional behaviors. Through managing the instructional program the principal not only remains abreast of curricular matters but also is able to ensure that classroom instruction is aligned to the needs of the school.

     Developing the school learning climate program. The third dimension, developing the school learning climate program includes five functions: *protect instructional time, promote professional development, maintain high visibility, provide teacher incentives, and provide incentives for learning* (Hallinger 2011, p. 223-224). Each of these functions is important for a school leader when establishing a positive learning climate. This dimension requires a mix of direct and indirect actions that foster an environment of high expectations amongst both staff and students (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1992, 2003). *Protecting instructional time and maintain high visibility* highlight the responsibility of the principal to ensure that teachers are afforded an uninterrupted period of time to teach. Minimizing interruptions in the classroom by way of announcements, phone calls, or student behavior are important steps toward increasing instructional effectiveness. It also is important for staff and students to see and interact with their principal (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Instructional leaders also *promote professional development*. This includes encouraging teachers to attend pertinent professional development, planning professional development that is aligned with school goals, encouraging teachers to seek help with their weaknesses, and using teachers to motivate others with their strengths. It is also important to assist the teachers with

applying the new knowledge from their professional development to their future practice (Hallinger, 1985). Finally, it is important for instructional leaders to *provide teacher incentives and provide incentives for learning.* Principals make it clear through mission, vision, and actions that the school is a place of learning. They prioritize instruction and hold the same expectation for their staff and students (Terosky, 2013). The principal's most powerful influence on teaching and learning is through motivating staff and producing within them a sense of efficacy; also through creating working conditions conducive to teaching (Leithwood et al., 2008).This can be achieved by rewarding teachers and students for behaviors that contribute to instructional effectiveness. The learning climate of the school affects the performance of all stakeholders and the leader carries the burden of ensuring that this climate is healthy. This is a monumental task for just one individual, especially when considering all of his or her other responsibilities. Sharing this and other components of instructional leadership could not only improve principal effectiveness but also school climate.

Summary

The concept of instructional leadership has evolved from a personality trait of the principal to a series of leadership actions; "It is better to view leadership as a set of support functions that need to be performed rather than as an aspect of the role of the principalship" (Murphy, 1988, p.128). There have been many different definitions, each one reflective of the perspective of the researcher but for the purpose of this study, instructional leadership is defined as leadership that "increases the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional capacity" (Heck & Hallinger, 2014, p. 658). This definition coincides with Hallinger's (2011) instructional leadership framework and

includes both direct and indirect leadership actions. Indirect actions of school principals have a greater effect on student achievement than direct (Brewer, 1993; Hallinger, 2005; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Therefore, it is important that a model of instructional leadership includes behaviors that may have been previously mistaken as management in addition to those that have traditionally been classified as instructional leadership. Creating structures, developing a shared mission and vision, coordinating curriculum, building culture, and fostering an environment of continuous staff development (Heck & Hallinger, 2014) have all been found to increase student outcomes on the part of the principal and should not be neglected as "management" in favor of classroom observations. Each of these leadership functions is important for school success but because of the sheer volume of activities in addition to a principal's other responsibilities (accountability measures, paperwork, district responsibilities, etc.), it is impossible for a principal to carry the full load of instructional leadership alone (Elmore, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2007; Marzano, 2003; Spillane et al., 2003).

In the second wave of instructional leadership research, scholars recognized that not only was it impossible for a principal to lead in isolation but there were also aspects of leadership that could not be completely addressed through the current frameworks. For example, there had been extensive research on what behaviors constituted instructional leadership but information on how to best enact these behaviors was missing. This gap, coupled with the change in mindset from principal as sole leader to shared leadership, opened the door for the concept of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2006; Hallinger, 2005; Lashway, 2003; Spillane et al., 2001).

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is the "co-performance of leadership and the reciprocal interdependencies that shape leadership practice" (Spillane, 2006, p.58). It involves both formal and informal leaders and includes authentic interaction and interdependence as opposed to mere delegation of responsibility (Harris, 2013). It includes both task distribution and a process of distributed influence and provides a framework to view the ways in which leadership functions are performed (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Mayrowetz, 2008; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2015). Like instructional leadership, distributed leadership has been the subject of much debate and researchers (Bennett et al., 2003; Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2001) continue to struggle to come to a consensus on its definition.

Defining Distributed Leadership

Bennett et al. (2003) reviewed the distributed leadership literature from 1996 to 2002 using the keywords delegated, democratic, dispersed, and distributed leadership and found so many differences between approaches that they declined to consolidate them into a definition but chose to highlight three distinctive elements of distributed leadership that were common among the literature. First, leadership was the product of concertive action as opposed to additive action (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2001). Distributed leadership was not a set of tasks delegated to individuals based on their talents, it was a group of individuals pooling their expertise to accomplish a common task; creating an impact that is far greater than the summation of individual actions. Second, distributed leadership expanded the traditional boundaries of leadership. Although most literature on

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distributed leadership was focused on teachers as leaders there were truly no boundaries as to who could be included as a leader (Bennett et al., 2003). Last, expertise was stretched across the many and not the few. Leadership was open because there were many possible contributors within an organization and if you could find them and bring them together they would enhance the concertive action. Although these three elements were a step in the right direction, there was still no clear conceptualization of distributed leadership. Also, there was little empirical evidence to support its application.

Mayrowetz (2008) sought to open discussion about the usage of the term distributed leadership in the literature. He teased out four common themes. The first theme, theoretical lens for viewing the activity of leadership, was based on the work of Spillane et al. (2001) and Gronn (2000) and grounded in activity theory. Leadership was activity stretched over multiple people and could only be understood through looking at the larger context, tasks, materials, and social dynamics. Conceptualizing distributed leadership required researchers to shift their thinking from the principal to the action of leadership. The administrators role should not but ignored but the interaction of leadership was more important than the role of any individual. This theme was strong in theory and it only had indirect implications for school improvement but it formed the groundwork for the other themes.

The uses of distributed leadership for democracy and for efficiency and effectiveness were very similar and based on the idea that leadership was not to be placed solely in the hands of the principal but that it should be shared with a team or organization (Storey, 2004). When multiple people with different sources of expertise worked together to solve a problem, this was distributed leadership (Elmore, 2003).

There were, however, critics of these methods who said that democratic methods could increase the work load of teachers and cause undue stress (Conway & Calzi, 1996; Smylie, 1994; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). There were even proponents of democratic methods who found that that too many individuals involved in leadership were associated with lower levels of student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998).

Distributed leadership being used as human capacity building was the fourth and final use. Its major tenet was that having more educators engaged in leadership would encourage those educators to learn more about themselves and the issues facing the school. The purpose was to increase the capacity of individuals, thereby multiplying the capacity of the organization, and in turn boost school improvement (Harris, 2006). This initiative did constitute growth in the area of leadership development but not enough to be a catalyst for school improvement (Copeland, 2003).

Tian et al. (2015) conducted their meta-analysis to determine if current literature on distributed leadership addressed the lack of a common definition and the absence of empirical data on application of distributed leadership. They found that in most cases leadership was already distributed and researchers were concerned with defining the concept but a consensus as to a definition had still not been reached. This lack of a common definition had a negative impact on empirical research regarding the practical application of distributed leadership. Tian et al. (2015) concluded that while the knowledge base had grown it was still unable to satisfactorily fill the gaps identified by the Bennett et al. (2003) analysis.

It is evident that even after decades of research there continue to be misconceptions and widely dispersed beliefs about the definition of distributed

leadership. Within the inconsistencies there are some commonalities. One thing that has been consistent, is that much of the research on distributed leadership is grounded in the tenets identified by Gronn (2002) and Spillane et al. (2001): "additive" or "person plus" (Gronn, 2002) and "holistic" or "practice aspect" (Gronn, 2002; Spillane et al., 2001).

Tenets of Distributed Leadership

The first tenet of distributed leadership is that it is additive. The additive nature of distributed leadership describes the appointment of leadership tasks to different individuals and to everyone having their turn as a leader. There is no assumption of hierarchy within the leadership behaviors and no one individual plays a more important role than another (Bennett et al., 2003; Gronn, 2002); all activities are equal. Although the leadership activities may be carried out separately they come together to achieve a common goal; everyone does their part and fills in their piece of the puzzle. This tenet forms the loose theoretical basis of many practitioner approaches to distributed leadership that encourage leadership for all.

The tenet of person plus refers to the "consciously managed and synergistic relationships among some, many, or all sources of leadership in the organization" (Leithwood et al., 2007, p.39). Distributed leadership equates to a greater outcome than the sum of the parts (Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2013; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004) and can manifest itself through spontaneous collaboration (ad-hoc groupings), intuitive working relations (co-leaders who work closely together and depend on each other), or institutionalized practice (formal leadership team structure in an organization). In each of these formats, leadership activity is spread over multiple leaders (Spillane et al., 2001, 2004; Spillane, 2005). This

distributed activity, or leadership practice, is achieved through the interaction or synergy between leaders, followers, and the situation (Spillane, 2007).

Components of Distributed Leadership

In distributed leadership the unit of analysis is leadership practice. This practice is the interaction between leaders, followers, and situation and is demonstrated through task enactment. Practice cannot exist without all of these elements. Leadership is not an action in and of itself that is influenced by leaders, followers, and situation; it is a function of these things that does not occur in their absence. Leadership practice is not based on individual traits, skills, or perspectives; it is a product of the context of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2007).

Leaders*.* In distributed leadership the leaders are the individuals who exert influence over leadership practice. This influence can be distributed in three ways, collaborated distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution (Spillane et al., 2004; Spillane & Diamond 2007). When leadership is collaborated, two or more leaders work together in the same space on the same thing. Collective distribution describes the interdependency of two or more leaders working separately, for example, assistant principals and principals working together through separate formative evaluations to collectively produce teachers' summative evaluations. Coordinated distribution outlines a sequence of leadership routines that require the completion of one task to proceed with the next. This was illustrated as school staff using assessment data to inform instruction. Tests must be distributed, proctored, and scored prior to disaggregation of data. After that it must be organized, analyzed, and processed before goals are set. In order to set and pursue goals, the previous steps must be accomplished.

This is achieved through a process of coordinated distribution (Spillane et al., 2004; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Followers. Leaders cannot exist without followers. Leadership is influence and followers have to allow themselves to be influenced. Spillane and Diamond (2007) caution those who define followership in passive terms because of the multidirectional nature of the relationship. In a distributed framework the roles may change and at times the leader becomes the follower and the follower becomes the leader (Spillane et al., 2004). Influence flows both ways and often times the legitimacy of a leader is based on the impression of the followers. "Followers are a defining element of leadership practice; in interaction with leaders and aspects of the situation, followers contribute to defining leadership practice" (Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Situation. The concept of situation brings context to the forefront of distributed leadership. Just like instructional leadership, distributed leadership is a product of the circumstances of the school. Situation is influential in the actions of leaders and their effect on followers (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). The size, type, purpose, and environment of the school do not only affect leadership, they constitute it. Thus, distributed leadership cannot be separated from situation. Situation is made up of structure, tools, and routines. Structure is the "rules and resources that provide the medium and outcome of social action within a system" (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 22). It encompasses the formal organization of the school (i.e. large scale organizational tasks or macro functions) and forms a basis for tools and routines. Tools and routines are artifacts of leadership practice. Tools are tangible representations of leadership practice like memos, agendas, data analysis programs, policies, and evaluation protocols. Routines are

abstract artifacts that represent the repetitive actions of leadership including vocabulary, strategies, and daily schedules (micro tasks) that are stretched across organizations (Spillane et al., 2001; Spillane, 2005). Tools and routines can either facilitate or extinguish leadership and a focus on their enactment can provide insight on the distributed practice in an organization.

Summary

Distributed leadership provides researchers with a framework to analyze the enactment of leadership practice in a school environment (Spillane et al., 2007). Although the principal is the leader in name, they cannot and do not perform leadership functions in isolation. Distributed leadership is a framework through which we view the current instructional leadership function in schools.

Evolving Nature of Distributed Leadership

In response to the move away from principal focused leadership, much of the distributed leadership literature is focused on the roles that teachers and other non-traditional leaders play (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Spillane et al., 2007). Although formal leaders continue to hold an important place in the distributed leadership paradigm many researchers have opted to focus on the interactions between formal and informal leaders as opposed to the interaction amongst formal leaders (Leithwood et al., 2007). Even when leadership of formal leaders is examined, teacher leaders (department heads, resource teachers, etc.) still become the focus (Angelle, 2010; Klar, 2011; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007); especially when discussing instructional leadership (Hulpia et al., 2011). Rarely is there discussion of the relationship between the principal and the assistant principal and the assistant principal's role in distributed

leadership. This is an important gap because by virtue of their certification, assistant principals appear to be well suited to share instructional leadership with the principal. Instead, assistant principals appear on the periphery of the distributed landscape, particularly in regards to instructional leadership functions.

Assistant Principals in the Distributed Leadership Literature

Although distributed leadership is focused on leadership functions as opposed to individuals (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2001) the principal remains an important actor by virtue of their being the sanctioned leader of the school. Assistant principals appear in the literature but more often as ancillary players than as legitimate leaders (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Hulpia et al., 2011; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012).

Hulpia, Devos, and Van Keer (2011) examined the influence of distributed leadership on teachers' organizational commitment. They defined distributed leadership as "the degree to which leadership functions are distributed among formal leadership positions in the leadership team" (p. 40). Based on teacher report, most support (78%) and supervision (84%) from the leadership team was provided by the principal but in 70 percent of cases this support was provided by the assistant principal. In 64 percent of cases, supervision was provided by the assistant principal. Support was measured by scales intended to monitor the strength of vision, supportive behavior, and providing instructional support and intellectual stimulation. Supervision was measured based on multiple theories of supervising and monitoring teachers (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Hallinger, 2003; Southworth, 2002). The authors concluded that while support was more of a distributed function, supervision was more centralized to the principal.

Leithwood and Mascall (2008) examined patterns of distributed leadership and how they were related to student outcomes. They found that based on a scale of none (1) to very great (6) teachers perceived principals (5.30) and district administrators (5.28) as having the most influence on school decisions; building level administrators not including the principal – assistant principals – came in third (4.75) and teachers with formal leadership roles fourth (4.43). This was different than the result of an earlier study (Leithwood & Jantzi 1998) that rated leadership influence within schools based on sources of influence. In this study assistant principals were ranked fourth behind principals, individual teachers, and teacher committees. Further, Leithwood and Mascall (2008) argued that the inclusion of leaders beyond principals and teachers may have a negative influence on student engagement. This finding was not a criticism of assistant principals being involved in leadership it was meant to illuminate the fact that too many leaders could prove ineffectual and that the influence over instruction that was given to teachers was more significant than what was shared with assistant principals.

Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007) explored the principal's workday from a distributed perspective. Using principal self-report, they calculated the percentage of the day that principals either lead, co-lead, or turned over leadership in activities related to administration or curriculum and instruction. Then, they asked the principals to report whom they were sharing leadership with. Principals were more likely to share leadership of activities related to curriculum and instruction with classroom teachers than with any other leaders including assistant principals. Management-type tasks were more often shared with the assistant principal.

Although assistant principals receive the same education as principals, there appears to be a lack of confidence in their ability to accomplish instructional leadership functions. In order for assistant principals to be true partners in the distribution of instructional leadership, the principal must allow them to be a part of curricular and instructional functions in addition to managerial functions. However, in spite of having limited access, assistant principals still see themselves as instructional leaders and feel that they should be doing work that supports this mission (Petrides, Jimes, and Karaglani (2014). The next section highlights the research on assistant principals as instructional leaders.

Assistant Principals as Instructional Leaders

Given the limited work on assistant principals, the literature reviewed included global perspectives to help explore this area of inquiry. Cranston, Tromans, and Reugebrink (2004) examined the actual role versus the ideal role of the assistant principal in Queensland Australia. The participants indicated that the majority (84%) spent a great deal of time on "student issues." More than half of the participants also spent a great deal of time on management/administration, operational matters, and staffing issues. Only a few spent a great deal of time with parent/community issues, educational leadership, and strategic leadership. Most participants would have preferred to spend a great deal of time on educational and strategic leadership but were unable to because of student issues. While teachers are sharing in the work of curriculum and instruction, assistant principals are consumed with student discipline and other tasks assigned by the principal.

Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, and Donaldson (2002) organized 41 roles of assistant principals into seven dimensions (instructional leadership, personnel

management, interactions with the education hierarchy, professional development, resource management, public relations, and student management) and found that assistant principals in Maine spent the majority of their time on student management, including discipline and co-curricular activities. After student management, assistant principals spent their time on interactions with the education hierarchy, personnel management, public relations, professional development, resource management, and the least amount of time on instructional leadership (p. 149). Hausman et al. (2002) note that the generalizability of this study is limited due to the high achievement scores and high levels of teacher involvement in Maine but even in such an environment it bears noting that student discipline was still the most common task amongst assistant principals and instructional leadership the least.

Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) reviewed the literature on assistant principals from 1970 to 2011 and found that there was no common definition of the position other than to "perform…duties as assigned" (p.273) by the principal. This lack of role clarity was exacerbated by an expansive scope of responsibilities that ranged anywhere from seven to thirty three different duties. Oleszewski et al. (2012) separated the duties into three categories, student management, personnel management, and instructional leadership. Student management included student discipline and remained number one of the ten most common responsibilities for assistant principals throughout the 30 year span. Personnel management included human resource duties and in addition to student discipline was common amongst assistant principals in the US as well as abroad. Instructional leadership, which did not appear in the literature until the year 2000, included tasks such as teacher evaluation, professional development, and curriculum

management. This category commanded an important place in the literature because of increasing requirements in the area of educational accountability and its proven positive effect on student achievement. In spite of its importance, it was also the area where assistant principals spent the least amount of time. Assistant principals rarely had time to participate in instructional leadership and those that did were often specifically tasked with instructional leadership and relieved of duties unrelated to this niche (Oleszewski et al., 2012).

Kwan (2009) classified the role of the assistant principal into seven dimensions and organized them based on perceived degree of importance and extent of engagement. Assistant principals in Hong Kong were spending what they felt was an appropriate amount of time on all activities except for staff management and teaching, learning, and curriculum. They spent most of their time on staff management (staff orientations, staff recruitment, handling grievances, etc.) and they believed that this was too much time. The variable "teaching, learning, and curriculum (promoting a learning centered focus, interaction with students and parents, etc.)" was ranked fourth after staff management, strategic direction (planning), and quality assurance and accountability (program evaluation). Assistant principals in Hong Kong spent much less time dealing with student issues than did assistant principals in the US but they were still not spending that time on duties that they considered as instructional leadership tasks (Kwan & Walker, 2012).

Petrides, Jimes and Karaglani (2014) sought to conceptualize the role of the assistant principal as they took a more prominent place in instructional leadership. Using narrative capture study, the researchers analyzed anecdotes from 45 assistant principals of different ages with various years of experience. They found that while many of the

participants considered themselves instructional leaders, they had doubts about the amount of impact they had on teacher practice. They also cited operational management, pre-existing structures and practices, and teacher and principal mindsets as a hindrance to their ability to successfully function as instructional leaders. Petrides et al. (2014) called for increased support of assistant principals via professional development in order for them to develop the skills they need to be successful in this emerging role. They also encouraged principals to change their mindset and to view assistant principals as valuable members of instructional leadership teams rather than as support.

Summary

The role of the assistant principals in distributed instructional leadership is not well defined. Assistant principals appeared on the periphery of some of the limited empirical research on distributed leadership. From the perspective of principals and teachers, they were only there to perform support functions (Hulpia et al., 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane et al., 2007) just as they have traditionally done since the inception of the assistant principal role (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012). In contrast, assistant principals thought of themselves as instructional leaders but felt that their successful completion of this role was hindered by operational/management functions and by the negative attitudes and behaviors of the principal and teachers (Petrides et al., 2014). Petrides et al. (2014) encouraged principals and districts to use assistant principals as instructional leaders instead of as operational support. They called for a change in mindset, structure, and support that facilitates a more instructional role for assistant principals.

From both a teacher and principal perspective, the general mindset is that assistant principals are there to support principals and teachers by performing administrative functions. While some of these management functions are still classified as instructional leadership under the Hallinger (2000) Framework, many "leaders" overlook the assistant principal's contribution to leadership functions that are more directly related to curriculum and instruction. This perspective reflects the role that assistant principals have traditionally held as disciplinarians and policy managers (Glanz, 1994; Marshall, 1991; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993) and can impede the instructional leadership process. With distributed leadership on the horizon as a vehicle for the implementation of instructional leadership it is necessary to examine the assistant principal's role (Celikten, 2001; Cranston, Tromans, & Reugebrink, 2004; Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett; 2012; Williams, 1995). The wide range of responsibilities held and the pressing nature of these responsibilities is clearly an impediment to assistant principals as instructional leaders (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012). This is especially true for the responsibilities that relate to student discipline. Although assistant principals are included as members of the instructional leadership team, they are hampered by traditional role as disciplinarians while principals are distributing instructional leadership amongst teachers.

The literature is sparse on the successful fulfillment of instructional leadership duties by the assistant principal. It is nonexistent on those niche assistant principals whose primary focus is instructional leadership. These niche, "instructional" assistant

principals have an even less defined role than their "traditional" assistant principal counterparts. Current research about instructional leadership is focused primarily on the principal. It did not even appear in the literature for assistant principals until the year 2000 (Oleszewski et al., 2012). The literature on distributed leadership is focused on teachers with assistant principals waiting in the wings for support. By using qualitative methods to explore the role of the instructional assistant principal in the distributed context we can more clearly define the role of the assistant principal in the instructional leadership process.

<div align="center">**Conceptual Framework**</div>

This study is grounded in Hallinger's (2000) Instructional Leadership Framework and Spillane's (2007) Distributed Leadership Framework. The instructional leadership component provides a source for leadership actions while the distributed leadership framework provides a lens through which to view how leadership is spread across instructional leadership actions. In this study I will use these two frameworks to examine the role of the assistant principal in distributed instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership. Hallinger's (2011) Instructional Leadership Framework is composed of ten dimensions in three categories. Each of the three categories – defining the school mission and vision, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate program – includes a number of functions that contribute to instructional leadership. These categories have gone through multiple iterations since their creation (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) and although the titles of the categories have changed, the premise remains the same.
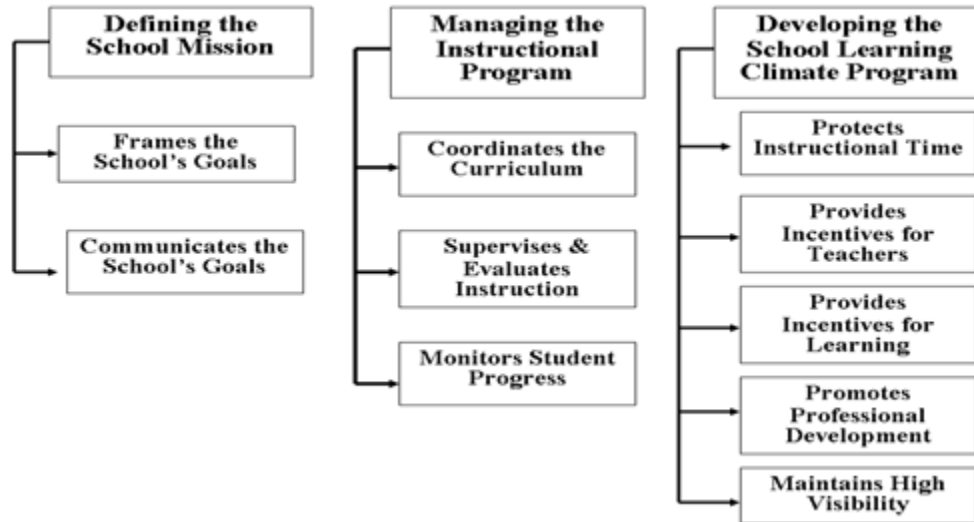
Figure 1. Hallinger's (2011) Instructional Leadership Framework.

Defining the school mission and vision highlights the responsibility of the instructional leader to develop measurable goals that are data driven (Hallinger, 2003). Defining the school's mission and vision ensures that not only do stakeholders know their current purpose but also where they are going. *Managing the instructional program* represents what several other scholars refer to as instructional leadership or supervisory behaviors (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Hulpia et al, 2010; Hulpia et al., 2011; Petrides et al., 2014). These actions call for a more hands on approach to instruction where the leaders are developing curriculum, observing lessons, and using student data to improve both the curriculum and instruction. The functions included under d*eveloping the school learning climate program* have traditionally been seen as management or operational functions (Hulpia et al., 2010; Hulpia et al., 2011; Petrides et al., 2014) but in spite of their history, these indirect instructional leadership functions are vital to ensuring instructional success. If the staff and students do not feel valued and supported, they are less likely to produce adequate instructional outcomes (Heck & Hallinger, 2010).

Distributed leadership. This study is also grounded in the practice aspect of Spillane's (2007) theory of distributed leadership. This theory provides a framework through which I will view the practice of instructional leadership. Distribution is not in and of itself a form of leadership; it is a way of viewing leadership actions (Spillane et al., 2001). Distributed leadership is focused on leaders, followers, and the situation and how they interact to perform leadership practice. In an organization, the leaders are those who carry the influence (Gronn, 2000). It is possible for an individual to be in charge and carry no influence or for someone who is not officially in charge to carry influence. In a school, the principal is both in charge and the most influential. From a distributed perspective, this influence can be spread across multiple individuals; there can be both formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders are those who carry an official title (assistant principals, counselors, resource teachers, etc.). For the purpose of this study we will be focused on a formal leader, the assistant principal. Followers are those who participate in the accomplishment of leadership activities but who are not currently in a leadership role (Spillane, 2007). It is important to note that in a distributed landscape there is a dual relationship between leaders and followers; leaders may turn into a follower at some point and vice versa, it often depends on the situation.

The situation is the context within which the leadership takes place. It is composed of three artifacts: *structure*, *routines*, and *tools* (Spillane, 2007). For the purpose of this study, *structure* represents the macrofunctions of leadership, formally recognized ways of organizing instructional systems. They can be handed down from the district or created within the school. *Routines* are microfunctions or the day to day actions that occur within organized structures. *Tools* are physical artifacts of structures and

routines (Spillane et al., 2003). For example within the Teacher Professional Growth and Evaluation system (structure), an assistant principal uses an evaluation protocol (tool) to complete a teacher observation (routine). Without these artifacts, leadership would be impossible.
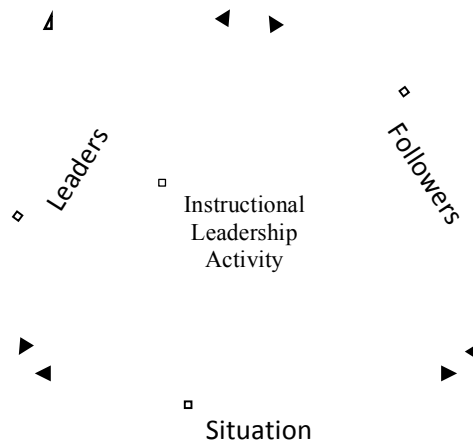
Figure 2. Adapted from Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Framework

Summary

Leadership activity is the product of the interaction between leaders, followers, and the situation (Spillane, 2007). Instructional leadership is leadership that "increases the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional capacity" (Heck & Hallinger, 2014, p. 658). Distributed instructional leadership is leadership that improves instruction though the interaction between leaders, followers, and the situation. In this study I will use the tenets of distributed leadership to examine the role of the assistant principal in instructional leadership. As illustrated in Figure 2, instructional leadership actions take the place of "activity" in the distributed framework. This allows me to view distributed practice in a specific instructional context as recommended by Spillane et al. (2001).

Using specific leadership actions also allows me to identify relevant artifacts (tools, routines, and structures) used by the actors in the distributed landscape.

Distributed Instructional Leadership

Principal

Routines   Tools

Structure

Leadership   Situation
Team
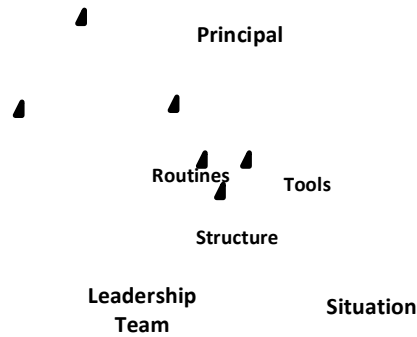
Figure 3. Adapted from Grenda, 2011

Analyzing the role of the assistant principal in defining the mission and vision, managing the instructional program, and developing the school learning climate program can add to the knowledge base on assistant principals as instructional leaders as well as expound on their role in distributed leadership.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Instructional leadership in this study is defined as leadership that "increases the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional capacity" (Heck & Hallinger, 2014, p. 658). While its effects on students may be largely indirect, leadership for learning provides a school environment that facilitates positive student outcomes (Brewer, 1993; Hallinger, 2005; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Hallinger's (2011) Framework for Instructional Leadership gives an outline of the vast array of leadership actions that must be accomplished for effective instructional leadership. The sheer volume of activities included in this framework in conjunction with the principal's additional responsibilities begs a distributed perspective where leadership is spread across multiple formal and informal leaders (Elmore, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2007; Marzano, 2003; Spillane et al., 2003). One particular formal leader, the assistant principal, who possesses the same training and certification as the principal, has been neglected in both studies of instructional and distributed leadership. This study aimed to explore the role of assistant principals in distributed instructional leadership by examining the work of assistant principals whose responsibility is primarily instructional leadership.

This chapter includes research questions, research design and setting as well as information on the sample, data sources, procedures, data collection, and analysis.

Research Questions

This study was designed to explore the emerging role of instructional assistant principals in a large urban school district. The following questions support this purpose:

1. What is the nature and function of the assistant principal engaging in instructional leadership?

    a. What are the formal and informal responsibilities that support this role?

2. How does the instructional role of the assistant principal interact with the instructional responsibilities of the principal?

3. How does the instructional role of an assistant principal influence the broader vision of instructional leadership in the school?

Research Design

To address these research questions, qualitative research methods were employed using an exploratory case study design. Yin (2014) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 16). Because of the distributed nature of instructional leadership it is impossible to separate the role of the assistant principal from their leadership context. Distributed leadership action is the product of the convergence of leaders, followers, and the situation (Spillane, 2011); in order to examine this interaction, it was necessary to interact with the actors in the instructional leadership landscape. Interviews were arranged with assistant principals, and principals, and focus groups were organized for teacher leaders. Two teacher leaders were interviewed individually because the attempts

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at having a focus group repeatedly failed. Because of their importance to the study, however, the researcher interviewed these teachers individually. Documents, including job descriptions, lists of responsibilities, and schedules of professional development, were also analyzed to better understand the role of the instructional assistant principals in the distributed landscape of their schools. One assistant principal was observed facilitating a Leadership Team meeting. The other assistant principals did not provide the researcher with the opportunity to view their leadership in action. The use of case study research allowed for an intense focus on the participants' perspectives and provided rich information that relates to the research questions (Glesne, 2011).

Research Context

Data for this study were collected from three middle schools in a large urban district in the Midwest Region of the United States. This district was chosen because of the nearly 100,000 racially and economically diverse students it serves and the increased level of accountability this provided. As the largest district in its state, WCSD serves close to 100,000 students in its 173 schools. Close to 48% of these students are White and 36% of these students are Black. Nearly nine percent are Hispanic and less than four percent are Asian. Over 65 percent of the district's students qualify for free (59.6%) or reduced (5.5%) lunch. This number is greater than the state average. The total amount of spending per student, $12,739, is also greater than the state average. Eighty-four percent of the over 6,000 teachers in WCSD hold a master's degree or higher and they have on average more than ten years of experience. WCSD failed to make adequate progress on the state assessment and is now considered a district that "Needs Improvement."

When President Obama allowed states to apply to submit their own plan for accountability in lieu of using the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the state of the district in question submitted Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) as an alternative. Although SB 1 (2009) made changes to some of the terms and to the method of score calculation, the basic premise behind the new accountability system mirrored NCLB. School and district progress was monitored based on Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) (formerly Adequate Yearly Progress or AYP), defined as significant progress toward the state designated definition of proficiency (KDE, 2012). Regardless of how this number was calculated it remained significant for schools and districts that served a large population of disadvantaged groups (English Language Learners, Free/Reduced Lunch Recipients, minorities, and Special Education Students) and increased in relevance for schools and districts that only served small numbers of these students.

In the past if a school or district failed to make progress in a subsection, they failed altogether; schools could not partially achieve AYP (Meyers, 2012; NCLB, 2002). Under the current system, schools/districts receive points for Achievement, Growth, College/Career Readiness, Graduation Rates, and Gap. The "Gap" category subsumed the diversity based subgroups of NCLB. The Gap score is calculated based on the number of proficient scores for students from a racial or ethnic minority (Black, Hispanic, Native American), who live in poverty, who receive Special Education services, and who have a limited English proficiency. In the past, school/districts were not required to report data on these diverse students unless they had a significant number. Schools that were not funded by Title I were also exempt. Under the current system, all schools and districts are held accountable; the Gap score accounts for 20- 30 percent of the AMO for every

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school and district. Failing to show progress for these students can have a substantial effect on the overall score of a school or district regardless of their Title I status (KDE, 2012). Schools and districts that had never failed accountability were now in danger of not meeting goal. Increased pressure from accountability in conjunction with the already extensive list of responsibilities for principals has been shown to pave the way for distributed leadership practices (Camburn, Rowan, and Taylor, 2003; Harris, 2013; Klar, 2011). The change in accountability measures coupled with the diverse nature of this district make it an ideal location to explore the emergence of the role of assistant principals for instruction.

Middle schools were chosen because the majority of research on assistant principals as instructional leaders is situated in elementary schools, high schools, or entire districts (Bennett et al., 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Spillane et al., 2001). The few that do highlight middle schools are focused on the empowerment of teachers as leaders rather than assistant principals (Angelle, 2010; Grenda & Hackman, 2014). Also, the common practice of "team" leadership in middle schools makes them an ideal environment to examine shared instructional leadership. Each of the middle schools discussed here served students in grades sixth through eighth at some time and reside in the Waterview City School District (WCSD). These specific middle schools were chosen because they claimed to have an assistant principal whose primary responsibility was instructional leadership. The schools are described below.

Harriet Tubman Middle School

Harriet Tubman Middle School (pseudonym) is a large school of 1,317 sixth through eighth grade students. The students at Harriet Tubman either come from the

downtown area or they apply to be in one of the special programs that serve students classified as gifted either based on IQ – students with a 24 or higher out of 28 on the Cognitive Abilities Test – or based on their prowess in the arts (band, orchestra, choral, visual, dance, or theater). Students from across the city apply to be in these extremely competitive programs. When locals hear the name of Harriet Tubman they think of these programs, many are not even aware the school is assigned regular program students based on their addresses. The two largest racial groups are White students (48.7%) and Black students (38.9%). The remaining students are Hispanic (5.4%), Asian (.04%), Two or More Races (.03%), or have classified themselves as Other (7.1%). A little over eight percent of students at Harriet Tubman receive special education services. Nearly four percent receive services for English as a Second Language (ESL). Harriet Tubman has one principal, four assistant principals, two counselors, and 61 teachers.

Harriet Tubman has maintained an excellent reputation regardless of the fact they have not made adequate progress on the state assessment in the last three years (60.4, 59.8, and 58.1). They have not reached priority status and are still considered proficient because they are ranked between the 70th and 89th percentiles in the state but they have been classified as a "Focus School." This means they either have a non-duplicated gap group score in the bottom ten percent of the state or they have an individual group of students who have significantly low scores.

Harriet Tubman uses the traditional middle school teaming method although they operate on a very complex schedule that deviates from the typical middle school schedule. There are four teams at each grade level with an average of 109 students per team and 27 students per section. This is close to the average number in a typical middle

school classroom in this district. The actual classroom counts may be very different, however, because at Harriet Tubman, students are separated based on classification – Gifted, AP, and Comprehensive – so the numbers may be different depending on the numbers in each of these groups.

Marcus Garvey Middle School

Marcus Garvey Middle School (pseudonym) is a unique middle school located inside of a high school in the Waterview City School District. At the time of this study the school only served eighth grade students. In the past, it was a typical middle school serving grades sixth through eighth but following the 2013-2014 school year the WCSD school board voted to close the school based on its poor test scores (lowest in the state). The following year, new incoming sixth graders were routed to other middle schools and the seventh and eighth graders from Marcus Garvey were moved from their building into a local high school with more space. Because the school has not accepted any new students, there are currently only eighth students attending. After the 2015-2016 school year, Marcus Garvey will close.

Currently, Marcus Garvey serves 122 students. The majority of these students are Black (66.6%). The remaining students are White (17.2%), Hispanic (15.6%), and Asian or Two or More Races (.008%). Seventeen of these students receive special education services and even though 13 students qualify for the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for English Language Learners (ELLs) Test, they have all waived their right to any services. Marcus Garvey shares a principal with the high school it is housed within. In addition to a principal, there are

thirteen teachers, two counselors, and three assistant principals (one instructional and two team) at Marcus Garvey.

Prior to being closed, Marcus Garvey had a history of not making adequate progress toward the state designated goal. For the last three school years the overall scores on the state proficiency assessment for Marcus Garvey were 32.3 (2012-2013), 29.9 (2013-2014), and 26.2 (2014-2015). The totals for the state were 54.9 (2012-2013), 55.9 (2013-2014), and 53.1 (2014-2015). Marcus Garvey scored considerably lower than most state middle schools. Last year, they had the lowest score of all middle schools in WCSD. Because of this, they are classified as a Priority School.

Marcus Garvey operates using the teaming concept typical of middle school. Groups of students are assigned to groups of teachers and the students rotate amongst the teachers daily, receiving instruction as a group. Marcus Garvey has two teams with four teachers each representing each of the core subject areas: English, Social Studies, Math, and Science. Each team has around 60 students and each class has around fifteen students. This is half the number that is typical in eighth grade in this district.

Huey P. Newton Middle School

Huey Newton Middle School (pseudonym) is a middle school that serves over 800 students in grades six through eight. Newton is large enough to hold nearly 2000 students, but because of changes in boundaries, the enrollment has rapidly decreased from 1100 in 2011 to 800 in 2016. The population consists of mostly White students (51.4%) drawn from the neighborhoods adjacent to the school and Black students (36.7%) drawn from areas to the east nearly ten miles away. The remaining students are Hispanic (7.9%), Asian (.004%), Native American (.002%), Two or More Races (.03%).

There are also those who classify themselves as Other (4.1%). Almost 18 percent of the students at Huey Newton receive special education services and 0.7% are considered to have a limited proficiency of English. These students are not receiving services for this because they have waived them. Huey Newton has one principal, four assistant principals (one instructional and three grade level), two counselors, and 53 teachers.

Huey Newton operates as a typical middle school, as students are assigned to teams and rotate in sections between teachers. There are six teams, two in each grade level – one with five teachers and one with four. The four person teams have Science, Math, Social Studies, and Language Arts. The five person teams have the same with the addition of Reading. The students on the four person teams receive reading instruction as well but they rotate to a different subject area each trimester for a content area reading class. There are approximately 250 students on each team and an average of 28 students in each section. This is a typical number for middle schools in this district.

Huey Newton has a history of not meeting state assessment goals. Over the last five years they have made adequate progress once. They have been audited by the state three times in these five years and there has been a decline in test scores every year for the past three years (36.3, 32.8, and 30.8); they are classified as a Priority School. The most recent audit, in 2015, found the principal did not have the capacity to lead. At the time of this study, Huey Newton was in the process of making a major change; during the study, their principal was removed. The principal was audited twice in her tenure, the first, less than a month after she assumed leadership, the second, two months before this interview. The first audit determined that both she and the Site Based Decision Making council (SBDM) had the capacity to lead. The school was given recommendations for

improvement but no state mandated changes were made to the staff or program. The second audit determined that the SBDM was effective but the principal was not and she was removed. At the time of this study, while there have been recommendations for improvement given, there have been no other state mandated changes to the staff or the program. Although she had the option to continue as principal for the remainder of the school year, she opted to end her term early and for an interim principal to be assigned. So, although she is a part of this study, Debra (pseudonym) is no longer principal of Huey Newton

Data Collection

Case study methodology (Yin, 2014) was used to gain information about each school between the months of January 2016 and March 2016. During this time, nine interviews and two focus groups were conducted and one observation was completed. The researcher attempted to do three focus groups, however despite multiple attempts it proved impossible to gather the teacher leaders at Huey Newton so they were interviewed individually. The researcher also attempted to observe all three assistant principals involved in instructional leadership tasks but only one of them engaged in such a task during the duration of this study. Documents were also reviewed. Participants produced information regarding their job descriptions, their list of responsibilities, and the school's schedule of professional development. These documents were used to confirm the role of the assistant principals in distributed instructional leadership.

Participants were selected using purposive criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013) because it was necessary to locate assistant principals whose primary responsibility was instructional leadership. Emails were sent and phone calls were made to all of the middle

schools in the selected district to determine which schools fit the criteria. Of the 23 middle schools, five schools had assistant principals who fit this description, two men and three women. Each assistant principal was contacted via email to gauge interest in participation in this study. After the first email two female assistant principals responded. One week later the email was re-sent to those who did not respond and one male assistant principal responded. Meetings were arranged with each of the assistant principals and they were presented with the Informed Consent form that included information about the study (purpose, methods, duration, risks, and benefits). Following consent and interview, they were asked to identify the Principal and teacher leaders in their schools with whom they work to accomplish instructional leadership tasks. Interview data was collected from three principals, three self-described "Instructional Assistant Principals," one assistant principal, and nine teacher leaders including two Goal Clarity Coaches, two Resource Teachers, and five classroom teachers serving as Department Chairs. Table 1 lists the participants by school.

Table 1
Participants by School

School	Name	Race	Gender	Years of Experience	Position
Harriet Tubman	Nancy	White	Female	19	Principal
	Marla	Black	Female	19	Instructional AP
	Nika	Black	Female	16	Grade Level AP
	Kelly	White	Female	20	Resource Teacher
	Norma	White	Female	22	Goal Clarity Coach
	Sharon	White	Female	30	English Lead

	Rita	White	Female	15	Principal
	Wayne	White	Male	18	Lead/Instructional AP
	Clara	White	Female	7	Science Lead
Marcus Garvey	Frank	White	Male	4	History Lead
	Meg	White	Female	5	English Lead
	Stacy	White	Female	2	Math Lead
	Debra	Black	Female	24	Principal
	Genevieve	Black	Female	12	Instructional AP
Huey P. Newton	Leon	Black	Male	14	Goal Clarity Coach
	Matthias	Black	Male	16	Resource Teacher

Institutional Review Board Approval and Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the University of Louisville Institutional Review

Board (IRB) therefore the rights of the participants were protected in accordance with the

standards of this board. All participants completed the informed consent process with the

researcher. They were notified of the purpose of the study, any risks associated with

participation, procedures, duration, and benefits to the researcher using the Informed

Consent Document included. Participants were informed that they were volunteers and

that they could withdraw at any time. During data collection, notes and electronic data

were kept secured and once audio was transcribed, identifying information about

locations and individuals was password protected.

Procedures for Data Collection

Nearly all of the data for this study were collected using semi-structured interviews that lasted up to 60 minutes. Interviews are a strong source of evidence because they allow the researcher to explore individual perspectives (Yin, 2014). Although there was a risk of response bias (i.e., participants saying what they think you want to hear), the quality of information gathered was worth the risk. Because leaders and followers are an integral part of the distributed leadership framework, it was imperative that data were collected from the perspectives of both. Individual face-to-face interviews were used for the assistant principals, the principals, and two of the teacher leaders. Focus groups were used with the remaining seven teacher leaders (Department Heads, Goal Clarity Coaches, and Resource Teachers). Yin (2014) refers to focus groups as the "group counterpart" of the interview and ascribes to them the same level of importance. This combination of individual interviews and focus groups resulted in a total of eleven interviews of 16 individuals.

An interview protocol was used for questions and a digital voice recorder was used to record the answers. Creswell (2013) suggests the use of an interview protocol with guiding questions and space for notes in addition to a recording device. This provides a safety net in the event there is a problem with the recording and it acts as a guide so that the interviewer stays focused and is able to listen and respect the time of the interviewee. Following the completion of the interviews, the audiotapes were transcribed to facilitate analysis.

In one instance, data were also collected through an hour-long observation as a nonparticipant observer (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). I was able to gain access to the

Leadership Team meeting at one middle school to observe distributed instructional leadership in action and view evidence of the assistant principal as instructional leader within the school context. The other two assistant principals did not facilitate a meeting, a Professional Learning Community (PLCs), or a Professional Development session during the time of the study.

The final source of data was textual artifacts (lists of responsibilities, job descriptions, schedules, etc.) collected from the participants during interviews, via email, and online. These artifacts, or tools, are the tangible representations of leadership that support the structure and routines. Gaining access to schedules, meeting agendas, data analysis forms, policies, and other documents used by the participants to enact leadership actions helped paint a complete picture of leadership practice.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining data collected and deciphering themes. It "consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to produce empirical findings" (Yin, 2014, p. 132). In this qualitative study, data collected was from interviews, focus groups, observation, and document analysis, so the primary mode of analysis was coding. Coding is using "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language base or visual data" (Saldaña, 2013 p.3). Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) actually define coding as analysis because of the nature of the reflection, analysis, and interpretation that is required. Coding/Analysis in this study was comprised of three actions: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification

(Miles et al., 2014). These actions occurred simultaneously and occurred concurrently with data collection (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2013; Yin, 2013).

Following collection, the data in this study were transcribed and then analyzed using the Saldaña (2013) method of both First and Second Cycle Coding - applying initial codes to the data and then reviewing the codes with the intention of identifying patterns and then consolidating them into larger themes. Analysis began with Initial Coding formerly known as "open coding" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data were separated into smaller parts and compared and contrasted for the purpose of becoming familiar with the data and of identifying leads that required more attention (Saldaña, 2013). This process originally produced 37 codes (Appendix A). These codes were identified by hand and then the data were transferred to the NVivo program. Through this program, the initial codes were combined with other similar codes and organized into larger "nodes" which were then consolidated into four themes. As I worked toward those themes it was important to take continuous measures to ensure conclusions were empirically based through verification measures. Prior to reporting these conclusions it was important to ensure the validity or trustworthiness of these conclusions.

This process of verification can be accomplished in several ways; I achieved it through checking for representativeness, checking for researcher effects, and by triangulation (Miles et al., 2014). Checking for representativeness means to take a comprehensive sample rather than only talking with people based on convenience or because they have opinions that coincide with mine. To accomplish this, I contacted every middle school in the Waterview City School District and asked if they employed an assistant principal whose main focus was instructional leadership. Once these individuals

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were identified, I sent the same communication to each one. When I did not receive responses from all possible participants, I reached out to them again. Once participants were identified, I used snowball sampling to identify other potential participants – asking participants for suggestions of others who might qualify as participants (Creswell, 2013). I was able to interview everyone suggested by the original three participants.

Checking for researcher effects was another key to avoiding biased reporting. I recognized my presence could affect the case and that the case could have an effect on me. In order to minimize this influence, I was frank with participants about my intentions and how they were not evaluative. I also accessed as much public information as possible to avoid getting documents that may have been created just for the purpose of this study. Last, I conducted most of the interviews in private and offered the participants a choice in where and when the interviews occurred. When I was on-site with participants, I kept "a low profile" and tried to blend in while at the same time not spending too much time so as to avoid "going native" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 297-298). This was difficult at one site because I am an employee there. In order to remain removed from the research at this site, I interviewed participants during times when school was not in session and thus there were minimal amounts of staff present in the building. I also did not include any information that was not directly provided by the participants. In addition, I did not discuss my research with members of the staff who were not involved in the study. I also stayed focused on my interview protocol and let the participants do the majority of the talking. I did not feel as if the participants were trying to mislead me but there were a few instances where people seemed hesitant to say what they really thought on tape. In those instances I turned off the recorder and/or I noted their hesitance in memos.

The third method of confirmation – triangulation – is indispensable and was weaved into every aspect of data collection and analysis. Triangulation is using multiple data sources, methods, theories, or data types to support a conclusion (Miles et al, 2014). The purpose is to minimize bias and to create a complete and informed perspective. Spillane's (2011) Framework for Distributed leadership lends itself to triangulation because of the need to include leaders and followers (diverse sources). In this study, this translated to talking with principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders at three different schools to gain a rounded perspective on how instructional leadership in their school was actually implemented. Also, using interviews, observation, and document analysis provided diverse sources so that data could be verified. For example, if someone stated in an interview that they facilitated professional development (PD), it could be confirmed through observing that leader in action and viewing the PD schedule. Taking care to test and confirm findings during both collection and analysis also supported stronger conclusions by allowing for adjustments during research.

Limitations

This study had two notable limitations: the inability to observe two out of the three assistant principals participating in instructional leadership and the researcher being employed at one of the research sites. One participant was observed conducting an Instructional Leadership Team meeting and either of the other two assistant principals had occasion to facilitate a meeting, present professional development, or otherwise demonstrate instructional leadership during the course of the study. Lack of observation was limiting because observing only one of the assistant principals participating in instructional leadership and not the others created incongruence in data collection. These

observations would have provided valuable information about distributed instructional leadership in action. However, the inaccessibility of this function to the other two assistant principals was also telling. Clearly, assistant principals acting as facilitators of instructional leadership was not something that was valued by the principals at those sites during the time of this study.

Last, the researcher being employed as an assistant principal at one of the research sites was limiting because it increased the opportunities for bias in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This limitation was addressed through the use of bracketing (Tufford, 2012) which includes focusing on the experience and analysis and putting aside ones judgement and perspectives. Although the researcher worked at one of the research sites she was able to separate herself and her research by interviewing participants during times when school was not in session. She also did not discuss her study with anyone in the school who was not a participant. Last, she only used information (interview and documents) obtained directly from participants.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methods used to study the emerging role of the instructional assistant principal in middle schools in a large urban school district. It included research questions, context, and information on the sample, procedures, data collection and analysis. The following chapter includes information on each case and the themes that emerged during analysis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a thematic description of each of the

cases and to present the findings on the nature and function of assistant principals as

instructional leaders. Each case had its own outcome based on the distributed leadership

landscape, or lack thereof, at each school. In order to describe the nature and function of

assistant principals engaging in instructional leadership, it is necessary to understand

what they and their colleagues define as instructional leadership, what they perceive as

the responsibilities of this role, and how these responsibilities are distributed. Further,

knowledge of the roles of the principal, the assistant principal, and the teacher leaders in

distributed instructional leadership is essential to an understanding of how these roles

interact and how this interaction influences the distribution of instructional leadership.

The following chapter presents three distinct cases describing schools that purported to

practice distributed instructional leadership. Findings from this study are derived from

interviews, focus groups, an observation, and document analysis. Based on the findings,

only one case reflects distributed instructional leadership.

Instructional Leadership or Operational Management?

The Case of Harriet Tubman Middle School

Instructional leadership has a tumultuous past because for a long time the

literature was unable to arrive at a common definition. With the advent of Hallinger and

Murphy's (1985) Framework of instructional management, researchers received some clarity on the functions that comprised instructional leadership. This framework combined overtly instructional functions (i.e., teacher evaluation and curriculum development) with functions more traditionally considered management (i.e., maintaining visibility and protecting instructional time) to develop a comprehensive description of instructional leadership. While this framework is extensive, it does not provide an all-encompassing list of a principal's leadership responsibilities. There are still functions often referred to as managerial or operational that must be accomplished for a school to continue to operate. These functions do not fit under the auspices of the Hallinger (2000) framework. With the principal consumed with developing a culture of instructional leadership who then becomes responsible for these things? At Harriet Tubman, that person is Marla, the instructional assistant principal. Although she was named as "instructional" and described her position as "the melding of instructional leadership and then management tasks" she was also described as "the building assistant principal" and "dealing with a multitude of other things that aren't specific to a grade level or to instruction" by other members of her staff.

This misalignment was characteristic of this case. The model for distributed instructional leadership presented by the principal did not align with what was described by other participants which resulted in a portrait of a school that practiced distributed instructional leadership in name but not in actions. The following is a description of the formal leadership roles, the planned instructional leadership structure, and of the actual normative structure described by participants. At times, these two structures were in direct contradiction of each other.

Formal Leadership Structure

      Harriet Tubman Middle employs a principal, four assistant principals, two counselors, a Goal Clarity Coach, and a Resource Teacher. In addition to these formal leaders there are also classroom teachers who function as department chairs and Professional Learning Community (PLC) leads. Participants in this study were the principal, two assistant principals, the Goal Clarity Coach, the Resource Teacher, and a classroom teacher who functions as a department chair. Their perspectives on their formal leadership roles are as follows.

      Principal. The principal of Harriet Tubman, Nancy (pseudonym), is in her second year as principal. Prior to being named the principal she was an assistant principal at Harriet Tubman. Before she was an administrator she spent nine years as a math teacher. Nancy's vision is for "students to show growth in their learning" (Interview). Because of the diverse group of students at Harriet Tubman and their differing ability levels, Nancy feels that it is important to meet the students where they are and focus on the students gaining in either an academic, social, or behavioral capacity prior to leaving the school. She "really wants to make sure that we're helping students be well rounded so they're not only focusing on academics but focusing on all aspects of the individual" (Interview).

      Instructional assistant principal. Marla (pseudonym) the instructional assistant principal (according to herself and the principal) is in her 19th year of education. She was a teacher for six and a half years and is in her thirteenth year as an administrator. She began her tenure as assistant principal at Harriet Tubman under the previous principal and highlights those experiences as her introduction to being an instructionally focused assistant principal. In the past, even though she was assigned a grade level and was in

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charge of eighth grade students, she was still encouraged to increase her prowess as an instructional leader.

Marla described her current role as balancing instructional leadership and management. According to Marla, the instructional leadership side of her role is comprised of many things including "working with teachers on instructional practice, doing classroom observations, providing evidence based feedback and tying it to teachers' growth goals, providing research based strategies, and supporting PLCs." She also had what she calls "honest conversation" about what affects teachers in their classrooms. Some of her management responsibilities are scheduling, coordinating professional development hours, ensuring grades are reported properly, working with buses, and reviewing special program applications. Prior to this school year, Marla was a grade level assistant principal and was mainly responsible for discipline, team schedules, and student issues. This year her role has changed and become the role described above. Currently, she ranks master schedule/scheduling, professional development, and safety as her most important responsibilities.

Assistant principal. Nika (pseudonym) is a grade level assistant principal at Harriet Tubman. She was interviewed because originally when the school was contacted she was identified as the assistant principal whose primary responsibility was instruction. She is in her 17th year as an educator. She was a teacher for eight years and this is her ninth year as an administrator. Prior to being an assistant principal, she was a school counselor. This is her second year at Harriet Tubman. She considers herself an instructional leader because she uses data to monitor and evaluate instructional effectiveness. She described "feeling comfortable" and "at home in the classrooms" and

repeatedly emphasized "the importance of good instruction to the overall classroom environment." "For me, I feel like if I can make sure that there is [a] rich layer of instruction in the classroom, all my other issues subside (Interview)." In order to effectively achieve this, she embarks on her own journey of professional development because according to her, the district professional development for assistant principals is not instructionally focused. She has also been out of the classroom for eleven years, so in order to remain current on instructional best practices, she feels she must educate herself.

Nika describes her current role as being responsible for the discipline, scheduling, and any other student issues of her grade level. In addition, she is in charge of the special education department. This current role is vastly different from her role last year. In her first year as an assistant principal, Nika was a counselor/assistant principal hybrid that was in charge of special education and conducted all of the Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) meetings. She was in charge of English as a Second Language (ESL) and while she was also assigned a grade level, during this time most of the discipline and student issues went to the actual school counselor. After the previous principal left, Nika met with Nancy and told her she did not feel she was being used appropriately in that role. She let Nancy know that she would do whatever she wanted her to do but that the hybrid role was not what she had signed up for. As a result of this conversation, the leadership model was restructured and now she is able to not only preside over her grade level but also, from her perspective, participate in instructional leadership in a way that was impossible before. Currently, she ranks student safety (safety of the school), instruction (teacher effectiveness), and discipline (safety of individuals) as her top three most important responsibilities.

Teacher leaders. The three teacher leaders identified by the assistant principal

Norma, Kelly, and Sharon, are all members of Harriet Tubman's Instructional Leadership

Team and have an average of 24 years of experience. Norma is the Goal Clarity Coach.

At one time, she was a classroom teacher but currently she does not have a class of her

own. She is a member of the administrative team and is also the head of the Math

department. Kelly, a Resource Teacher, is also a member of the administrative team and

no longer a classroom teacher. She is the head of the Science department and works

closely with the Social Studies department chair. Sharon was at one time a Resource

Teacher and part of the administrative team but had to go back into the classroom

recently because of the absence of a qualified Language Arts teacher. While she is no

longer a member of the administrative team she is still the head of the Language Arts

department and a member of the Instructional Leadership Team.

When asked about their role in instructional leadership, Norma and Kelly stated

without hesitation that "they were both members of the instructional team because the

principal includes them in leadership and because of their roles as department chairs."

Sharon had a slightly different perspective because of her recent change in position. She

originally called it "jaded" and then switched to calling it a "loaded question." She went

on to describe the circumstances under which she was moved from her position as a

Resource Teacher back into the classroom. When the question was clarified to include

her position as a department chair she conceded that she was a teacher leader "in that

frame."

Norma, Kelly, and Sharon described their most important responsibilities as

"empowering the teachers to feel like they can be successful with all kids" (Sharon,

Focus Group), "to be flexible enough to roll with it, not abandoning the other things but realizing when something needs to happen now and when something can wait" (Norma, Focus Group), and "to stay up on the standards and what's going on educationally at the time" (Kelly, Focus Group). This included not only standards but any other additional initiatives the school chooses to take on (literacy assessment, grants, etc.). They felt it was important that they were instructional resources as well as providers of emotional support for teachers.

All of the participants considered themselves instructional leaders. The next section will outline the intended instructional leadership structure from the perspective of the principal who saw herself as a catalyst for distributed instructional leadership. It will also use the leadership functions from Hallinger's (2011) framework to outline the distribution of instructional leadership activities.

The "Core" of Instructional Leadership

Nancy considers herself an instructional leader because she believes it is her responsibility to ensure students are growing and teachers have the resources to foster this growth. She uses data and teacher observation in order to offer feedback that encourages growth for both the students and the teachers. However, she credits the title of "main" instructional leader to her Instructional Leadership Team. This team comprised of the principal, the assistant principals, department chairs, and Resource Teachers is what Nancy calls the "core" of instructional leadership. According to her, she encourages everyone, including her assistant principals, to use their strengths so they all can work together to increase teachers' instructional ability.

I think my role comes in several different ways. It comes in helping to build capacity in others, giving them the resources and information they need to continue to grow as instructional leaders themselves but then also looking at resources, whether be it human or financial, to make sure that they have the support that they need to make sure that we're driving the instruction, making sure that we're on top of the most innovative and engaging and rigorous things that's students need to be involved in. (Nancy, Interview)

Nancy prioritizes her responsibilities to build capacity in others, to collect and analyze data, and to make sure adequate human capital and financial resources are in place.

She believes spreading the leadership responsibilities to others allows her to dig deeper into her areas of focus. It enables her to take time to increase knowledge in specific content and procure resources to assist those teachers. Nancy's believes she achieves distributed instructional leadership through collaboration. She meets with her team daily, formally and informally, to share information about what each member of the group is doing so everyone gets the entire picture and not just their area of focus. Having four assistant principals – three grade level and one instructional – allows Nancy to hone her focus, further facilitates the distribution of instructional leadership, and frees Nancy up to spend her time on other things. Nancy said she leans more on the assistant principal who she calls her instructional assistant principal, Marla, because Marla does not have a grade level she is responsible for so she is more involved in what Nancy refers to as "instructional aspects."

According to Nancy, she shares the majority of instructional leadership functions with her Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). The entire team is responsible for *coordinating curriculum*. Nancy and her assistant principals *supervise and evaluate instruction* and the Resource Teacher and Goal Clarity Coach provide support through

the use of feedback and teacher coaching. The Resource Teacher and Goal Clarity Coach are the point people for *monitoring student progress* although the PLC leads and the administrators have a role as well. Nancy takes on the bulk of the responsibility for *protecting instructional time* but she also enlists the help of her assistant principals to make sure that distractions and disruptions are minimized. The principal and the instructional assistant principal are responsible for *providing incentives for teachers* and the entire ILT is responsible for *providing incentives for learning. Promoting developing and implementing professional development* is handled by the instructional assistant principal, the principal, the Resource Teacher, and the Goal Clarity Coach although at times, the grade level assistant principals do participate in presentations. Nancy cited *maintaining high visibility* as a goal for herself and for her administrative team. She knows her stakeholders wanted a principal who was visible so they try to schedule their day so that they can be present. She also comes in early and opens her door when she can to show she is available.

Nancy described an atmosphere of shared leadership where she prioritizes capacity building and encourages her staff to take on aspects of instructional leadership. On the surface, the leadership model at Harriet Tubman may suggest that it is distributed instructional leadership but a problem occurs when the perspectives of her staff are taken into consideration. The leadership model Nancy described was very different from what was perceived by her assistant principals and teacher leaders as actually happening at Harriet Tubman.

The Misalignment of Distributed Instructional Leadership: Espoused vs. Reality

The assistant principals and teacher leaders described a situation where the principal shares instructional leadership with the teachers but the assistant principals are all but absent from distributed instructional leadership. In practice, the instructional leadership hierarchy excludes the assistant principals and while the teacher leaders are not in charge, they are believed to function in a completely different sect of leadership.

Instructional leadership hierarchy. Typically, and without hesitation one would classify the school principal as the main instructional leader at the school. This perspective is supported by research as most research on instructional leadership is centered on the principal (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Hulpia et al., 2011; Kwan, 2009). This is not the case at Harriet Tubman. Neither the principal nor the assistant principals view the principal as the main instructional leader. The principal sees no one as the main instructional leader and credits this role to her leadership team. The assistant principals were unsure as to who the main instructional leader was.

> The main instructional leader? You know, it's kind of a difficult question for me as I sit here because we have a new principal. Now, if my former principal were here, who had been here for, I don't know, ten or eleven years, I would say Pat. I think, theoretically, it would be the principal, but at this moment in time I think we're still like flushing that out. I'm just being honest. (Marla, Interview)

Marla added that a new principal might believe that he/she is the main instructional leader but that they may be overwhelmed trying to get acclimated to the job so others might not perceive them as such. She spoke about this in general terms but the researcher interpreted her comments to be directed towards her principal. Nika found it difficult to pinpoint a main instructional leader but stated that if she had to pick, it would be the Resource Teacher and Goal Clarity Coach because, "they're the ones that are going

out to those district meetings, and they're bringing the meat back." She also mentioned the leadership team concept but ultimately brought it back to the teacher leaders.

The teacher leaders had more complex answers but ultimately agreed with the other participants. Sharon stated it was "hard to name a main instructional leader because of the unique nature of the school and how the teacher leaders collectively covered all the contents." Sharon considered the teacher leaders having such a significant leadership role as "unique." She named Kelly as the lead for Science and Social Studies, herself for Language Arts, and Norma for Math. Kelly then clarified that if they were talking about the overall main instructional leader it would be Nancy, the principal because she turned over the power to them.

At Harriet Tubman, the Resource Teacher and Goal Clarity Coach are the "MVPs of instruction" according to the assistant principals, and have been given full autonomy over instructional leadership by the principal. According to the Marla and Nika, the meetings the teacher leaders have with each other and with the principal are about instruction and the meetings the assistant principals have with the principal are about discipline, safety, and other operational activities. Marla and Nika were offended by this while the other two assistant principals did not even attempt to engage in instructional leadership beyond mandatory evaluation responsibilities.

> I'm not going to be politically correct, because it'll take me too long to search for the words, but I will say there are people that are more seasoned than me as far as being assistant principals, and they will tell you, "This instructional leadership [stuff] is for the birds. I am supposed to make sure the students are safe, they're acting right, and that is my job. To make sure there is order in the court…" (Nika, Interview)

In contrast to their perceptions of the other two assistant principals, both Nika and Marla shared that they were envious of the Resource Teacher and Goal Clarity Coach

because they are able to fully immerse themselves in instruction; whereas the assistant

principals have to depend on the information the teacher leaders bring back rather than

getting it first-hand. They also emphasized a lack of professional development for

assistant principals that focused on things instructional and repeatedly mentioned they

seek out their own professional development in order to increase their own instructional

leadership capacity.

They admitted to feeling like outsiders in instructional leadership. Marla clarified

that she has never felt that she was solely a manager, here for "buses, books, and butts,"

but that she does have a fear that with the prevalence of Resource Teachers and Goal

Clarity Coaches they will usurp the instructional responsibilities. Because of this the

assistant principals are left out because they are too busy doing other things. She credited

this exclusion to the principal. "I think, really, in terms of being an instructional leader,

you kind of have to have that support from your principal to make that happen. It really

depends on what they value… (Marla, Interview)." While she no longer has a

responsibility for discipline or a grade level, Marla felt discipline had been replaced with

management/operational tasks. She acknowledged these tasks required less "mental

space" than discipline so she does have a little more time to focus on instruction but she

felt truly being a part of instructional leadership is somewhat of a fight because of the

important space held by the teacher leaders:

> I don't even think it's a conscious thing, but I firmly believe that the principal sets
> the tone and establishes the priority for those that are working under them. So I
> can't grab somebody's responsibility after it has been delegated to them by the
> principal. So that's why it has to start there to maintain it. It really goes back to
> what I, as a principal, value and know that I need instructional leaders working
> with me. I can't leave them out of the loop, even if I have three [Goal Clarity
> Coaches] or four Instructional Resource Teachers, my assistant principals need to
> be with me on the firing line when it comes to instructional leadership and those

opportunities. I think that they absolutely need opportunities to do the teacher leadership, but assistant principals need to be in that loop and staff needs to see them leading instructionally. (Marla, Interview)

The teacher leaders also supported the perspective of assistant principals as separate from the instructional leadership hierarchy. When asked to expound on the role of the assistant principals in instructional leadership beyond their responsibility to be present at department meetings, gather information, and share with the principal, the teacher leaders were not immediately able to answer. At first, there was confusion about how many assistant principals served in the building. One person said two and another said three. The third person knew there were four and was able to name them all and the department they were assigned to. According to the teacher leaders, the three grade level assistant principals did not actually have much of an influence on instructional leadership. Although they were assigned a department meeting to attend they are more of a liaison between the department and the principal than an actual leader. This was true not only for the grade level assistant principals but also for the instructional assistant principal. They put the assistant principals as adjacent to the instructional leadership hierarchy rather than within it. When it came to instructional leadership, the principal is at the top and they (the teacher leaders) are underneath her and the assistant principals are off to the side performing support functions that, while not directly instructional influence instruction. These functions include but are not limited to student discipline, parent issues, and scheduling.

Instructional assistant principal. Although Marla was discussed in the section on hierarchy, the incongruence between her title and the actual function of the position is also important to note. In spite of being called an instructional assistant principal by the

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principal, Marla was referred to as an "overall assistant principal" by all of the other participants. Collectively the teacher leaders defined instructional leadership as helping all teachers, new and experienced, become proficient with standards and encouraging them to internalize and implement strategies that ensure the best instruction for meeting student needs. The grade level assistant principal defined it as supporting teachers in order to ensure their teaching is supporting student learning. Neither of these definitions were reflected in their description of the role of the instructional assistant principal. The teacher leaders described Marla, as "dealing with a multitude of other things that aren't specific to a grade level or to instruction." Her fellow assistant principal said the following:

> I guess it's kind of like if the principal's not in the building, she would then assume that role. Marla is kind of like the building assistant principal. She's' all things building. She's all things [data system], the logistics, master schedule, [special programs], light bulbs working, grass need to be cut, she's kind of canvassing the whole building perspective… (Nika, Interview)

Marla described herself as an instructional leader because she "puts herself in the position to be." She was encouraged by her previous principal to invest her time into the instructional components of her job, which has given her a strong grasp on instruction. According to Marla, the principal before Nancy had a very strong instructional background and believed leadership went beyond management. During that time Marla facilitated professional development, spent as much time in classrooms as possible, and gave informed feedback to teachers. Now, she feels like she only continues to grow as an instructional leader because she is focused on her own personal professional development not because of her role or through anything that is shared with her by the principal.

> I've grown because of my own professional development. So I'm better able to have those conversations. I never felt like I was kind of slighted and it was all

about buses, books and books. I never had that. What I am a little fearful of, though, is we have goal clarity coaches and instructional resource teachers for support. That is great, but a lot of times the instructional responsibilities kind of shift to them in terms of leading professional development and that kind of leaves APs out of it a little bit… The onus is on us to try to remain a part of that loop. (Marla, Interview)

Although Marla is the instructional AP, instruction is not prioritized in her day to day routines. Even Marla's own and the principal's definitions of instructional leadership did not coincide with the bulk of Marla's responsibilities. Marla defined instructional leadership as "guiding teachers in terms of their own pedagogical practices and how what they're doing in class impacts student achievement...helping teachers to identify…growth areas, and then working on those growth areas." Nancy considered it leadership that ensures student growth and provides teachers with the resources they need to maintain this growth. When Nancy described Marla's position, she said that it was "more of an instructional piece" but went on to describe her responsibilities as more operational:

Her role is more with grading, overseeing professional development…She does a lot with our magnet applications. Her role is really a little bit more defined as a building wide. She looks at let's say, she is not just safety and building needs. Hers is just kind of that overarching piece. (Nancy, Interview)

Marla's list of responsibilities includes more of the same and reads as a laundry list of building and staff maintenance items (Appendix B). Although professional development was mentioned as one of Marla's responsibilities, she neither plans nor does she implement professional development; the teacher leaders and the principal do this. Marla is responsible for completing the paperwork that must be turned into the district for staff to get credit for participation. Much of Marla's work, although instructional adjacent, is not seen as pertaining to instructional leadership.

Summary

Although the principal at Harriet Tubman envisioned a culture that prioritized distributed leadership, placing a leadership team as responsible for instructional leadership functions, there was a misalignment between what was planned and what was in place. In freeing herself to function as an instructional leader, Nancy passed her operational management responsibilities on to her instructional assistant principal. The instructional assistant principal was consumed with these tasks so she had very little time for instructional leadership. In addition, she was left out of the planning and implementation of instructional functions in favor of the teacher leaders and was only leaned on for the compliance aspects. This, in addition to lack of professional development, limited her availability to effectively participate in distributed instructional leadership.

Opportunities for Instructional Leadership:

The Case of Marcus Garvey Middle School

Marcus Garvey Middle is different from the other two schools in this study for several reasons. Two of the most apparent are the fact it is currently only serving one grade level and the principal of Marcus Garvey is the principal of two schools located in one building. This context is relevant because the presence of two distinct schools in one building exponentially increases the responsibilities for the principal. As previously discussed, the workload of the principal can become overwhelming with just one school. With two schools, it could become impossible. At Marcus Garvey, this issue is resolved by the presence of Wayne. Referred to as both the lead assistant principal and as the instructional assistant principal, Wayne presides over many of the principal duties at

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Marcus Garvey, "Anything the principal would do she kind of allows me to do unless it requires a large funding amount. I don't do anything with the budget at this point" (Wayne, Interview). Because the principal is stretched so thin, she had to lean on Wayne to function as a leader in her place at the middle school. Ideally, this would be an opportunity for distributed instructional leadership, however, what is described by staff is something different.

This section will begin by describing the formal roles of the participants. It will go on to compare and contrast the perspectives of the participants about leadership culture at Marcus Garvey and how it would better be described as delegation of leadership rather than distributed instructional leadership practices.

Leadership Roles

Participants at Marcus Garvey were the principal (Rita), the lead assistant principal (Wayne), and four teacher leaders (Clara, Meg, Stacy, and Frank) who were classroom teachers that functioned as department leads. The following section will outline their role and perspectives on instructional leadership.

Principal. The principal at Marcus Garvey, Rita (a pseudonym), is in her fifth year as principal of Northeast High School (a pseudonym) and her second year as principal of Marcus Garvey. She was hired at Northeast following the removal of a principal who was determined to lack the capacity to lead. She was able to restructure the staff and the school and set up a system where she felt she would be best able to turn around a failing school. Because of her success at Northeast, she inherited Marcus Garvey and has also been consulted about the turnaround of other Priority Schools. Prior to being a principal, Rita worked as a teacher and as an assistant principal at another local

high school. She also spent two one-year terms shadowing principals at two other local high schools. In addition to being the principal at two schools she is also a mentor for other principals working at struggling schools.

Rita's mission for her school is "making every student ready, one Cougar (pseudonym) at a time. She believes this readiness includes not only academic preparedness but also the need to teach students how to be socially and emotionally literate citizens. She exerts leadership not to control students but to teach them. Rita definitively describes herself as the main instructional leader in her building and credits this to her principal preparation and her experience as an AP:

> I was raised in the newer, more instructionally centered principal preparation. I handled a lot of that for [previous principals] when I worked for them. They were more historical building managers. The role was different, and the expectations were different, even from district level leadership. The accountability is what has required principals to be so much more accountable… (Rita, Interview)

She described some of the issues at Northeast before her arrival as "crazy town" and "bananas town" and noted the previous administration "lacked the professional confrontation necessary to hold the people not doing what they needed to do accountable, so that systems could work functionally (Rita, Interview)." She also made it clear her brand of instructional leadership is research based and that encouraging staff to focus on what is best for students helps them buy into her vision.

Rita highlighted providing professional development to staff, creating a positive culture of teacher evaluation practices, organizing a peer feedback loop for teachers, modeling appropriate instructional leadership practices for assistant principals, overseeing student discipline, and teacher discipline as important components of her role

as an instructional leader. When asked what her most important responsibilities were as

an instructional leader she responded:

> I think appropriate evaluation, honest evaluation, is a big part of instructional
> leadership, and making sure teachers really understand what you expect, what are
> they not doing, what are they doing, and kind of how can we get better at that. It
> is multiple parts. One, it is proper identification of the issues... Then,
> understanding and agreeing that it's a problem. Seeing examples of those errors
> and issues…suggestions for improvement, and then providing the support or the
> resources to get that done, and then monitoring. What is not monitored does not
> happen. I do think spending time in classrooms, which is a huge challenge for me,
> because of time, but spending time and assistant principals spending time in
> classrooms is critical. Then, I definitely think the coaching is critical. (Rita,
> Interview)

Assistant principal (lead/instructional). Wayne (pseudonym) who refers to

himself as the "instructional assistant principal" has been in administration for twelve

years. He is referred to as the lead assistant principal by the principal and on the school

website. After teaching for six years, Wayne worked as a middle school principal for

three years and has worked as an assistant principal for nine years. He has been at Marcus

Garvey since before the move. Wayne described his role as:

> …to oversee the building with two other assistant principals. They take primarily
> discipline, my job is to take care of the principal stuff that Rita may not need to
> take care of. I work on the CSIP [Comprehensive School Improvement Plan], I
> work on instruction with the teachers by developing the ILT [Instructional
> Leadership Team], I also help with minor discipline kind of issues. Anything the
> principal would do, she kind of allows me to do unless it requires a large funding
> amount. (Wayne, Interview)

Wayne stated that this role has changed since the previous year due to the

reduction in enrollment. Because there are fewer students now, he currently gets to

monitor teachers in the high school as well as the middle school. He also talked about

how he now has more opportunities to interact directly with students than he did before

this role. This positive mindset about being able to work with students was also reflected

in his ranking of his responsibilities. Wayne listed his top three responsibilities as: (a) safety – ensuring that students have an environment where they can learn, (b) teacher feedback – making sure that systems are in place and that everyone is speaking the same language and knows what is going on, and (c) state/district compliance – completing the CSIP, managing district/state assessments, etcetera.

Teacher leaders. The teacher leaders identified by the assistant principal were all members of the Instructional Leadership Team. These four teachers were interviewed in a focus group. They were all classroom teachers but held a leadership position; they were each the head of a department: Social Studies, Science, Language Arts, and Math. Three of these teachers transitioned with Marcus Garvey after leaving their school building and came to Northeast; the last was a new teacher.

Each teacher leader in the focus group articulated that they felt like a member of the school Instructional Leadership Team because they were considered when decisions were made. They each believed that their role as leader was supported by their responsibility as liaisons between the district, the school, and their departments. They also included advocating for other teachers and for students, working with other disciplines to better themselves so that they could help others, and being role models for other teachers – "not following the status quo" – as important aspects of their role as teacher leaders.

The roles of the participants at Marcus Garvey were varied but all felt that they had responsibilities as instructional leaders. Interestingly, the role of the participant influenced their perspective on what constituted instructional leadership.

Perspectives on Leadership

When defining instructional leadership at Marcus Garvey, there was a split between administrators and teacher leaders. Administrators' definitions were focused on getting into classrooms, observation, feedback/coaching, training, and instructional practices. Instructional leadership included direct contact with teachers and with other administrators. For example, Rita, the principal, made it a priority to model effective instructional leadership for her administrators and she also promoted professional development for staff that encouraged them to be effective teachers as well as instructional leaders.

Rita considered part of her instructional leadership as atypical. She used her Goal Clarity Coach and Resource Teacher as assistant principals giving them not only a role in more traditional tasks considered instructional (teacher coaching, walk-throughs, etc.) but also in student discipline; her students believe that these people are assistant principals. She also believes that it is important that there be no "non-instructional assistant principals." She had experience with this concept first hand because she was the instructional assistant principal or the "henchwoman" as she called it at her previous schools. She did the bulk of the instructional leadership herself because it was not the principal's (or the other assistant principals') forte. As a result, she now believes that regardless if an assistant principal wants to be a principal, he or she should have access to all components of the job and be taught to do them properly. She expressed disdain for the traditional culture of assistant principals as managers and disciplinarians:

> …all of those weird, old, bigoted cultures still are somewhat rampant in some of our buildings, and it's really unfortunate, but here, everybody needs to understand how to do it, and everybody needs to clap their hands and the staff has to make sure that we've always got something going on with people, and I always try to

make sure that I try to really balance with my assistant principals… (Rita, Interview)

Wayne defined instructional leadership as working with teachers and ensuring that instruction is the focus of both the work being done and the structure of the school:

> …instructional leaders help discuss what classroom instruction looks like with teachers... [T]hey work with teachers in a way that looks to design the building in a way that instruction is a priority. Try to get away from the distractors of dress code and behavior and able to focus on everything from curriculum to pedagogy to assessments. [T]he way you do that also is being able to have discussions about data and about assessments and how do you change your instruction in a way that students reach the standard and also that they have the time to reach the standards. That also gets into schedule design and use of time design. (Wayne, Interview)

Wayne felt that a large part of his responsibility as an instructional leader was to give honest evidence based feedback to teachers. He seemed proud of his ability to provide this feedback in a specific and non-threatening fashion.

When asked about who was responsible for certain instructional leadership functions, Wayne and Rita attributed most functions to the administrators and the Instructional Leadership Team. Only one function, *coordinating curriculum* was attributed solely to the teachers by Rita. Wayne included himself in this function but emphasized teacher involvement as well. They both also recognized it was the principal who provided opportunities for others to lead instructionally.

Rita and Wayne's perspectives were in contrast to what the teacher leaders defined as instructional leadership. The Instructional Leadership Team's two-part definition of instructional leadership highlighted making the best choices for students by considering the school, administration, teachers, and the district. Second, it was focused on determining which essential skills are most important and incorporating those skills across all contents. All four teacher leaders considered themselves to be instructional

leaders because of their roles as district and school liaisons for instruction. Also because of their responsibilities in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) pertaining to the influence they had over curriculum development and lesson objectives.

The teachers felt standards, curriculum, and lesson planning were the most important factors in instructional leadership and this is what they did so they considered themselves the main instructional leaders. When asked who the main instructional leader was, Clara responded, "Honestly, I would say the four of us more than administration. I think administration supports, but I think that we're making the instructional decisions." They discussed shared experiences and their history with the students as support for these statements. "I think this group of teachers really lead each other much more than relying on top down leadership (Meg, Focus Group). This misalignment of perspective was significant because it influenced participants' perceptions of who was leading instructionally. Since the principal did not participate in what they viewed as instructional leadership tasks and they felt the assistant principals were not experts in specific content areas, the teacher leaders' devalued the administrators' contributions to instructional leadership and inflated their own.

> I would much rather have an administrator that was a middle school Science teacher that could really add more to the discussion. I know that's not how it works, I think that was the nice thing about having [Goal] Clarity Coaches and having those district resource people, that you can talk the same language. That's something that is not always there in administration. (Clara, Focus Group)

Even though the administrators were not specialists in the content, the teacher leaders felt that they could be of assistance by aiding teachers in choosing cross-curricular strategies to support their instruction. Currently, the teacher leaders felt they were just in the meetings as support and not as participants. From what the teachers

discussed, they did not perceive the administrators as very helpful with instructional leadership. They considered them as a formality and placed themselves as the primary leaders. In fact, when the teacher leaders were asked about who was responsible for specific instructional leadership functions they only included the administrators as the primary leaders in creating the school mission and vision and supervising and evaluating instruction; tasks that teachers are unable to do.

The teacher leaders attributed most instructional leadership functions to either the entire staff or to themselves. Only one function produced some confusion: maintaining high visibility. When first asked about visibility, they looked confused and stated you could not make a "blanket statement" for that answer. They said that they were visible in their classrooms and in the hall and that they wear multiple "hats" of support for their children. When it came to administration, they looked at each other and paused and continued to look back and forth until the researcher described her actions as assistant principal. Then they named the team assistant principals and counselors as visible. After that, Meg clarified the teacher's positions as visible again and then struggled to explain why they could not answer the visibility question about the staff as a whole:

> [The students] can come to us on anything. We have to wear a lot of hats. We're not just teachers. We're counselors, we're mentors, we're example role models. I was just kind of talking more towards just here and teacher wise. If you talk about the whole staff and the whole ... You can't, that is a blanket statement, you can't say ... (trailed off) (Meg, Focus Group)

Based on previous comments, tone, and facial expressions, it appeared that the teachers did not see the principal or the lead assistant principal as visible or truly involved with the instructional leadership at Marcus Garvey. The principal's lack of participation in PLCs and Instructional Leadership Team meetings as well as the minimal

interaction of the administrators who were present at the observed meeting, confirmed this assertion.

Summary

Because being principal at two schools equated to an enormous amount of responsibility, the principal at Marcus Garvey delegated the majority of the leadership tasks that pertained to the middle school. Although this may have been an attempt at distribution it proved to be something else. Without the synergistic collaborative elements of distributed leadership, the teacher leaders developed their own perception of what constituted instructional leadership and thus failed to see the value of the contributions of the administration. They saw themselves as the main instructional leaders because they were responsible for what they thought were the most important aspects of instructional leadership. Because they did not see Wayne as proficient in standards, lesson planning, and curriculum, he was viewed as an ancillary player not as an instructional leader.

At the Intersection of Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership:

The Case of Huey P. Newton Middle School

Applying the tenets of distributed leadership to instructional leadership actions is the crux of distributed instructional leadership. This coupling appears to have been achieved at Huey P. Newton Middle School. Prior to her removal, the principal created a system where instructional leadership was stretched across multiple leaders and delegation was replaced by shared activity; distribution was present in action and not merely in name. Participants in this case communicated an agreement not seen in the other cases. Each one had a perspective of instructional leadership that matched the others' and their perceptions of the ways leadership was distributed were also aligned. In

addition, this type of leadership was so embedded in the culture that even in the absence of the principal distributed instructional leadership continued. Huey Newton Middle School provided the foundation for a model of distributed instructional leadership. In order to highlight this model and their representation of the role of the instructional assistant principal is to delineate the formal leadership roles of the instructional leaders at Huey P. Newton.

Building Instructional Leadership Capacity: Formal Leadership Roles

While distributed leadership hinges on the dispersion of leadership agency as opposed to titular leadership (Gronn, 2000), it is important to recognize that formal leadership – being a named leader (i.e. principal, assistant principal, etc.) is still a significant factor in distributed instructional leadership. At Huey Newton, the principal was the catalyst for distributed instructional leadership and her main consorts in these efforts were formal, named leaders. In her vision, their purpose was to function with her as a leadership team and their positions as named leaders helped make this possible.

Principal. Debra served as the principal at Huey Newton for almost two years. Prior to being principal she taught all grades in elementary including special education, worked for the state education department as a resource to principals of struggling schools, and was an instructional assistant principal at Huey Newton. Her vision for teaching and learning at Huey Newton was "to provide an environment that is conducive to learning so that all students can have everything they need to be successful and so that teachers can have everything they need to be successful. (Debra, Interview)." She believed she was an instructional leader because of her constant quest for knowledge and improvement. She stated that she always tried to keep up with the latest strategies and

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technologies and to share those with others. She felt she was good at analyzing data, modeling, and helping others see multiple perspectives. She was also knowledgeable about her students. She identified herself and her instructional assistant principal as the main instructional leaders but clarified that she wanted the teachers to be the main instructional leaders. She believed this made her a "leader of leaders;" in charge of managing instruction through the use of evaluation and monitoring lesson plans, analyzing data and monitoring progress, creating systems that reinforced continuous forward momentum.

Debra's perspective was supported by her assistant principal and her teacher leaders who described her as a facilitator and an "instructional leader rather than a manager" who encouraged other teachers and administrators to be instructional leaders. Although she had four assistant principals, she named her instructional assistant principal, Genevieve, as the assistant principal she leaned on the most for things pertaining to instructional leadership:

> I lean on her more than the others because her job is just instruction. She doesn't really deal with discipline or parent complaints. Her number one job is to ensure that instruction is occurring in the building, that systems are in place and monitored, and to really help with the day-to-day support that we have for our classroom teachers. (Debra, Interview)

The other participants confirmed this relationship between the principal and the assistant principal and these responsibilities as Genevieve's.

Both Debra and Genevieve named Leon the Goal Clarity Coach and Matthias the Resource Teacher as other important actors in the distributed instructional leadership framework. What follows is a brief description of Genevieve and the teacher leaders

including their educational experience, their definition of instructional leadership, and a description of their job responsibilities.

Assistant Principal. Genevieve (pseudonym), is in her second year as an assistant principal. Prior to being an administrator, she was a high school special education teacher and worked for the state department as a resource for principals of failing schools. Huey Newton was one of the schools to which she was assigned. Genevieve defines instructional leadership as having the ability to identify strategies that will increase student success and being able to help teachers implement those strategies in the classroom. She described her former principal, Debra, as the main instructional leader because she was able to lead by having a vision, knowing where they needed to go, and by putting systems in place to get there. Genevieve said, "She's the visionary and collaboratively we work to determine our areas for growth, our next steps, and what not."

Out of her myriad of responsibilities, Genevieve describes working with teachers, conducting walkthroughs, and facilitating analysis of student data through the use of PLCs as most important because they consume the most of her time. She articulated that her role is exactly what she expected, "I knew that my role was going to be different than the normal disciplinary AP, so I do a lot of different tasks working with teachers (Interview)." She recognizes that her lack of responsibility for student issues provides her with a unique opportunity to provide instructional leadership.

Teacher Leaders. Leon (pseudonym), currently works at Huey Newton as a Goal Clarity Coach (GCC). Prior to holding this position in middle school he was a Goal Clarity Coach in a local elementary school. Prior to his role as a GCC, he was a high school teacher. This was his first year working at Huey Newton. Matthias (pseudonym) is

a Math Resource Teacher at Huey Newton. Prior to being employed at this position, he was a high school math teacher. This is his sixteenth year in education and his second at Huey Newton. Both Leon and Matthias felt that their roles were made up of responsibilities that drew from their individual strengths. For Leon, this meant he is responsible for working with groups of teachers to gather, analyze, and interpret data in order to enhance instructional practices. He classified data analysis and coaching teachers (lesson design, planning, aligning standards, informal observation, etc.) as the most important aspects of his role. He defined an instructional leader as:

> Anyone who knows or can help with the process of everything from the beginning stages of planning all the way to the implementation of a summative assessment for kids. They are very familiar with the requirements of the content area. They're good with providing support for strategies of instruction when teachers are not aware of what to do next. They can provide that support. It's just being familiar with the changes in education in terms of the educational requirements for students. (Leon, Interview)

Leon described instructional leadership as being less of a managerial skill more focused on academic achievement for students.

Matthias's role included the responsibilities of arranging interventions, curriculum planning, lesson preparation, organizing assessments, data monitoring, planning professional development and working closely with the Math department chair as a liaison between the Math department and the administrative team. He felt his most important responsibilities were coaching teachers in both classroom climate and improved academics, managing interventions, and monitoring student data. He defined instructional leadership as:

> …the ability to develop your staff in order to bring their natural talents out through their teaching. Teachers should already know the content they are teaching but it is the leader's responsibility to help them develop relationships with students, strong lesson plans, and how to incorporate their personality into

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their teaching… I really just help identify strengths and growth areas and help to improve both… (Matthias, Interview)

According to Matthias, he is there to provide the teachers with new strategies, to support new teachers, and to encourage strong teachers to step outside of their comfort zone; get away from direct instruction and use unique activities to connect instruction to real life.

Both teacher leaders described themselves as instructional leaders working closely with the principal (when she was there) and the instructional assistant principal. They cited Debra as the main instructional leader in the past and Genevieve as the head instructional leader in Debra's absence. Both teacher leaders and Genevieve recognized their role in instructional leadership was a direct result of the principal's vision for distributed leadership. They all described their principal as having leadership qualities and nurturing a culture of leadership that they had not seen in other schools. The next section highlights the details of the leadership structure she fostered while at Huey Newton.

Normative Structure of Instructional Leadership

None of the participants discussed instructional leadership separately from distributed leadership. This was a reflection of the principal's philosophy. Debra believed it was impossible to accomplish all of the instructional leadership functions alone because of all of the other responsibilities she had as principal. This philosophy was not only stated but it was also implemented. Debra tapped into the talents of her staff to allow them to share the leadership. She described her Goal Clarity Coach as good at analyzing data. She talked about how he was able to use the data to find issues with learning and then to decide what needed to be done to fix the problem. She talked about how her

Resource Teacher was strong at designing programs to address the gaps in data and also with determining the effectiveness of programs and systems. She shared that her instructional assistant principal was best at providing professional development and with coaching teachers. Although she felt like she was good at all of these things she determined that it was best to allow her team of leaders to specialize in their strong area to help her bring her vision to fruition:

> The model that I try to build is that we all have a piece and no one has all the power. No one has the whole gamut of it. It's the little bit between myself, the instructional AP, the Goal Clarity Coach and the Resource Teacher and we try to help support the teachers who are ultimately the ones who are managers in the classroom or the instructional leaders in the classroom. (Debra, Interview)

This sentiment was supported by the other participants. They described themselves, the principal, the grade level assistant principals and the Special Education Resource Teacher as also being involved in instructional leadership. Everyone on the administrative team analyzed data, coached teachers, conducted walkthroughs, and participated in teacher Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):

> Anybody that does walkthroughs and goes in classrooms and observes, I think is part of the instructional process, because that data that's collected or the feedback they're giving really helps with formulating plans going forward of how we can improve the instruction as a whole. The more feedback that this school is receiving from those different parties in the administrative team, the more information we have to gather so we know exactly what teachers need further assistance on, or what teachers can be used as models for what we want to do instructionally. It also helps to set the course for where we are and where we want to go and overall what the need is from now and in the future. (Leon, Interview)

Leon believes that instructional leadership encompasses the entire administrative team and all the instructional resource personnel present at Huey Newton.

Leadership in action. It is evident Debra and her leadership team embodied a common vision of leadership and worked together to put that vision into action.

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Conversation about each leader's role in specific instructional leadership functions (Hallinger, 2011) also provided insight into this collective belief system and painted a picture of normal operations at Huey Newton Middle School.

Creating and communicating the school mission and vision. Debra, Leon, and Matthias all felt the principal was responsible for creating the mission and vision. They felt in order to ensure the vision/mission had a singular focus it was important for the principal to be the impetus behind it. All participants agreed there should be an approval process that included stakeholders and also the entire school community was responsible for communicating the mission and vision but felt it should be initiated by the principal.

> …a vision can only be set by one person, and that's the leader of the school. I think that if you have more than one, then there's conflict. Then everyone gets the wrong message about where we want to go. I believe a vision is to be a singular focus, and that should come from the person that is supposed to lead that community of learners and teachers and staff members. (Leon, Interview)

Coordinating curriculum. Debra and Genevieve named themselves as responsible for coordinating curriculum, Matthias named the administrative team, and Leon named the teachers. All these responses have merit because Debra and Genevieve with the help of the administrative team created a system of common planning supervised by this team. They also gathered staff input to purchase and organize school based curriculum structures (Math program, English program, etc.) to work in tandem with district mandates. The teacher Professional Learning Communities planned day-to-day lessons.

Supervising and evaluating instruction. All participants agreed this was a function of the principal and the assistant principals but also that the teacher leaders were

responsible for providing support through non-evaluative walkthroughs and coaching

sessions. At Huey Newton, teacher evaluation was a "team effort."

> Supervising and evaluating instruction... [is a] responsibility for primarily [the] principal but it's still a big team effort because there's a lot of people and…one of the ways that…it's effective is that when you do have multiple people giving their evaluation of someone…[it] gives multiple perspectives on one individual. I may go into a classroom and someone else may go into a classroom, and they may see something totally different that I see, but if we compare notes, we can come to a mutual consensus…we can definitely get a clear picture of what's going on…not as a means to show any type of intimidation towards a teacher, but more just for to help. (Matthias, Interview)

Monitoring student progress. The participants agreed this function was the

responsibility of the both teacher leaders and administrators. "Managing student progress

in regards to data analysis, RTI, et cetera. That is something that I share with not only my

assistant principals, but my goal clarity coach as well (Debra, Interview)." The teacher

leaders made sure that the appropriate data was collected and assisted teachers in

analysis. They arranged the data for consumption and the principal, assistant principals,

and teacher leaders used this data to continually monitor the course of instruction.

Genevieve was responsible for ensuring this process continued. "…the monitoring of

student progress is something that I allow my assistant principal to do because that is

basically making sure that everyone's doing what they're supposed to be doing. It's like a

check and balance type of thing (Debra, Interview)."

Protecting instructional time. All participants felt they were responsible for

protecting instructional time. They all provided support for teachers in various areas to

ensure that classroom were safe and teachers had time to teach. Matthias in particular was

very focused on the importance of classroom/behavior management and classroom

culture as important to instruction.

…it's just a big responsibility because not only just instructional leadership, you've got to support with behavioral instruction, behavior management, the whole classroom management, in general just all the logistics, just making everything has a good flow and a good fit, because in the end, it's just number one, make sure that the students are safe. You can't learn if you're not safe, so safety is first. (Matthias, Interview)

Providing incentives for teachers and learning. The principal felt that she was responsible for this function but admitted she asked for input from the rest of her team. The other participants felt this was a function of the administrative team and also of the teaching staff.

How do you motivate those kids like they were motivated themselves when they were students? [Teachers] find that challenging, so one of things you have to talk to them about is how to use incentives that not only give them the opportunity to build the rapport for the students to take ownership but also for the students to build an intrinsic value for themselves in their learning. It doesn't necessarily have to be a reward system based upon giving them things and objects, but how do you give an incentive that rewards the kid and makes them feel good about themselves and the educational process. (Leon, Interview)

Promoting, developing, and implementing professional development. All four participants agreed the instructional assistant principal, Genevieve, was responsible for professional development.

Promote, develop and implement professional development. That is something that I give to my instructional AP. We use data from teachers, she proposes what the professional development will be, and then basically I'll allow her to be in charge of making sure, lining it up and making sure the professional development is going on in the time that it's supposed to go on. (Debra, Interview)

Genevieve and Matthias included Debra in this function and Leon stated they were all responsible. All four participants are included as presenters in the professional development calendar and have participated in planning and getting feedback on professional development. "We rotate between myself, the Academic AP, and then the math resource teacher (Leon, Interview)."

Maintaining high visibility. All of the participants agreed they all had a place in

this function.

> Having visibility, I think, is something that everyone is responsible for. When
> they see you out in the building, it allows you to be able to build relationships and
> lets the teachers know they're supported. It keeps order in the building. I mean,
> there aren't any surprises. Maintaining High Visibility is something that I feel like
> everyone needs to be responsible for. (Debra, Interview)

Although the participants from Huey Newton were able to classify instructional

leadership functions by the individuals involved in their fulfillment, they were clear

leadership in their school was accomplished through a distributed model initiated by the

principal, characterized by a culture of collaboration and communication and rooted in

unique relationships. Matthias described his former principal, Debra, as being the

facilitator of instructional leadership at Huey Newton. "I think she was all about trying to

raise and develop leaders."

> [R]elationships are different here. Our principal is a more of a 'relationships are
> key' and she trusts the people that she works with. It's like we have different skills
> that we can bring to the table and she allows us to bring something to the table…
> you have to have a principal who is open to not just being the one who has all the
> information. [One] that wants input, that wants shared leadership or distributed
> leadership. (Genevieve, Interview)

Distributed Instructional Leadership

The staff at Huey Newton accomplished the level of distributed instructional

leadership described above by practicing a system of constant communication. Leon

highlighted formal and informal meetings as critical in the shared leadership process. The

Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) had a weekly meeting where roles were defined and

responsibilities were outlined but there were also informal meetings between the

principal and assistant principals, the principal and the instructional assistant principal,

and the principal, the instructional assistant principal, and the teacher leaders. Although

major objectives were discussed at the formal meetings, the informal meetings provided the opportunity to create an open dialogue about ongoing instructional needs. Often these meetings occurred as a direct result of something observed in PLCs or Embedded Professional Development (EPD) pertaining to teacher needs. Instead of waiting a week for the next Instructional Leadership Team meeting, they were able to address issues immediately and make changes to the system on the spot:

> When [Debra] was here…her leadership was more about inclusion, which is very rare. You have a lot of schools where really you can go six, seven weeks without seeing the principal…When I came here that was one of the first things that I noticed, was how involved the principal was [in] the daily operations, as well as the visibility, as well as how the systems here were designed versus the other schools I've been in. Some of the systems were a work in progress but at least they were adopted for the school. They were constantly changing. That's one thing that was different than I've seen in other schools is that the systems were always being worked on weekly, daily and talked about… [Debra] valued feedback from her administrators and Instructional Leadership Team as well as people like myself … she would openly ask for feedback. She would make the final call but she valued that. That doesn't happen everywhere. Pretty much the principal dictates and decides what's going to happen in the school. There's very little conversation and feedback that is even welcome. Therefore, that kind of culture here was different from other schools. (Leon, Interview)

Genevieve believes that although the individuals on this Instructional Leadership Team supported the principal's vision, Debra encouraged them to be instructional leaders in their own right and truly shared the leadership with them. According to her, this was rare:

> I can only speak for schools that I either know a few people or my past school. The principal had all the information and there wasn't a lot of shared leadership or shared tasks. There were things that she did and there were things that the AP's did that was just unique to them. I don't feel like it's that way here. We all know and we all have a say so. We all have a direct influence. We all have a part in it. In the decision making we are very open and we share and we are constantly looking for feedback, sharing results, making next steps. We do that all together. It's not like one or two people plan something and then we all just follow. (Genevieve, Interview)

Assistant Principal as Instructional Leader

Although she had four assistant principals, Debra, leaned on one more than others for instructional leadership matters. She included the other assistant principals in instructional leadership by sharing information with them from professional development and requiring them to attend school based professional development. She wanted them in the loop but she was aware of the burden they carried dealing with student and teacher issues. So instead, she hired a fourth assistant principal who was not assigned a grade level and who was primarily responsible for instruction. Prior to being the principal at Huey Newton, Debra was the instructional assistant principal, so she did not create the role. She did, however, hire an instructional assistant principal to replace her and, she used that instructional assistant principal as a partner working together with her to accomplish instructional leadership functions rather than as a catch-all or as a principal's assistant:

> I see value in the role as an instructional assistant principal because that person… can really help pull instruction in for those teachers who need the extra support or the extra motivation to do the right thing. The principal cannot do all things, they can't run the building and take care of instruction. However, I think it takes a unique chemistry. If the instructional AP and the Principal are not on the same page, or if they don't have the same knowledge level, then it doesn't work out very well. I do see a lot of benefit, but it takes a lot to get to the point where you are finishing each other's sentences and you're all on the same page and you're all moving in the right direction. (Debra, Interview)

Genevieve agreed, as she considers herself an instructional assistant principal whose role is to "work with teachers to improve classroom instruction." Specifically, she analyzed data to determine areas for improvement, went into classrooms and worked with teachers, and provided training and support. She was also responsible for professional development (internal and external), monitoring Professional Learning Communities

(PLCs), monitoring data, collaborating with the state assistance, organizing walk-

throughs, and keeping track of progress towards improvement priorities:

> As an instructional AP, I work with teachers to improve classroom instruction. [I] work to provide them with professional development to increase various instructional strategies that are used in the classroom, as well as keep an eye on the student achievement data and use that to drive decision making. I work closely with the Principal in keeping an eye on student progress and monitoring systems and various tasks with the other APs dealing with discipline as needed. (Genevieve, Interview)

The teacher leaders also agreed on the nature of this partnership. Leon described

Debra as having the "heartbeat of the school" and directing instructional decisions but

working with Genevieve to "oversee the daily [instructional] operations." Debra provided

direction for the instructional assistant principal. She and Genevieve were both visible in

classrooms, collected and analyzed data, and provided feedback. Together, they used this

information to improve on instructional systems. Matthias and Leon both felt that in

Debra's absence, Genevieve was carrying the torch of instructional leader. This is

relevant because this is the only case where the teacher leaders saw the assistant principal

as an instructional leader.

Summary

At Huey Newton the principal had a vision for instructional leadership that

included her entire staff.

> With my vision you have, 'I can't do it all.' You try to empower other people to do it… everyone has an expertise or a specialty so that I don't have to be the expert and specialty in all areas but I kind of have all those people kind of talk to me and bring it all into fruition. (Debra, Interview)

This vision was not unique but what did stand out from the other cases was that

Debra was actually putting her vision into action. In this case, all of the participants

agreed on who was a part of instructional leadership and that it was distributed. They saw

Debra as a facilitator of distributed instructional leadership and they saw themselves as a part of this culture so much so that even after Debra left, they were continuing with what she had begun. This commitment to a vision of distribution made Huey Newton an example of distributed instructional leadership.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Pressure from increased educational accountability has created a premium on time in schools. Principals have more responsibilities than ever before and less time to accomplish them (Spillane & Harris, 2008). They are required manage the day-to-day operation of the school including but not limited to personnel, operations, student issues, budget, and grounds. They are also required to ensure that a sufficient percentage of their students score satisfactorily on state assessments and can demonstrate college and career readiness (USDOE, 2010). The latter has risen to utmost importance because failure to accomplish this goal can result in severe consequences including principal removal (Meyers, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2014; NEA, 2002; USDOE, 2009; 2010). In order to promote student success and keep their school from being sanctioned, principals must ensure teachers in their schools are providing effective instruction. Thus, it is important that the principal be an instructional leader (Brewer, 1993; Hallinger, 2005; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2008). This translates to ensuring that a significant amount of time and energy is spent on leadership that "increases the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional capacity" (Heck and Hallinger, 2014, p. 658). Because of the principal's wide range of responsibilities, it is impossible for him or her to accomplish this type of leadership alone (Lambert, 2002). A research based

solution to this problem is for instructional leadership to be distributed amongst the school staff (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Hulpia et al., 2011; Spillane & Healey, 2010; Spillane, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita; 2003; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004; Torrance, 2013).

Instructional leadership is comprised of three dimensions supported by ten functions: Defining the School Mission and Vision (*creating and communicating the mission and vision*), Managing the Instructional Program (*coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, and supervision and evaluating instruction*), and Developing the School Learning Climate Program (*protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, and providing incentives for teachers and learning*). These leadership functions provide action steps for the dimensions (Hallinger, 2011), which in turn provide a framework of a broad array of activities to be accomplished for effective instructional leadership. Although the principal is responsible for all of these leadership behaviors, distributed leadership lightens the load because it allows individuals to combine their expertise through authentic interaction and interdependence to accomplish these tasks creating a concerted action that is greater than the sum of its parts (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2013; Spillane et al., 2001). This distributed instructional leadership – principals sharing the instructional leadership functions with their staff – was the crux of this study.

Discussion

While instructional leadership can be shared with any member of a school staff, the majority of research on distributed leadership is focused on teachers (Angelle, 2010; Klar, 2011; Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007). Studies that include other leaders

present them as support for teachers and principals as instructional leaders rather that as legitimate instructional leaders themselves; this includes assistant principals (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Hulpia et al, 2011; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Petrides et al., 2014). Principals appear to be distributing instructional functions to teachers and sharing management/operational tasks with assistant principals. In spite of assistant principals having the same certification as principals and being able to act as principal in their absence, principals have traditionally used assistant principals as support staff as opposed to as instructional leaders (Hulpia et al., 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane et al., 2007). Many assistant principals, however, still see themselves as instructional leaders (Petrides et al., 2014) and believe they should be given the opportunity by the principal to act as such. The assistant principals in this study carry the title within their schools of instructional assistant principals, which implies the principal is open to including assistant principals in distributed instructional leadership. Under these circumstances, this study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and function of the assistant principal engaging in instructional leadership?

   a. What are the formal and informal responsibilities that support this role?

2. How does the instructional role of the assistant principal interact with the instructional responsibilities of the principal?

3. How does the instructional role of an assistant principal influence the broader vision of instructional leadership in the school?

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In addition to a discussion of the data in relation to the research questions, this chapter also includes conclusions drawn and recommendations for future research.

Research question 1. Each of the cases in this study purported to have assistant principals who engaged in instructional leadership. According to the principals, leadership was distributed to the assistant principals and other staff because the principals were aware of their inability to accomplish all of the instructional leadership functions alone. Succinctly, the function of assistant principals engaging in instructional leadership mirrored the research on assistant principals. Their main function was to, "to lighten the load of the principal" (Petrides et al., 2014). The nature of this role and the responsibilities that supported it were more convoluted.

The data showed assistant principals in this study each had a vast array of responsibilities and that they varied by site. There were a few things they had in common – teacher evaluation, supervision of a content area Professional Learning Community, committee membership, monitoring the completion of district/state mandates – but for the most part, their list of responsibilities was as diverse as those traditionally presented when assistant principals are discussed (Celikten, 2001; Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Williams, 1995). Another thing they had in common was their lack of responsibility for student discipline/student issues. This fact was directly in conflict with the traditional role of assistant principals who spend most of their time on discipline/student issues (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012). While ideally, not having to fill the role of disciplinarian should free up an assistant principal to be more of an instructional leaders, performing other duties as assigned by

the principal seems to have replaced this function at Harriet Tubman and Marcus Garvey. Only at Huey P. Newton did the instructional assistant principal spend the majority of her time on functions that she and the teacher leaders agreed were related to instructional leadership (e.g. planning and implementing professional development, coaching teachers, and monitoring student data, etc.). Wayne and Marla replaced student discipline with the job of building manager or assistant to the principal (e.g. managing state and district assessments, completing paperwork, reviewing student applications, scheduling, etc.). This does not mean that they were not engaging in instructional leadership functions, only that they were not perceived as doing so as the main function of their job by the staff interviewed. In these two cases, the teacher leaders saw themselves as instructional leaders more than they did their assistant principals whom they saw as support staff. This perspective was supported by research (Petrides et al., 2014).

Research question 2. The answer to this question was also divided amongst the cases. There were different types of interactions between the instructional role of the assistant principal and that of the principal. At Harriet Tubman, when the principal talked about her instructional assistant principal she called her an instructional assistant principal and stated that she leaned on her more than the other assistant principal for things of an instructional nature. She also stated they used formal and informal meetings to foster collaboration, the main meeting being the administrative team meeting where people shared their progress and that the agenda contained staff and student concerns as well as "something related to the instructional piece."

This was in direct contrast to the comments made by her assistant principals and teacher leaders. They described a situation where the instructional assistant principal was

more consumed with school operational functions than instruction. They also stated the assistant principals were not invited to the informal instructional meetings that the principal had with the teacher leaders and the administrative meetings were focused on staff and student issues, fire drills, and other procedural things. The assistant principals, including the instructional assistant principal, were not included in the instructional leadership hierarchy by the teacher leaders, they were placed adjacent, as support. The principal shared the planning and implementation of curriculum and professional development with the teacher leaders and did not include her assistant principals. The instructional assistant principal monitored grading practices and completed the paperwork for professional development, but rarely engaged in the work of teaching other than to do formal evaluations. Although she bore the name of assistant principal, Marla mostly functioned as a traditional assistant principal, focused on school operations and acting as support staff (Celikten, 2001; Kwan, 2009; Marshall, 1991; Marshall & Hooley, 1996). The only difference was her lack of responsibility for student discipline.

The assistant principal at Marcus Garvey had a list of responsibilities that included more instructional functions than the first assistant principal, including facilitating the Instructional Leadership Team and Staff Meetings and drafting the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. But like Marla at Harriet Tubman, he was also responsible for compliance and general operations. Wayne was referred to by the principal and the official school website as the "lead" assistant principal instead of as the instructional assistant principal. His principal had basically given him authority over the operation of the school and he functioned more as an associate principal than as an instructional assistant principal. He stated his job was to oversee the school with the other

assistant principals and take care of the things that the principal may not be able to do. The teacher leaders felt the principal was largely absent and the lead assistant principal was there as a facilitator for them although he was not as visible as the two grade level assistant principals. They felt he was there as a support and that they, as teachers, carried the bulk of the weight of instructional leadership.

Rather than engaging in instructional leadership routines, the instructional assistant principals at Harriet Tubman and Marcus Garvey were mired in the tools; they were more involved in the compliance aspect of instructional leadership than the actual function of leading. This finding was supported by research on assistant principals. More often than not, assistant principals act as assistant to the principal and take on the role of support staff and spend more of their time engaged in operational/management functions than instructional leadership (Hulpia et al., 2011; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Spillane et al., 2007).

The assistant principal at Huey Newton was different. Not only was she universally referred to by all of the participants at her school as an instructional assistant principal, the principal also described her as her partner in instructional leadership; together they were the main instructional leader in the school. The principal stated that she leaned on Genevieve more than she did on the other assistant principals for instructional leadership and that Genevieve's number one job was to monitor instruction and instructional systems and to provide instructional support for teachers. She was responsible for paperwork and matters of compliance but she was also an active participant and facilitator of instructional leadership routines and a contributor to the structures within which they operated. This finding was of interest because it was in

direct contradiction to the literature; typically principals are more inclined to share "management-type" tasks with assistant principals and instructional functions with teacher leaders (Oleszewski et al., 2012; Spillane et al., 2007).

Assistant principals do what they are directed to do by their principals (Celikten, 2001; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Their instructional role is what the principal says it is and they cannot take on responsibilities that are not shared with them. Assistant principals' involvement in distributed instructional leadership is dependent on how their principal chooses to distribute instructional leadership (Petrides et al., 2014; Spillane et al., 2007). This research is reflected in the cases presented here; the instructional role of the assistant principal was a direct result of how the principal chose to share their instructional responsibility.

Research Question 3. Each principal in the three cases fostered a vision of growth for their students and staffs. They all wanted to encourage leadership and build this capacity in others. This included instructional leadership being distributed to the assistant principal as well as teacher leaders. All three of the principals interviewed felt they were instructional leaders and two out of the three considered themselves the main instructional leader in their school. One principal named the Instructional Leadership Team as the main instructional leader at her school. In spite of being the leader of the school, they all recognized they were not the only instructional leaders and that they could not accomplish all of the instructional leadership alone. All three principals saw the importance of empowering others to share in the instructional leadership.

> …there's no way I can possibly tap into every PLC, every single week so really making sure that those other people in the building have the capacity to go and help facilitate those groups… It gives me I think more time to focus… so I can really kind of delve deeper … because I know that the APs are taking care of

making sure that the needs of [other] departments are being met so I don't spread myself too thin… (Nancy, Interview, Harriet Tubman)

I think that was a big initiative to empower teacher leadership, and to get at that other piece that I can't do. I mean, I can't be your peer, observe you, and I can't give you feedback. I'm not your peer. I have to find a way to empower them. (Rita, Interview, Marcus Garvey)

With my vision you have, 'I can't do it all.' You try to empower other people to do it… everyone has an expertise or a specialty so that I don't have to be the expert and specialty in all areas but I kind of have all those people kind of talk to me and bring it all into fruition. (Debra, Interview, Huey Newton)

It was apparent they all considered themselves distributed instructional leaders, however, the difference was in the actual act of distribution. The vision was important but the implementation affected the way that the vision for distributed instructional leadership was communicated to staff. At Marcus Garvey, the principal offered autonomy to the lead assistant principal to work within her leadership vision to function as the leader in her place. This translated to him becoming a facilitator of instructional leadership of teachers and him being viewed as an operations manager. The assistant principal at Harriet Tubman was dubbed as "instructional" on paper but her list of responsibilities and her exclusion from private instructional team meetings reflected an overall manager who acted as an assistant to the principal and also came across as an operations manager. The assistant principal at Huey Newton worked in tandem with the principal to create and implement instructional systems. As a result, they appeared to the staff as partners and the assistant principal came across as an instructional leader in her own right. This supports distributed instructional leadership being a function of the beliefs and actions of the principal (Angelle, 2010; Petrides et al., 2014).

Conclusions

The findings discussed in this study provide insight into the assistant principal's role in the process of distributed instructional leadership. Although this study is limited to three middle schools in a large urban district, many of the findings correspond to the larger body of research on this topic and therefore inform the literature. It also provides insight on the role of the assistant principal in distributed instructional leadership as it currently exists. What follows are conclusions drawn based on the data shared in this study.

First, the role of the assistant principal in distributed instructional leadership is dependent upon the vision of the principal. One of the main tenets of distributed leadership is that it is additive; there is no assumption of hierarchy and no individual's role is more important than another (Bennett et al., 2003; Gronn, 2002). This was not the case in this study. The data in this study supports the fact that in spite of the staff's perception of the principal as an instructional leader, the principal remains the most important factor in the leadership landscape based on their position as sovereign leader of the school (Coelli & Green, 2012; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009; Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson, & Yeh, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). While principals may not always assert their authority over the actions of instructional leadership, it is theirs to hold or distribute. In this study, the principals decided who led each department, who left the school for professional development, who facilitated meetings, and who presented professional development. Principals can choose to share this responsibility with a leadership team but regardless of who makes the final

decision, the ultimate authority is with the principal. If she distributed leadership with someone, another person cannot swoop in and take it over. Assistant principals' role in instructional leadership is at the discretion of their principal regardless of their interest in or efforts to expand that role. In order for an assistant principal to be an effective instructional leader it is necessary for that role to be the one sanctioned for them by the principal.

Second, the role that is perceived is not always the role that is implemented. There is not always congruence between the distribution of leadership that is planned and what occurs. In this study, there were assistant principals who were absolved of their responsibilities involving direct interactions with students so that they would be freer to practice instructional leadership. In spite of being relieved of these duties, two out of the three instructional assistant principals were not as focused on instructional leadership as either they wanted to be or their staff wanted them to be. The role of disciplinarian was replaced with operations manager. In order for assistant principals to be effective instructional leaders, this role must be protected.

Third, the role of the assistant principal as an instructional leader is as diverse as the traditional role of the assistant principal. They had things in common– teacher evaluation, supervision of a content area Professional Learning Community, committee membership, and monitoring the completion of district/state mandates – but there was diversity in what functions were shared with them. Their individual responsibilities were as diverse as those of traditional assistant principals. One finding of interest was that only one of these instructional assistant principals played a significant role in the development

of curriculum and teacher professional development. In the other two schools, these functions were the responsibility of the teachers.

The final conclusion drawn was that assistant principals want to be instructional leaders and may see themselves as instructional leaders even when no one else does. This was also reflected in the research. Petrides et al. (2014) examined the place assistant principals held in instructional leadership. They found teachers and principals perceived assistant principals as support staff and this perception hindered the assistant principals' ability to successfully function as instructional leaders. In spite of those perceptions, assistant principals still considered themselves as instructional leaders. The same was true for the assistant principals in this study. Also, in this study as well as in the Petrides et al. (2014) study, assistant principals expressed a desire for more professional development that was aligned with instructional leadership as well as more opportunities to share in this type of leadership.

Implications for Practice

This study provides multiple insights into the future practice of enlisting assistant principals as instructional leaders. In order for assistant principals to effectively be instructional leaders, they need to be properly trained in instructional leadership, they need to remain up to date on best practices, and the principal needs to see their value as instructional leaders. This has implications for principal preparation programs, professional development, and models of distributed instructional leadership. Aspiring principals and assistant principals in certification programs must be exposed to instruction on how to be instructional leaders and how to work in tandem with other leaders to accomplish tasks. Principals are exposed to budget, staffing, organizational

leadership, etc., exposing them to distributed instructional leadership would begin the process of normalizing shared leadership by encouraging them to create leadership frameworks where instructional leadership is shared amongst multiple leaders.

Ongoing professional development is also important. One of the primary complaints of both assistant principals and teachers in this study was the lack of professional development for assistant principals pertaining to instructional leadership. Currently teacher leaders are exposed to professional development that coincides with their specialties; math leads participate in training that supports math curriculum, Goal Clarity Coaches train to better lead teachers and facilitate PLCs, Resource Teachers are trained to be a resource for their fellow teachers etc. According to participants, professional development for assistant principals is geared towards student discipline. This supports the historical role of assistant principals as primarily disciplinarians (Cranston et al., 2004; Hausman et al., 2002; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oleszewski et al., 2012). As long as resources and support are put into the role of assistant principals as disciplinarian, then that is where their energy will be focused. If assistant principals are ever to be seen as viable instructional leaders then they must receive support in the way of resources and professional development.

The final implication is most crucial, in order for assistant principals to effectively function as instructional leaders, principals must commit to including them as full partners in distributed instructional leadership. Historically principals have fostered the mindset that assistant principals are there to support principals and teachers by performing administrative functions. Not only does this cause them to overlook the assistant principal's contribution to leadership functions but it also encourages this

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mindset in teachers and other school staff. This perspective stifles assistant principals from fully participating in the instructional leadership process and marginalizes them in their traditional role as disciplinarians and policy managers. (Glanz, 1994; Marshall, 1991; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). In order for principals to get the most out of distributed instructional leadership, it is necessary for them to work with assistant principals and allow them to function as instructional leaders. This requires a commitment to a vision for distributed instructional leadership and a change in the traditional mindset.

Opportunities for Future Research

The findings in this study lend themselves to an array of different opportunities for future research. First, the field would benefit from a large-scale mixed methods study that replicated this one and added grade level assistant principals and classroom teachers. Having a larger and more diverse population in addition to having access to more demographic data would shed light on the reasons behind the conclusions discussed. Also, including other staff members would expand the perspectives on instructional leadership.

Another study that would be beneficial is one that is focused on the motivation (or lack of motivation) of principals to share instructional leadership with assistant principals. Researchers could examine the factors that influence a principal's willingness to distribute instructional leadership functions to certain individuals. Is it related to their experience, expertise, personality, or some combination? Is it because educators are still mired in the traditional mindset of what an assistant principal is capable of? Does the assistant principal's passion for instructional leadership effect this? Is it affected by the

status of the school? At Harriet Tubman, regardless of the school's test scores, the school had a reputation to maintain and they were comfortable doing the same thing they had always done. Did the principal discount the instructional influence of the assistant principals because she did not need to consider it? At Marcus Garvey, the middle school was about to close and it did not matter if their scores improved, did this influence the level of nuance in the approach to distributed instructional leadership? In this study, the best example of distributed instructional leadership came from a principal who was removed. Did her brand of shared leadership influence this removal or was it the answer to the problem of student achievement and she ran out of time to see it through? These and other questions could be addressed in a study focused on the principal's motivation to share leadership.

A third option would be to examine assistant principal's access to professional development focused on instructional leadership and its influence on their capacity to function as instructional leaders. Finally, another pertinent study would be an examination of the effect, if any, distributed instructional leadership including assistant principals has on student outcomes.

Summary

The role of assistant principals engaging in instructional leadership is diverse and complex. The principal dictates the role of the assistant principal and different members of the staff based on their interaction may perceive it differently. The assistant principals in this study wanted to be instructional leaders and some of their responsibilities lent themselves to this role, however, in some situations management responsibilities and staff assignments hindered their ability to participate in instructional leadership in the

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way that they would have preferred. Future research is needed to further examine this

concept to determine the reasons behind these conclusions.

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APPENDIX A

Codes

1. Definition/Description of Instructional Leadership
2. Principal as Instructional Leader
   a. Main Instructional Leader
   b. Principal as Catalyst for Instructional Leadership
   c. Principal Can't Do it All
   d. Principal's Vision
3. Distributed Instructional Leadership
   a. Collaboration
   b. Communicating Mission and Vision
   c. Communication
   d. Coordinating Curriculum
   e. Incentives for Learning
   f. Incentives for Teaching
   g. Maintaining Visibility
   h. Monitoring Student Progress
   i. Professional Development
   j. Protecting Instructional Time
   k. Supervising and Evaluating Instruction
   l. Teacher Leaders
      i. Responsibility of Teacher Leaders
      ii. Teacher Leaders as Main Instructional Leaders
   m. Creating Vision and Mission
4. Assistant Principal's Role
   a. Assistant Principal as Support
   b. Assistant Principal's Fear of Inadequacy
   c. Assistant Principal's Lack of Professional Development
   d. Choice of Professional Development
   e. Discipline as a Distraction
   f. Historical Perception of Assistant Principals
   g. Instructional Assistant Principal
      i. Role of Instructional Assistant Principal
         1. Scheduling
         2. Supervision
   h. Instructional Leadership to the Assistant Principal
   i. Management
   j. Most Important Responsibilities
   k. New Assistant Principal Mindset

APPENDIX B

Responsibilities of Assistant Principals Engaged in Instructional Leadership
Presented By Case - <u>Commonalities Underlined</u>

Case 1 Harriet Tubman	Case 2 Marcus Garvey	Case 3 Huey Newton
<u>Teacher Evaluation and Growth Plans</u>	Principal Meetings	ACT Prep Co-Coordinator
Duty Assignments/Monitoring	Content Support	Delinquent Fees
Discipline Reports	Office Staff Supervision	Course Recovery Supervisor*
Lockers/Locks/Keys	Leave Time Approval	<u>Walkthrough Coordinator</u>
Building and Grounds	<u>Safety Procedures</u>	Instructional Support
<u>Safety/Drill Coordinator</u>	Athletics	New Teacher PLC Coordinator
Master Schedule	<u>Instructional Leadership Team*</u>	Orientation
Schedule Compliance Report	<u>Teacher Evaluation and Growth Plans*</u>	PD Coordinator
Master Data System Troubleshooting	<u>Walkthroughs*</u>	Staff Evaluations
Special Program Application Process	Professional Learning Community	<u>Supervise Instruction*</u>
<u>Program Review</u>	Facilitation/Monitoring*	Teacher of the Month
English Language Learner	Standards Based Grading	Textbooks
Programming/Intervention	<u>Comprehensive School Improvement</u>	Assessment Reports
Transportation	<u>Plan*</u>	
<u>Walkthroughs</u>	Instructional Feedback*	
Staff Recognition/Incentives	<u>Program Review*</u>	
Security Codes	Extended School Services*	
Dress Code Oversight		
Student Planners		
Grant Writing		
Professional Development Proposals		
District Data		
First Aid Responder		
Back-Up Team Administrator		
Site Base Council		
<u>Comprehensive School Improvement Plan</u>		
<u>Content Support*</u>		
<u>Professional Learning Community</u>		
<u>Facilitator</u>		
<u>Instructional Leadership Team*</u>		
*Responsibility of all Administrators		

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol –Principal

Exploring Instructional Leadership Capacity

1. What is your vision and mission for teaching and learning in your school?
2. Do you consider yourself as an instructional leader? Why or why not?
   a. Who is the main instructional leaders in your school? Why?
3. How would you define your role as an Instructional Leader? What are the responsibilities that support this role?
4. Name your top three responsibilities as an Instructional Leader and tell me why you think that it is this way.

Exploring Distributed Instructional Leadership

1. With whom do you share your instructional leadership responsibilities?
2. How does this affect your vision for teaching and learning?
3. How do you share your role as an instructional leader with your assistant principals? Is there one you lean on more than the others? Why?
4. Here is a list of responsibilities attributed to instructional leadership, please select those that you share with your assistant principals. Why do you think these are shared and the others are not? Are there any that you are solely responsible for? The assistant principal? Another leader?

- Creating the school mission and vision.
- Communicating the school mission and vision to stakeholders
- Coordinating curriculum
- Supervising and evaluating instruction
- Managing student progress (data collection/analysis, RtI, etc.)
- Protecting instructional time. Ensuring that teachers have time to teach
- Providing incentives for teachers
- Providing incentives for learning
- Promote, develop, implement professional development
- Maintaining high visibility

* If they indicate that others participate, ask for specific observable examples*

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol – Assistant Principal

Exploring Leadership in Action

1. How would you define your role as an assistant principal?
2. What are the responsibilities that support this role?
3. How has the role changed or evolved?
    a. How is it different from what you anticipated? Is it more or less complex? How?
4. Name your top three responsibilities as an assistant principal and tell me why you think that it is this way.

Exploring Instructional Leadership

1. How do you define instructional leadership?
2. Who is the main instructional leader in your school? Why do you say this?
3. Do you consider yourself as an instructional leader? Why or why not?

Exploring Distributed Instructional Leadership

1. In addition to the principal who else is involved in instructional leadership? What does that look like?
2. How do you share your role as an instructional leader with the principal? With other leaders?
3. Here is a list of responsibilities attributed to instructional leadership, please select those that are shared with you. Why do you think these are shared and the others are not? Are there any that you are solely responsible for? The principal? Another leader?

    • Creating the school mission and vision.
    • Communicating the school mission and vision to stakeholders
    • Coordinating curriculum
    • Supervising and evaluating instruction
    • Managing student progress (data collection/analysis, RtI, etc.)
    • Protecting instructional time. Ensuring that teachers have time to teach
    • Providing incentives for teachers
    • Providing incentives for learning
    • Promote, develop, implement professional development
    • Maintaining high visibility

    * If they indicate that they participate, ask for specific observable examples*

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol –Teacher Leader

Exploring Leadership in Action

1. Do you consider yourself as part of the school leadership team? Why or why not?
2. What are the responsibilities that support this role?
3. Name your top three responsibilities as Teacher Leader and tell me why you think that it is this way.

Exploring Instructional Leadership

1. How do you define instructional leadership?
2. Who is the main instructional leader in your school? Why do you say this?
3. What is your role in the instructional leadership process? What are the responsibilities that support this role?

Exploring Distributed Instructional Leadership

1. In addition to the principal, who else is involved in instructional leadership? What does that look like?
2. Are instructional leadership duties in your school shared with the assistant principal? How?
3. Describe the ways that the principal and assistant principal share instructional leadership with you.
4. Here is a list of responsibilities attributed to instructional leadership, please select those that you share. Why do you think these are shared and the others are not? Are there any that you are solely responsible for? The assistant principal? The principal?

   - Creating the school mission and vision.
   - Communicating the school mission and vision to stakeholders
   - Coordinating curriculum
   - Supervising and evaluating instruction
   - Managing student progress (data collection/analysis, RtI, etc.)
   - Protecting instructional time. Ensuring that teachers have time to teach
   - Providing incentives for teachers
   - Providing incentives for learning
   - Promote, develop, implement professional development
   - Maintaining high visibility

* If they indicate that they participate, ask for specific observable examples*

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Jefferson County Public Schools	**7/2011-Present**	**Louisville, KY**
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