A Professional Development Project for School Leaders: Including Investigations of the Value of the Project to the Participants

William Larson
Ohio University - Southern

Abstract

Administrators, at both the school and district levels, have challenging responsibilities (Greenfield, 1995; Gronn, 2003). The administrators are responsible for the provision of leadership and management for a plethora of matters, including cleanliness, conflict resolution, construction, finances, instruction and learning, maintenance, nutrition, and transportation, among others. Administrators need well-developed knowledge and skills in order to be able to address these expectations (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007). While a substantive level of understanding can be obtained in graduate level preparation programs, the administrators are served by engaging in professional development throughout their careers in order to remain current regarding the ongoing changes and expectations of education. For example, demands for accountability regarding student learning, for which administrators tend to be ultimately responsible, are growing among policymakers, particularly at the state and federal levels (Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita, & Zoltners, 2002). This paper pertains to a professional development program, the Leadership Project, which started as a small endeavor and has grown into a learning community with participants from nearly twenty percent of the counties in the state of [NAME OF STATE]. The story of the Leadership Project, including an analysis of its growth, is reported in this paper. The acronym LP will be used, as it is the manner in which the Leadership Project is known.

Introduction

A learning community for school administrators was introduced nineteen years ago at the [NAME] Regional Campus of [NAME] University. The focus of the learning community was and continues to be the professional development of current school administrators. The initiation of the community began after school administrators in the region had requested that the dean of the campus provide professional development for them, particularly after the discontinuance of a similar project by

another organization. The requests of school administrators led to the initiation of the Leadership Project (LP)[1]. The LP, which began with one small cohort of less than fifteen superintendents, now annually serves approximately three hundred participating administrators via cohorts for elementary principals, secondary principals, superintendents and treasurers. The growth of the project has provoked questions, answers to which are pursued in this paper. More specifically, the questions are; (a) has the LP contributed in a useful manner to the professional development of school administrators; (b) which of the LP's implementation strategies appear to have contributed to its viability as a source of professional development; (c) what have been the perceptions of the participating administrators regarding the influence of the LP upon their growth and development?

The story of the LP, along with answers to these questions, has been reported and analyzed in this paper. To obtain this objective, an examination of the related literature and investigations of the perceptions of the participating administrators regarding the value of the LP, including their levels of attendance at its seminars has been conducted. Descriptions of these factors are included in greater detail throughout this paper.

A Review of the Related Literature

A review of the related literature has been developed in order to provide a framework in which to consider the participating administrators' perceptions of the Leadership Project. The review contains a synopsis of the literature pertaining to the professional development needs of administrators and the manner in which the development should be delivered. Also included is a description of the strategies upon which the LP has been implemented, along with an identification of the theoretical constructs upon which the strategies have been based. The review is concluded with an identification of the relationships that exist between the literature and the strategies.

The value of the professional development for school administrators is well documented in the literature (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Foley, 2001; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002;

---

[1] Only portions of the name of the project and its acronym have been used in order to avoid the inclusion of identifying information.

Peterson, 2002; Petzko, 2004). Each of the authors has attested to the importance of the provision of professional development in order that leaders will be prepared to address their responsibilities in an effective manner. In addition, each of the authors has proposed specific approaches to enhance the effectiveness of the professional development. Several of the approaches appear to overlap, and others seem to be distinctive to an author.

A rather thorough treatment of professional development for school leaders has been offered by Daresh and Playko (1992). The aspects of their findings that seem applicable to this report purport that professional development should be structured in a manner that is compatible with the responsibilities of the participants. Particular attention is focused upon the manner in which the responsibilities interface with the environments of the districts and schools and the learning needs of the students. The authors also suggest that professional development should be delivered in an engaging manner that is reflective of the tenets of andragogy, adult learning. In order to pursue these ends successfully, Daresh and Playko (1992) suggest that the input of the participants should be sought and used for the construction of the professional development and it should be nurtured with the use of both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation. The authors propose the importance of networking opportunities for the professional development participants. In a like manner, Daresh and Playko (1992) suggest the utilization of an inclusive approach that values alliances and collaborations with other organizations. In other publications, Daresh (1997; 2004) proposes the value of mentoring, particularly for beginning principals. Their development is purported to be enhanced with the opportunity for interaction with knowledgeable and caring mentors.

Collaborative structures, interagency interactions, and attention to strategies for conflict resolution are important for the professional development of secondary principals, according to Foley (2001). Professional development, according to Grogan and Andrews (2002), should be conveyed in a manner that is cognizant of administrative practices, in accordance with the focus of the schools and districts in which the administrators work, reflective of research and theory, and conducive to practitioner-based learning. Participant motivation, diverse forms of professional development opportunities, support in the form of mentoring, practice-based development, and the existence of a learning community are reported by Kochran et al. (2002) as being important aspects of professional development. Peterson (2002) suggests professional development for

administrators should be complementary to the participants' learning needs, should incorporate engaging learning activities, and should be focused upon assisting the participants to obtain enhanced knowledge, skills, and understandings of cultures that can be used to improve their schools. Collaboration, mentoring, networking, a responsibility-related focus, and reflective practices represent the strategies recommended by Petzko (2004).

The LP has been implemented based upon four operational strategies. The strategies have been selected to be complementary to the vision of the regional campus, the culture of the region, and the effectiveness of the project, as opposed to practices used in other professional development programs as described in the literature. The strategies pertain to the perceived importance of professional development that is (a) focused upon the needs of school administrators, as opposed to other educators; (b) dedicated to the preparation of school administrators to address the challenges of their work; (c) delivered with servant leadership in an open and ongoing learning community, in which the input of the participants is solicited and utilized; and (d) based primarily upon intrinsic factors, with only one extrinsic factor. The theoretical foundations for the strategies, as found in the literature, are described in the remaining paragraphs of this section.

A perception exists that an organization works best when it has a well-defined focus, as opposed to a poorly defined sense of direction in which attempts are made to be everything to everybody (Kaplan & Norton, 2001; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994). In other words, a carefully directed use of the resources of an organization can contribute to the obtainment of its mission. For this reason, the LP has attempted to deliver professional development by focusing almost exclusively upon the self-identified needs of the participating school administrators, as opposed to others, such as teachers. Polite denials have been made to the requests, which have been received for the initiation of cohorts for other groups,

Challenging responsibilities face school administrators on a daily basis (Fullan, 2009; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In response to these responsibilities, the LP provides seminars in which the administrators gain knowledge of practices that work and an understanding of the concepts, upon which the practices are based. Being aware of effective practices, without an understanding of the concepts upon which they have been built, can leave administrators at a disadvantage when attempting to apply the practices to the cultures of their own school communities (Osterman, 1990;

Purkey & Smith, 1983). Knowing the concepts, without an understanding of the manner in which they translate into effective practices, is also of little value to practitioners. In other words, a "tool-kit" of effective practices and related concepts can best enhance the capacity of administrators to identify contextually-based solutions to the challenges that they regularly face.

An open (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975) and ongoing (Borko, 2004; Petzko, 2004) learning community in which the participants provide significant input serves the needs of such a community. The strategy reflects that an open system, one that in this case is open to the input and involvement of all administrators, often leads to a sense of ownership and it, in-turn, results in a desired level of commitment to a useful learning experience (Hassel, E., 1999; Mary Parker Follett Foundation, 2002; Seltzer & Himley, 1995). For this reason, the participants designate topics for the seminars regarding what they need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to address their responsibilities in an effective manner. The seminar topics, which have been chosen by the participants, reflect the plethora of responsibilities that principals, superintendents, and treasurers address on an ongoing basis. In some cases, the topics have been relatively current issues, such as the emotional maltreatment of students by teachers and staff members, and in other cases they have echoed more perennial needs of administrators, such as ways to cope with the stresses associated with their jobs. The majority of the seminar topics have related directly or indirectly with effective instruction, learning, and assessment.

This strategy to obtain the participating administrator's commitment to professional growth also comprises their involvement in other related issues, such as the identification of the number, dates, and locations of the seminars. In order to glean the desired input, planning committees of each of the cohorts meet at least once per year to discuss and formulate recommendations. Then, the project's part-time director and part-time administrative assistant transform the recommendations of the planning committees into the seminars. This aspect of the work of the two part-time staff members reflects a servant leadership approach (Greenleaf, 1998). They perceive their roles to be stewards of the LP, with the intent of providing significant learning experiences for the administrators. One might suggest that the LP has been operated in a "grassroots" fashion. In fact, some of the participants have suggested that the acronym for the LP should be changed to "OUR" in order to reflect the inclusive approach.

Intrinsic motivation represents the primary approach to encourage attendance at the LP's seminars (Deci & Ryan, 2008; McLaughlin, 1978).

Only one extrinsic motivator exists. It is a certificate of attendance that can be used for license renewal. However, the certificates represent only a minor source of motivation for attendance at the seminars, as the administrators almost certainly would not be able to acquire enough certificates, during a renewal period, to obtain a license. The purposeful absence of other extrinsic motivators, such as university credit, has been made apparent to the participants, along with indications of the values of an intrinsic approach. The basis for the objective is the perception that professional development will be more meaningful to the participants if it is based upon their internal desire to grow and improve. For example, the participants appear more likely to apply the knowledge and skills gained at the seminars if they are focused upon professional growth, as opposed to just the renewal of a license (Bierman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000).

A comparison has been made of the professional development practices that have been identified in the literature with the strategies upon which the LP has been implemented, in order to summarize this literature review. The operation of the LP, as already reported, has been based upon strategies, which were selected to address the context in which the project has been implemented. However, the LP's strategies also align well with the practices proposed in the literature. More specifically, sixty percent of the practices from the literature are similar, if not identical, to the strategies. The other forty percent of the practices reflect the "ways of doing business" that have emerged from the implementation of the LP's strategies.

Methodology for the Report's Analysis

A report, including an analysis of the nineteen-year existence of the Leadership Project, has been presented in this paper. The report contains selected factors, which include the results of external and internal investigations and the outcomes of a literature review. An objective has been to cross-reference, triangulate (Berg, 2007), these factors in order to gain an enhanced and accurate perspective of the outcomes of the project.

The results of the internal and external investigations have been included as being reflective of the perceptions of the administrators regarding the value the LP as a source of effective and relevant professional development. The external investigation had been conducted at the end of the first ten years of the project, 2002. The investigation had been led by a professional researcher, who had no ties to the LP and had been contracted for the purpose of gaining an outside and unbiased perspective of the perceptions of the administrators to the professional development offered

by the project. The outcomes of the external investigation emerged from "paper and pencil" surveys and interviews. The internal investigation has been based upon the results of the evaluations that the participants have completed anonymously at the end of each seminar during the remaining nine years (2003-11) of the ongoing project. The numbers of attendees and evaluations received at these seminars have been included in order to provide a context to understand the outcomes of the internal investigation. The outcomes of the work of the external reviewer and the results of the anonymous internal evaluations have been used in order to minimize bias from the study (Reichardt & Borman, 1994).

In addition, a literature review has been included, with the intent of anchoring the study in a thoughtful framework. The review contains an overview of the literature pertaining to the professional development, along with a discussion of the strategies and theoretical constructs upon which the LP has been implemented (Tracy, 2010). "Minding and experiencing" reflections " (Mitchell, 2006, p. 249) have contributed to the manner in which this manuscript has been organized, the methodology that has been used to conduct the study, the commentary regarding the results of the investigations, and the summary and suggestions for the future. The objective has been to identify valid relationships (Kvale, 1995) that reflect trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1986).

Results of the Investigation of the Perceptions of the Participating Administrators

The results of the investigations of the participating administrators regarding their perceptions of the relevance and value of the LP's professional development have been organized in four ways. They include:

1. An overview of the manner in which the participants responded to the prompts of a survey and interviews conducted by a professional researcher as part of the external review of the LP. A summary of the overview can be found in Table 1.
2. An overview of the ways that participants have reacted to the internal evaluations, particularly the perceived level of engagement and relevance. Also included are the number of seminars, the average number of participants, and the average number of evaluations received at each of the seminars. A summary of the overview can be found in Table 2.
3. A summary of the comments offered by the participating administrators in the external and internal investigations.

Sample, Survey Prompts	Elementary Principals: Percentage of participants who agree with a prompt	Secondary Principals: Percentage of participants who agree with a prompt	Superintendents: Percentage of participants who agree with a prompt	Treasurers: Percentage of participants who agree with a prompt
Table 1. External Evaluation: Sample of Responses of Participants to Survey Prompts, regarding the Leadership Project's first ten years, 1993-2002.				
Has provided opportunities to network and learn how others have handled issues like those with which I deal.	97.3	100	100	100
Has conducted seminars that have been relevant to my work.	97.3	100	100	100
Has helped me to develop a better understanding of my job and how it fits into the larger picture of education	91.9	95.6	96.8	96.7
Has **not** provided me with as much information or skill development as I needed	2.7	15.6	9.7	10.0
Has helped me to increase confidence in my abilities.	94.6	95.6	96.8	100
Has led to my taking (or	86.5	93.3	100	100

planning to take) specific actions based upon what I have learned.				

Note: The "n" for elementary principals, secondary principals, superintendents, and treasurers is respectively 37, 45, 31, and 30. The total "n" is 103.

Cohorts	Total number of seminars/ average number of seminars per year	Average attendance /average number of evaluations received per seminar	Total attendance/ total number of evaluations received	Percentage of evaluations indicating that the seminars seemed relevant	Percentage of evaluations indicating that the seminars seemed engaging
Elementary Principals	35/3.86	29/26	1015/ 910	92	95
Secondary Principals	35/3.86	35/31	1225/ 1085	98	91
Superintendents	36/4	38/36	1368/ 1296	95	95
Treasurers	36/4	42/41	1512/ 1476	98	97

Table 2. Internal Evaluation: Summary of Responses of Participants to Leadership Project Seminar Evaluations regarding the period from 2003-11.

Note: Given the magnitude of the number of attendees and evaluations received over the nine-year period, a modest amount of error, no more than one percent, likely exists.

The participants in the external evaluation, which comprises a total population of one hundred and three, have been requested to react to prompts regarding the manner in which the LP has served their professional development needs. Two types of prompts have been used. One type is stated in a positive manner, as "has conducted seminars that have been relevant to my work." The other type of prompt is stated in a reverse manner, as "has not provided me with as much information or skill development as I needed." The responses to the first type of prompts range

from a low of eighty-six and half percent to a high of one hundred percent. For the second type of prompt, the responses range from a low of two and seven-tenths percent to a high of fifteen and six-tenths percent. The responses of the elementary principals and treasurers are respectively the least and most positive. The responses of the secondary principals and superintendents are similar, with the responses from the superintendents being slightly more positive.

The participants in the internal evaluation have been requested to complete an evaluation at the end of each seminar, for which 4767 have been received over the nine-year period. The participants are asked if the seminar has been engaging and relevant to their responsibilities. The responses to the question regarding the relevance of the seminars range from a low of ninety-two percent for the elementary principals to a high of ninety-eight percent for the treasurers. The reactions to the question pertaining to the whether the seminars have been engaging, range from a low of ninety-one percent for the secondary principals to a high of ninety-seven percent for the treasurers. The elementary principal and secondary principal cohorts have had, thirty-five seminars, for an average of nearly four seminars per year. The superintendent and treasurer cohorts have had thirty-six seminars for an average of four seminars per year. The average attendance and average number of evaluations received at each of the seminars range respectively from a low of twenty-nine and twenty-six for the elementary principals to a high of forty-two and forty-one for the treasurers.

The external and internal evaluation findings include indications that (a) there have been high levels of satisfaction with the program; (b) the relevance of the topics and the quality of the speakers and the opportunity to share and learn strategies that work from peers from throughout the region has represented a significant reason for attending the seminars; and (c) the opportunity for input and ownership in the agenda and the environment, in which the seminars are conducted, has been important to the participants. Also found in the external and internal evaluations have been indications that (a) the support received from superintendents and the quality of the knowledge gained at the seminars has helped the participants, particularly the principals, to overcome the discomfort of leaving their buildings in order to attend the seminars; and (b) the LP's programs should be maintained as they are, not changed. The old axiom, "If it is not broken, don't fix it" has actually been used in the responses.

Individual comments, which have emerged from the external and internal evaluations, indicate that (a) the LP is the only "real" professional development that we get (from a secondary principal); (b) the seminars feature very relevant topics that we need in order to address the responsibilities of our jobs (from an elementary principal); (c) this was one of the most informative professional development sessions that I have attended anywhere (from a superintendent); and (d) I have learned strategies to appropriate and expend funds in ways that will make additional revenue available for instruction and to enhance student learning (from a treasurer).

Reactions to the seminars, as reported above, have tended to be positive, particularly regarding the topics and speakers. However, occasional negative reactions have been received. For example, a scheduled speaker decided on the Friday before a Tuesday seminar to send an assistant to make the planned presentation to the cohort of secondary principals. The replacement speaker, who exhibited effective presentations skills, delivered a canned presentation, given the last-minute nature of the speaking assignment. The topic for the presentation unfortunately was of little relevance to secondary principals. With the exception of a few other similar reactions to programs and speakers, most of the negative reactions have pertained to "creature comfort" matters, such as the temperature of the room.

Proposed Meanings of the Results

The overall reactions to the LP's professional development seminars appear to have been positive. Several reasons demonstrate this outcome. The project has remained viable for nineteen years. Few individuals predicted at the initiation of the LP that it would continue to serve administrators for such a lengthy period of time. Plus, the LP has had to work through such "ups and downs" as the loss and replacement of portions of its monetary support. The reactions of the participants to the seminars, as reported in the external and internal evaluations, have been favorable. The overall levels of attendance appear to have been desirable. After all, attendance is purely voluntarily and, as already reported, is based primarily upon intrinsic factors. Participants have few reasons for attending other than relevant and engaging seminars. Recognition that the administrators, who attend the LP seminars, often have more work to address than there is available time, that these administrators strive to use their time in a

productive manner, and that they still participate in the seminars of the LP contributes to the perception that the project is being well received.

The results of the external and internal investigations appear to align with the outcomes of the literature review. More specifically, relationships, as already identified, exist between the literature pertaining to professional development for school administrators, the strategies upon which the LP has been implemented, and the theoretical constructs upon which the strategies have been developed. These linkages have emerged in the outcomes of the external and internal investigations. More specifically, the reasons which the participants have given for attending the seminars coincide with the literature, strategies, and constructs. For example, the participants have expressed positive reactions to the relevance of the seminars and the opportunity to participate in the identification of their topics.

A relationship appears to exist between the levels of attendance and the reactions of the participants to the value of the seminars. The elementary principal cohort has an average seminar attendance of twenty-nine and rates the relevance of the seminars at ninety-two percent, the lowest among the four cohorts, while the treasurer cohort has an average seminar attendance of forty-two percent and rates the relevance of the seminars at ninety-eight percent, the highest among the four cohorts. There also seems to be a relationship between the responsibilities of the participants and their levels of attendance at the seminars. For example, the level of attendance tends to be higher at the seminars for superintendents and treasurers and somewhat smaller at the seminars for elementary principals and secondary principals. This outcome reportedly reflects that superintendents and treasurers have more discretion about the use of their time than do the principals, who typically are expected to be available on immediate notice to address emergencies in their schools.

The popularity of the LP has resulted in requests to expand it to include additional superintendent, principal, and treasurer cohorts in outlying counties. The requests have been received primarily from the participants who travel a significant distance to attend the seminars. While many of the participants work in districts, which are in a relatively close proximity to the location of the seminars, others travel an hour and more to the seminars.

The Emergence of a Learning Community

An outcome of having professional development programs for elementary principals, secondary principals, superintendents, and treasurers, which are open to all administrators, has been the emergence of a learning community, which spans throughout the eighty-one districts and sixteen counties in which the participants are located. The participants communicate during and away from the seminars. The seminar break-periods tend to turn into informal, small group sharing and problem-solving sessions. In addition, the LP seminars provide the participants with the benefit of developing an ongoing rapport with a more diverse group of administrators than the norm, as administrators typically meet with their in-county and adjoining-county counterparts.

The LP's convention of organizing by cohorts contributes and hinders the development of the learning community phenomenon. While the convention appears to be of little hindrance to the development of a learning community within each of the cohorts, it is cumbersome to a learning community of the administrators from all of the cohorts. The structure reflects that the participants of each of the cohorts have indicated a desire to meet on most occasions with their counterparts, absent the involvement of the participants of the other cohorts in order to focus directly upon the uniqueness of their work. However, the hindrance to the development of a larger learning community has been reduced with the use of topics and speakers that are relevant to the participants of more than one cohort. For example, mutually useful topics and speakers are planned annually for the participants of the elementary principal and secondary principal cohorts.

The scope and the influence of this learning community have been even further broadened through the development of working relationships with other organizations. The relationships have been developed between the LP and state offices and state administrator associations in order to address the professional development needs of the participants.

Summary and Suggestions for the Future

The Leadership Project, which is housed at the [NAME] Regional Campus of [Name] University, provides professional development for school administrators. This paper pertains to a report and an analysis of the meaningfulness of the LP, including its growth from a small cohort of superintendents to four, larger cohorts for elementary principals, secondary principals, superintendents, and treasurers, with requests from administrators for additional cohorts. Several factors have been identified,

as having influenced the effectiveness of the project. The administrators have reported that the relevance and engaging manner, in which the seminars are conducted, along with the inclusive approach, in which their input is solicited and utilized, represent primary reasons that the project has been helpful to them as they address the challenges of administration.

A proposed future study involves a comparison of the attendance of the administrators at the seminars to the learning outcomes of the students in their schools, coupled with consideration of other mitigating factors. The use of a regression model could help to parse the results of the comparisons into contextually accurate outcomes. The regression would be used to control mitigating factors, such as socio-economic demographics of the districts and schools of the participating administrators, in order to identify useful relationships between attendance in the LP seminars and the learning outcomes in the schools of the participants.

References

Berg, B. L. (2007). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bierman, B. F., Desimone, L., Porter, A. C., & Garet, M. S. (2000, May). Designing professional development that works. Educational Leadership, 28-33.

Borko, H. (2004). Professional development and teacher learning: Mapping the terrain. Educational Researcher, 33(8), 3-15.

Daresh, J. C. (1997). Improving principal preparation: A review of common strategies. *NASSP Bulletin, 81*(585), 3-8.

Daresh, J. C. (2004). Mentoring school leaders: Professional promise or predicable problems? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(4), 495-517.

Daresh, J. C. & Playko, M. A. (1992). *The professional development of school administrators:*
Preservice, induction, and inservice applications. Needham, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M.T. (2007). Preparing school leaders
for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs. *Final*
Report of the School Leadership Study, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

Retrieved from
http://seli.stanford.edu/research/documents/sls_tech_report.pdf.

Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life's domains. *Canadian Psychology, 49*(10), 14-23.

Dowling, J. & Pfeffer, J. (1975, January). Organizational legitimacy: Social values and organizational change. The Pacific Sociological Review, 18(1), 122-136.

Foley, R. M. (2001). Professional development needs of secondary school principals of collaborative-based service delivery models. The High School Journal, 85(1), 10-23.

Fullan, M. (2009). The challenge of change: Start school improvement now (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Greenfield, W. D. (1995). Toward a theory of school administration: The centrality of leadership. Educational Administration Quarterly, 31(1), 61-85.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1998). *The power of servant leadership.* Spears, L. C. (Ed.). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Grogan, M. & Andrews, R. (2002). Defining preparation and professional development for the future. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(2), 233-256.

Gronn, P. (2003). *The new work of educational leaders: Changing leadership practice in an era of reform.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Hassel, E. (1999). *Professional development: Learning from the best.* Oak Brook, ILL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

Kaplan, R.S. & Norton, D.P. (2001). *Strategic-focused organization: How balanced scorecard companies thrive in the new business environment.* Boston, MA: Harvard School Publishing Corporation.

Kochan, F. K., Bredeson, P., & Riehl, C. (2002). Rethinking the professional development of school leaders. In J.Murphy (Ed.), *Yearbook of the national society for the study of education* (pp 289-306). New York, NY: Teachers College Record.

Kvale, S. (1995). The social construction of validity. *Qualitative inquiry, 1*(1), 19-40. Leithwood, K. A. & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership.* Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University.

Lincoln & Guba (1986). Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous?

Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. In D. D. Williams (Ed.), *New Directions for Program Evaluation* (pp. 73-84). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mary Parker Follett Foundation, Inc. (2002). *Designing communities of learning: Program guidebook.* Retrieved from www.follettfoundation.org.

McLaughlin, M. & Marsh, D. (1978). Staff development and school change. *Teachers College Record, 80*(1), 69-94.

Mitchell, D. E. (2006). Coherent knowledge and confident professional practice. In D. E. Mitchell, (Ed.), *New foundations for knowledge in educational administration, policy, and politics: Science and sensationalism* (pp 237-259). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Osterman, K. F. (1990, February). Reflective practice: A new agenda for education. *Education and Urban Society, 22*(2), 133-152.

Peterson, K. (2002). The professional development of principals: Innovations and opportunities. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(2), 213-232.

Petzko, V. N. (2004). Tailoring professional development for a better fit. *Principal Leadership, 5*(3), 17-21.

Purkey, S. C. & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective schools: A review. *The Elementary School Journal, 83*(4), 426-452.

Reichardt, C. S. & Borman, C. A. (1994). In J. H. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, H., & K. E. Newcomer, (Ed.), *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation* (pp 417-453). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Seltzer, D. A. & Himley, O. T. (1995). A model for professional development and school improvement in rural schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 11*(1), 36-44.

Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R. B., Smith, B. J. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B., Burch, P., Hallett, T., Jita, L., & Zoltners, J. (2002). Managing in the middle: School leaders and the enactment of accountability policy. *Educational Policy Educational Policy, 16*(5) 731-762.

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10) 837-851.