

RURAL ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
AND TRUST-BUILDING EFFORTS

by

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A Scholarly Delivery Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

West Texas A&M University

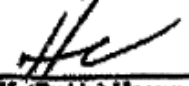
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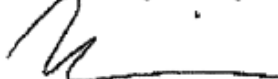
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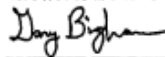
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*Qualified Signature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Literature Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	Case Study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Empirical Study
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*The qualified signature of the methodologist indicates agreement only with the scholarly deliverable(s) checked. The lack of one or more checked scholarly deliverables is not indicative of disagreement, but instead reflects a lack or absence of the methodologist's involvement with the unchecked scholarly deliverable(s).


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Abstract

Purpose: Rural principals' trust-building efforts have not been comprehensively investigated, and there is a lack of research concerning how rural principals build trust with teachers in relation to their leadership style. The purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of how rural elementary principals build trust with teachers and how the principal's leadership style relates to their trust-building efforts. **Research Design:** A qualitative grounded theory approach was used to understand a phenomenon by examining the perspectives (Corley, 2015) and experiences (du Plessis & Marais, 2017) of rural principals and teachers, utilizing semi-structured interviews to conceptualize data to generate a theory. Data were analyzed through iterative, open, axial, and selective coding. **Findings:** Findings indicated that rural principals did not identify with leadership style labels but rather actions or behaviors related to their leadership approaches and efforts to build trust. The overarching conceptual theme, *support mechanisms*, emerged as central to the development of trust through leadership actions/behaviors. Teachers' perceptions pointed out that principals' supportive behaviors developed trust, and concepts within the emergent categories were related to trust facets of benevolence, reliability, honesty, openness, and competency. Principals identified with category sets of communication, relationships, provisions, rural context, and expectations, some of which had transformational underpinnings connected to trust. **Implications:** These findings help rural principals and the scholars who study them focus on leadership behaviors, such as communication, relationship building, expectations,

provisions, and transformational behaviors that support the development of trust-building.

Keywords: Rural schools, trust, principal, leadership styles, grounded theory, empirical article



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS
Letter of Approval**

April 1, 2021

Dr. Klinker:

The West Texas A & M University Institutional Review Board is pleased to inform you that upon review, proposal #2021.03.015 for your study titled, "**Rural Elementary Principals' Transformational Leadership and Trust Building Efforts**," meets the requirements of the WTAMU Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) No. 15.99.05.W1.01AR Institutional Review Board (Human Subject Research). Approval is granted for one calendar year. This approval expires on **03.31.2022**.

Principal investigators assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed on or before the expiration date if the research project requires more than one year for completion. A Continuing Review form along with required documents must be submitted on or before the stated deadline. Failure to do so will result in study termination and/or loss of funding.
2. **Completion Report:** At the conclusion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Close out form must be submitted to AR-EHS.
3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Pursuant to SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.13AR, unanticipated problems and serious adverse events must be reported to AR-EHS.
4. **Reports of Potential Non-Compliance:** Pursuant to SOP No. 15.99.05.W1.05AR, potential non-compliance, including deviations from the protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment form to AR-EHS for review by the IRB. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented. Amendments do not extend time granted on the initial approval.
6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form, only the IRB approved form is allowed.
7. **Audit:** Any proposal may be subject to audit by the IRB Administrator during the life of the study. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate records for five years and making them available for inspection upon request.
8. **Recruitment:** All recruitment materials must be approved by the IRB. Recruitment materials distributed to potential participants must use the approved text and include the study's IRB number, approval date, and expiration dates in the following format: WTAMU IRB###-###-## Approved: ###/###/#### Expiration Date: ###/###/####.

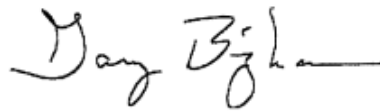
9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) if applicable to the research being proposed. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.

Sixty days prior to the expiration of this proposal, you will receive a notification of the approaching expiration date at which time you will need to submit an Amendment/Continuation/Close out form.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gary Bigham
Chair, WTAMU IRB



Dr. Angela Spaulding
Vice President of Research and Compliance

Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this Scholarly Delivery, I have received a great deal of support and guidance.

First, I would like to thank my committee, Dr. JoAnn Klinker, Chair, Dr. H. H. (Buddy) Hooper Jr., Member, and Dr. Mark Garrison, Methodologist, whose invaluable expertise and insightful feedback contributed to the successful completion of my doctoral journey. I want to single out my Chair, Dr. Klinker. Your scholarly poise is magnificent, and I hope to one day be as refined. I appreciate your direction and care.

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I dedicate this Scholarly Delivery to my husband Chad Okamoto and sons Gabriel and Ethan Walton. Chad, thank you for loving me through this process and believing in me. I could not have done this without you. Gabe and Ethan, I hope that I have made you proud.

And above all else, to God be the honor and glory!

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Introduction: Framework for Scholarly Delivery

This final composite scholarly delivery examines rural principals' transformational leadership through three different scholarly deliverables. The first artifact, a review of literature, is a traditional review of research concerning leadership, expressly transformational leadership specific to rural principals, and how purpose influences principals' decisions related to building capacity of trust, culture, climate, and buy-in among teachers for a shared vision. The second, a scholarly deliverable case study, can be used for teaching doctoral or master's candidates in the field of educational leadership. The case presents a principal's endeavor to employ transformational leadership and offers opportunities for discussion and examination of situational factors, and how transformational leadership might be applied in those circumstances. The third artifact is an empirical study of rural principals' transformational leadership and trust-building efforts.

**Rural Principal Leadership Through a Transformational Lens:
A Literature Review**

by

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This scholarly deliverable satisfies one of three requirements in the final composite scholarly delivery.

Rural Principal Leadership Through a Transformational Lens

A principal's leadership is integral to the effectiveness of the overall educational organization (Browning, 2014). Rural school principals charged with leading change in their schools must focus on how their purpose influences decisions related to the development of building capacity for trust, culture, climate, and buy-in among teachers for a shared vision. Besides geographical isolation, rural school principals face isolation in terms of being the only administrator on campus. Therefore, rural school principals' decisions should consider contributions from teachers and other stakeholders. Moreover, the way teachers perceive their principal affects organizational effectiveness and student learning. Namely, leaders influence organizational climate by their leadership style, motivation, decision making, and behaviors (Browning, 2014). Leader behaviors set the conditions for the development of the previously mentioned capacities.

In many cases, the lone rural principals are solely responsible for driving changes at their campuses to meet state accountability ratings, provide teachers with professional development to improve lesson delivery or methods, and support classroom management. A study surveying 502 teachers in 32 Netherland elementary schools (Thoonen et al., 2011) concluded that a combination of transformational leadership behaviors is needed to cultivate teacher development and improve instructional practices. In addition to leading initiatives to keep abreast of 21st century learning, the rural principal must find innovative ways to retain teachers when most teachers are looking to go to other districts for higher pay, or because they do not live in the community and are merely gaining experience. Consequently, in a document analysis by Preston and Barnes (2018), two themes

surfaced: “First, successful rural principals promote people-centered leadership; second, successful rural school leaders are change agents” (p. 8).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this review is to explore the research (see Appendix A) concerning leadership, specifically executive leadership and transformational leadership specific to purpose with rural principals, and how purpose influences principals’ decisions related to building capacity of trust, culture, climate, and buy-in among teachers for a shared vision. To understand rural leaders’ purposes and development to initiate and facilitate change, this review aims to delve into the literature that examines the underpinnings of a transformational leadership approach, its correlation to rural principal leadership, and causation to capacity building. Specific research goals include understanding how rural principals utilize executive and transformational leadership behaviors and how principals are influenced in their decision-making to foster the development of capacities. Additionally, the analysis of principals’ leadership effectiveness is largely based on teachers’ perceptions (Mayes & Gethers, 2018) of principals/leaders and the behaviors of those in leadership positions. Perceptions have correlational effects on the development of capacities. This review is delimited to teachers and principals, and did not link student learning to achievement gap.

Conceptual Framework

This literature review is arranged thematically according to the research focus statement’s keywords and contextual underpinnings within those themes from broad to narrow thus, providing a conceptually thematic framework (see Appendix B). The

conceptual framework driving this review is informed by empirical, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies, and select analysis of the literature centered on the research focus statement. The research focus statement centers on leadership, specifically executive leadership and transformational leadership specific to purpose with rural principals as the primary subjects, and how purpose influences principals' decisions related to building capacity of trust, culture, climate, and buy-in among teachers for a shared vision.

Literature Search Strategy

The exhaustive search for empirical, peer-reviewed literature relevant to the research focus was conducted through various databases to identify an extensive scope of potentially relevant sources. Search requirements necessitated articles be peer-reviewed empirical articles accompanied by research questions. However, I allowed a minimal number of non-empirical articles. The search was guided by the keywords: *executive leadership, transformational leadership, rural principals, purpose, decision making, building capacity of trust, culture, climate, buy-in, and shared vision*. The search specifically used the West Texas A&M University library database, the Google Scholar search engine, standard Google searches, and searches utilizing JSTOR and EBSCO databases, ERIC online library database, Paperpile online database search, and the list of peer-reviewed journals listed at the WTAMU Ed.D. webpage. I used Boolean operators to narrow the search. I initially surveyed the abstracts and keywords in the literature to identify articles related to the research focus statement. I examined bibliographies of identified articles to find other relevant sources and took notes of recurring citations in

bibliographies and online searches. The compiled literature spans the years 1955 through 2020.

Presentation of Findings

Executive Leadership

An executive leader manages and influences employees of their organization. In education, a leader's primary responsibility is to make decisions that improve "teaching and learning" (McCarley et al., 2016, p. 325) while including and inspiring stakeholders, supporting, and building capacity for the development of "more effective school systems" (Harris et al., 2006). Additionally, most leadership definitions reveal assumptions about influences exerted by individuals or groups over others (Bush & Glover, 2014). Research suggests that organizational effectiveness is determined in part by leader behaviors.

According to Harris et al. (2006):

Executive leadership is a model of leadership that forges collaboration and secures support at a variety of levels. Fundamentally, it works by bringing both leadership and teaching capacity into the school in challenging circumstances. It works through refocusing staff on the key objectives, such as teaching and learning strategies, i.e., processes which may lead to building capacity. (p. 404)

This statement demonstrates alignment with previously mentioned research indicating effective leadership behaviors are influential in developing collaborative efforts, supporting staff members' skills development, and building capacity.

Early scientific research recognized leadership traits as innate or hereditary (Özbağ, 2016). However, the movement for research to define a set of leadership traits

emerged with Katz's (1955) article *Skills of an Effective Administrator*. Katz's (1955) notion was that leadership skills could be developed based on three general skills: (a) technical skills, (b) human skills, and (c) conceptual skills. In other words, working with processes and activities, working cooperatively and collaboratively with people, and coordinating the processes and workgroups as a whole into action.

The administrator needs: (a) sufficient technical skill to accomplish the mechanics of the particular job for which he is responsible; (b) sufficient human skill in working with others to be an effective group member and to be able to build cooperative effort within the team he leads; (c) sufficient conceptual skill to recognize the interrelationships of the various factors involved in his situation, which will lead him to take that action which achieves the maximum good for the total organization. (Katz, 1955, p. 42)

In educational organizations, "The way principals conceive their roles is influenced by their expertise on leadership and their beliefs on what is central in their leader role" (Devos & Bouckennooghe, 2009, p. 175). Principals are executive leaders of education who lead and oversee the schools' organizational processes (Daniëls et al., 2019; Sharifah et al., 2008), including managing personnel, planning, influencing and guiding others, and being responsible for decision-making. Daniëls et al. (2019) conducted a narrative review of 75 studies of leadership theories and consequently stated:

Leadership in education is a process of influencing teachers and other stakeholders and is not necessarily limited to a single person. The process of influence ideally leads to an effective learning climate which all stakeholders

(such as pupils, teachers, parents, society) experience as an added value and keeps all the organisational [*sic*] processes in the school (among others, monitoring the instructional process, managing personnel and allocating resources) running smoothly. (p. 111)

The role of the principal is important to overall organizational success. Harris et al. (2006) state the primary purpose of executive leadership is to impact school improvement efforts as quickly as possible while supporting “individual leadership skills and capacities whilst [*sic*] building commitment to team goals” (p. 402). Having effective skills lends credibility to the leader. Leadership can be developed with time as skills and experience are acquired (Mumford et al., 2000; Sharifah et al., 2008); through the influence of others and leaders’ behaviors (Daniëls et al., 2019). In a study by Mumford et al. (2000), researchers focused on skills rather than abilities, personalities, or motivation and found increases in expertise and skills as leadership levels increased.

Moreover, leaders influence their followers in groups (organization) or individually (Bush & Glover, 2014), explicitly or implicitly (Krasikova et al., 2013), directly or indirectly (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Leadership may be composed of one or multiple theories and approaches. The leadership approach that works for one leader may not work for another. Influential leaders have the capacity to motivate followers and apply different leadership styles appropriate for the circumstances at hand. Effective leaders are able to manage and understand the schools’ instructional needs and allocate resources and personnel (Daniëls et al., 2019; Sharifah et al., 2008). A common theme found in the research demonstrates that leaders’ and principals’ leadership approaches

and behaviors influence followers and organizational processes (Bush & Glover, 2014; Daniëls et al., 2019; Slater, 2008). For purposes of this review, I focused on a specific leadership approach, transformational leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is one of several leadership theories that have gained momentum as an effective leadership approach. A transformational leader motivates and empowers others to guide them towards a change (Kirby et al., 1992), which is generally a common goal or vision for improvement or development of leadership practices within the organization (Balyer, 2017; Kirby et al., 1992). “Transformational leadership theory was introduced by Burns (1978), who stated that transformational leadership occurs when a leader engages the individuals within the organization to a higher degree of motivation” (McCarley et al., 2016, p. 323).

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is versatile and comprises four dimensions: idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 2000; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kirby et al., 1992; Neissen et al., 2017; Zeinabadi & Rastegarpour, 2010). Bass (2000) specifies that charismatic and inspirational leaders express the vision and the means to attain the vision by setting high expectations and acting as exemplars. In other words, modeling the desired behaviors influences follower’s buy-in or acceptance of the vision. Followers look up to leaders and want to emulate them. Brown et al. (2005) state, “Most attention to an ethical dimension of leadership has been embedded within the charismatic

or transformational leadership paradigm” (p. 118). Leaders intellectually stimulate followers by showing them different ways to look at problems while learning to be problem solvers and highlighting rational solutions (Bass, 1990, 2000; Thoonen et al., 2011). Bass (2000) and Kirby et al. (1992) suggest intellectually stimulating followers foster their innovation and creativity. Transformational leaders provide a supportive climate, pay attention to followers’ needs, and provide individualized consideration by caring and showing genuine concern for followers. Support and development of followers are provided individually, depending on each persons’ exclusive needs (Bass, 2000). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) and Urlick and Bowers (2014) posit that transformational leadership aims at developing people and the organization into leaders, consequently improving outcomes.

Leithwood and Jantzi’s (2000) model expands on Bass’ work and “described transformational leadership along six dimensions: building school vision and goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; symbolizing professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions” (p. 5). The six dimensions consist of numerous, “more specific, practices which encourage contingent responses on the part of leaders depending on the contexts of their work” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 205). Further in this review, the correlation of transformational leadership dimensions, practices, and principal leadership in a rural context are explored.

Transformational Leadership Practices

Kouzes and Posner (2007, as cited in Quin et al., 2015, p.74) identified five transformational leadership practices: (a) modeling the way, (b) inspiring a shared vision, (c) challenging the process, (d) enabling others to act, and (e) encouraging the heart. Also, Browning (2014) indicates that there are ten significant practices commonly used by transformational leaders: (a) openly admits mistakes, (b) offers trust to staff, (c) actively listens, (d) provides affirmations, (e) makes informed/consultative decisions, (f) is visible around the school, (g) remains calm and level headed, (h) mentors and coaches staff, (i) cares for staff, and (j) keeps confidences. Moreover, similar to Browning's (2014) common practices of transformational leaders, a case study by Budge (2006) revealed that influential principals should be "highly visible, accessible, and approachable" (p.7). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Smith et al. (2014) agree that leaders need to be visible and available.

Furthermore, transformational leaders raise the confidence and commitment of their followers (Martins & Costa, 2016; Moolenaar et al., 2010). Transformational principals influence their teachers most notably by gaining their trust, building teachers to a higher self (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017), and allowing them to participate in decision making (Bouwman et al., 2017). In essence, transformational principals foster the development of teacher leaders by modeling leadership practices, communicating the schools' vision, and communicating the purpose(s) that motivate the actions and decisions concerning achieving the vision and change. Working collaboratively with transformational school leaders encourages teachers' sense of efficacy and self-

actualization (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). In a similar fashion, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) point out that “increased capacities and commitments are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity” (p. 204). Confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy are improved as a result of transformational leadership (Kirby et al., 1992). “As has been pointed out, this approach to leadership fundamentally aims to foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of leaders' colleagues” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 4).

Several themes emerged from the literature on transformational leadership including trust as an essential element of transformational leadership; teachers' and principals' perceptions of confidence in one another; the influence of principals' behaviors on teachers' perceptions; and how those behaviors affect the culture and climate in schools (Shagholi et al., 2010). Transformational leaders who trust and value individuals, allow them to participate in decision making, and foster a culture of innovation and confidence are considered effective leaders.

Additionally, Bass (2000) maintains that transformational leaders inspire followers beyond self-interests, placing the needs of the organization above themselves, as well as “friends, family, and community” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 183). Bass (2000) asserts that leadership can be transactional and transformational; however, a good leader is more transformational. The transformational leader focuses on the employee's self-concept and sense of self-worth and encourages the follower to build a self-concept that identifies with the leader's self-concept and mission.

Contradictions to Transformational Leadership

Parson et al. (2016) assert that instructional leadership rather than transformational leadership is the most common approach used by rural school principals.

Over 60% of survey participants reported instructional leadership as the most important role a principal plays in the school, yet participants reported instructional leadership is the component that receives the least amount of attention in the actual day-to-day responsibilities of principals. (Parson et al., 2016, p. 72)

In Parson et al.'s (2016) study, the reliance on a transformative approach was absent from the data; however, a transformational leadership approach is worth looking into as rural principals are responsible for guiding their campuses towards changes and improvements.

Additionally, a leader whose actions do not align with their words, such as one who says the right things but does not demonstrate correlating behaviors, is considered a hypocritical leader. According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), pseudo or unethical transformational leaders are frequently abusive and inconsiderate, and transformational leadership ethics have come under question with those leaders. Moreover, amoral praise is exaggerated because of the use of impression management; it opposes shared leadership, equality, consensus, and collaborative decision making; it encourages followers to put the organization ahead of themselves or their best interests; it manipulates followers; and lacks the accountability to avoid the domination of followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Leaders who portray the image of transformational leadership but are more interested in self-serving practices or knowingly mislead

followers are pseudo-transformational leaders (Bass, 1990). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) suggest, “Authentic transformational leaders may have to be manipulative at times for what they judge to be the common good, but manipulation is a frequent practice of pseudo transformational leaders and an infrequent practice of authentic transformational leaders” (p. 185). Consequently, Bush and Glover (2014) contend:

The transformational model stresses the importance of values but, as shown above, the debate about its validity relates to the central question of “whose values?” Critics of this approach argue that the decisive values are often those of government or of the school principal, who may be acting on behalf of government. Educational values, as held and practised [*sic*] by teachers, are likely to be subjugated to externally imposed values...transformational leadership may be directed at achieving worthy or less worthy aims. (pp. 558-559)

Rural Principals

Rural principals need to familiarize themselves with the school’s contexts and the community’s individualized qualities to be successful (Barley, 2007). Almost one third of American school-aged children attend rural schools, accounting for 43% of public schools in America (United States Department of Education, 2003 as cited in Canales et al., 2018). In Texas, 12.8% of elementary and secondary students attend rural schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003). Small and rural schools have the opportunity to develop unique relationships with individuals and the community because of their size and the personal connections teachers and principals have within the community. These relationships are distinct features of rural schools.

Canales et al. (2018), du Plessis (2017), Klocko and Justis (2019), and Preston and Barns (2018) examined leadership behaviors and practices of rural school principals. They reported that rural school administrators face many challenges and stressors, and the roles of principals in rural schools are often dual or multifaceted. Challenges and various roles or “hats” result in stressors that principals encounter throughout their lived experiences of multidimensional functions. All parties need to understand the relevance of the exclusive circumstances rural principals face to develop “effective leadership policies, practices, and programs within rural contexts” (Preston et al., 2018, p. 1).

School principals may lean towards instructional leadership (focused on teaching and learning) to develop a balance between local and district policies; however, the need to balance leadership responsibilities while developing the capacity to build trust and relationships is necessary. Boies and Fiset (2019) and Preston et al. (2018) suggest some principals commonly have difficulty promoting school objectives while synchronously balancing the various interests of community members, interests of local parents, and community members in different settings; social, political, and personal. On the other hand, efficacious rural principals competently balance local expectations and the district vision; they understand how local, state, and federal frameworks impact the rural school and react in ways that are cognizant of the rural contexts, and are responsive to mandates (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Preston & Barnes, 2018; Williams & Nierengarten, 2011). “Using more balanced leadership practices, one might argue that the rural school principal is able to more effectively address the challenges of the principalship” (Klocko & Justis, 2019, p. 30). Moreover, leadership practices of

efficacious rural principals are supported by the ability to manage the time needed to balance priorities.

Roles of Rural Principals

Rural principals have complex, multifaceted roles and responsibilities as educational leaders (Canales et al., 2018; du Plessis 2017; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Msila, 2010; Parson et al., 2016; Preston & Barns, 2018). Rural principals often serve as lone administrators in their districts with a limited number of staff available to fill positions (Canales et al., 2018). It is not uncommon for rural principals to take on the additional roles of superintendent, teacher, instructional coach, change agent, and community leader. The myriad of roles the principal takes on lends itself to the principal being the chief decision-maker in rural schools (Parson et al., 2016). As change agents and chief decision-makers, it is advantageous for rural principals to develop teacher leaders through a transformational leadership approach. The ability to forge change is conducive to persevering through challenges and stressors that coincide with rural principalship.

Challenges and Stressors

There are many challenges exclusive to leadership in rural areas. Some common challenges faced by rural principals include “geographic isolation, poor working conditions for teachers, lack of resources, and poor community involvement” (du Plessis, 2017, p. 8), as well as limited collegiality, professional development opportunities, various roles, and responsibilities unlike those of non-rural leaders (Budge, 2006; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Parson et al., 2016).

Researchers report that small school principals' needs differ from those of medium or large school principals (Stewart & Matthews, 2015), and rural principals commonly face stressors that differ from stress faced by non-rural or urban leaders. Principals may suffer from stress-related health problems, time management, and meeting state and federal requirements while sustaining local needs (Budge, 2006; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Parson et al., 2016). Klocko and Justis (2019) posit that the primary mechanisms of transactional stress theory, related to principals' occupational stress, may be caused by a disparity between the demands of principalship stress and accessibility of resources for meeting the demands, instead of solely the demands. Even though urban, suburban, and rural principals all experience stress, rural administrators who practice resiliency are more apt to be accepting of their roles (Klocko & Justis, 2019). DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) concluded that 91% of respondents maintained that stress was the cause of eventually leaving administration positions and even the profession of education.

Another challenge that can result in a source of stress for principals is searching for qualified applicants to fill positions. Teacher recruitment and retention are contentious challenges rural principals encounter frequently. Teachers are a vital resource of rural schools; however, the ability to recruit quality teachers, create working conditions to motivate teachers, or retain quality teachers in rural schools is difficult (Barley, 2007; Canales et al., 2018; Munsch & Boylan, 2008; Preston et al., 2018). Other rural school features that affect recruitment and retention are lofty workloads and low salary schedules. Malloy (2007) suggests that involving teachers in decision making is one of several recruiting and retention strategies. Other benefits that attract rural teachers are

smaller class sizes and closer-knit relationships (du Plessis, 2017; Malloy, 2007). Another retention strategy to support and grow teachers is to offer an effective mentoring program (Monk, 2007). Principals must continue to identify innovative and strategic ways to attract teachers (Starr & White, 2008). Researchers indicate that the increase in stress influences the organization and development of the school leader. Having the ability to persevere is crucial to educational leadership success (Dantley, 2003; Klocko & Justis, 2019).

Promoting Change

Effective rural leaders are in a position to lead change. Canales et al. (2018), du Plessis (2017), Klocko and Justis (2019), and Preston and Barns (2018) found that effective rural principals must encourage the development of relationships centered on people: staff, students, parents, and community members. “If teachers believe that the school principal, colleagues, students and parents act in accordance with their (the teachers’) commitments, it can contribute strongly to their perception of collective efficacy” (Ninković & Knežević, 2018, p. 53). Ninković and Knežević (2018) studied the relations between transformational leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and perceived collective teacher efficacy. Using the transformational model of school leadership is important because transformational leaders concentrate their efforts on developing the capacities and motivation of teachers, thus cultivating the quality of teaching (Ninković & Knežević, 2018).

Findings showed that transformational school leadership and teacher self-efficacy were independent predictors of teacher collective efficacy, and

that individually-focused transformational school leadership contributed significantly to an explanation of collective efficacy after controlling specific predictor effects of group-focused dimensions of transformational leadership. (Ninković & Knežević, 2018, p. 49)

Furthermore, when teachers are confident in their capacities to teach; this can lead to improvements in students' academic achievements, and consequently to increased positive perceptions of efficacy (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Ninković & Knežević, 2018).

Professional Development

Research denotes rural principals would benefit from further professional development and training personalized to rural school needs to effectively and successfully perform their roles (Daniëls et al., 2019; du Plessis, 2017; Parson et al., 2016; Stewart & Matthews, 2015). Rural principals need distinct supports, resources, and principal preparation programs targeted to their rural contexts (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Klocko & Justis, 2019; Parson et al., 2016; Preston et al., 2018). Canales et al. (2018) recommend the following training and support based on the findings and conclusions of their qualitative study which investigated leadership practices of effective principals by surveying 206 teachers, 35 school board members, and 37 superintendents/principals:

- (1) Superintendent/principals need to prioritize their job responsibilities in an effort to ensure completion of the most critical issues inherent in the dual position.
- (2) Dual administrators should participate in time management training. This training could assist them in prioritizing their duties and responsibilities.
- (3) School districts should budget resources for a separate principal or assistant

principal whenever feasible to alleviate the occupational stress dual administrators often face. (4) Superintendent/principals would benefit from attending stress management workshops. This attendance would assist dual administrators in learning how to effectively deal with the daily pressures of being the “go to person” for everything in the district. (5) Dual role administrators would benefit from participating in self-evaluation or self-awareness programs in an effort to assist them in identifying their strengths and building on them. (6) A network of small school superintendent/principals and mentors should be established to provide peer support. (p. 7)

Successful Rural Schools

As mentioned previously in this review, rural schools are nested in context and community. One of five components that principals identified as a key to success for organizational support and effective instruction was the “establishment of clear goals between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and the community and the school” (Barley, 2007, p. 4). An effective principal knows he or she must depend on the expertise within the school community to work collectively to bring about success. Preston and Barnes (2018) assert successful rural principals rely on teamwork and collaboration. Despite the unique composition of rural schools, a rural principal who nurtures “collaborative relationships with teachers, students, parents, community members, and senior educational leaders is positioned to succeed” (Preston & Barnes, 2018, p. 11). Similarly, Thoonen et al. (2012) state, “School organizational conditions such as participative decision-making, teaming, teacher collaboration, an open and

trustful climate, cultures which value shared responsibilities and values, and transformational leadership practices can foster teachers' professional learning in schools" (p. 443).

Community

In small or rural schools, relationships between principals and teachers extend beyond the school walls, possibly as family, neighbors, friends, or members of community organizations (Wildy et al., 2014). These types of relationships can affect the work environment. Families in rural areas tend to reside in the regions throughout generations. Many families with students in the school have parents who attended the same schools and can connect with the school's culture because of their familiarity. Trust is more aptly built due to the association with the school and community (Barley, 2007; Klocko & Justis, 2019). "Principals in rural schools are expected to have an historical awareness that embodies the social, political and cultural aspects of the rural community" (Lock et al., 2012, as cited in Klocko & Justis, 2019, p. 24). Rural principals are looked upon to be active in their community, and it is a commonly accepted view that the principal should live in the community where the school is located (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Preston et al., 2018). Additionally, it is beneficial to have a connection with the school community to obtain a job as a rural principal in the specified community (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Klocko & Justis, 2019).

"The close connection of school and community that facilitates principal leadership and high expectations for students warrants further investigation" (Barley, 2007, p. 10). The shortage of research into the leadership of rural organizations is

surprising considering the demands placed on the leaders of rural schools; therefore, there is cause to place attention on examining the framework of rural leadership. “These differences inform understanding of the rural principal’s leadership style” (Parson et al., 2016, p. 65).

Purpose

In order to optimally support the school community, principals’ understanding of their own purposes and those of the organization should be clear. Purpose is the reason something is done, the aim or intention of attaining or accomplishing something (Dictionary.com, 2020). For the purposes of this review, purpose is defined as one’s drive.

Purpose-driven leadership is a constructive leadership model that challenges an organization to: define its purpose, maintain integrity, encourage character, prevent burnout and sustain vitality. The model incorporates ‘best practice language’ and the tools needed to foster a meaningful discourse. As school leaders strive to define, defend, and sustain the school’s purpose, the purpose-driven leadership model not only builds leadership capacity, but also serves as a catalyst for positive school reform. (Holloman et al., 2007, p. 438)

One of the leaders’ main roles is to seek to motivate the organization towards actualization of its goals and objectives through an understood purpose (Kempster et al., 2011; van Knippenberg, 2020). An organization's purpose is understood when the leader communicates the intentions or purpose while introducing new methods or implementing changes (Hallinger & Murphy 1985; Holloman et al., 2007).

A school's purpose, mission, and vision are not identical terms. Purpose is the reason that drives the organization, an understanding of why we are doing what we do. Holloman et al. (2007) suggest, "Educators must feel free to ask why. The culture should encourage it" (p. 438). The difference between a school's purpose and its mission statement is that the mission is a declaration of its purpose, a statement articulating the school's goals. The school's vision is the ultimate objective that is hoped for; what the school would like to achieve. Furthermore, Holloman et al. (2007) refer to the mission and vision statements as tools to focus the organization.

School leaders driven by "purposive leadership" (Dantley, 2007, p. 275) have an understanding of the many dimensions within the challenges they deal with every day and are able to persevere through problems while simultaneously seeking "actualization for themselves and for the rest of the learning community" (p. 275). School leaders, specifically rural school leaders, continuously face challenges and, therefore, should reflect on their purpose(s) and rectitude (Holloman et al., 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Just as school stakeholders must understand the school's vision, the organization must understand the purpose(s) that drive the processes to achieve the vision (Holloman et al., 2007; Wildy et al., 2014). A common thread found in the literature is that principals' purposes should align with the school's vision, be clearly communicated to stakeholders, and consensus on purpose-driven processes should be understood and agreed upon.

Buy-In and Shared Vision

“Transformational leadership succeeds in promoting the development of a vision” (Harrison, 2011, p. 51) through intentional purpose(s). A vision depicts an organizations’ hopes for the future and is directed or motivated by change. A vision differs from a purpose in that a vision is not necessary. However, “vision is best understood as being in the service of purpose, and purpose pursuit could be a core motivation for vision pursuit (i.e., embracing the vision because it is in the service of the organization’s purpose)” (van Knippenberg, 2020, p. 8). Teachers are less likely to buy into school processes when the leaders do not understand or do not communicate the school’s vision, and when they are not involved in decision making (Bush & Glover, 2014; Dantley, 2003; Jensen & Moynihan, 2018).

Integrity

“The administrator and teacher leaders must take a systematic approach to examining each area and search for consistency and alignment with the school’s purpose” (Holloman et al., 2007, p. 440). Moreover, leaders set the tone (Mayer et al., 2012) for modeling and communicating organizational expectations of purpose with integrity. Morals depict the ideal standards of right and wrong behavior. Eisenschmidt et al. (2019) “conclude that moral virtues create purpose for principals’ work” (p. 444). Similarly, using portrait methodology as a qualitative approach in two cases, Bottery et al. (2012) found it is necessary for leaders to have an internal moral compass. This qualitative approach provides narrative descriptions or pictures of individuals dealing with challenges which can be used as tools for self-reflection and decision making. For

leadership to be successful, portraits propose “centrally defined standards and prescriptions need to be interpreted in a manner which allows them to dovetail not only with the context within which the individual practices, but also with that individual’s approach and moral drive” (Bottery et al., 2012, p. 240). Also, Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) concur with the “importance of virtue and morality” (p. 60). Furthermore, moral persons are characterized by transformational leadership traits such as honesty and integrity, and moral managers influence followers’ behaviors. Moral leaders’ transformational leader behaviors are indicative of doing the right thing, showing concern for others, openness, and personal morality (Treviño et al., 2000).

Ethical Competence

The ethical competence of an organization or a leader is observable through his or her actions. Ethical competence can be observed in character, professionalism, communication, moral decision-making, and overall disposition to do good. The more leaders demonstrate ethical behaviors, the more positively teachers’ perceptions of the organizational culture will rise (Toyok & Kapusuzoglu, 2016). Whether it is teachers or followers in an educational setting or in a different type of organization, the follower group must buy into the leaders’ ability to be knowledgeable about ethics and carry out ethical behaviors. As such, ethics and professional practice are interrelated and indicative of effective leadership. Based on the literature of transformational leadership, it is evident that the leadership approach has ethical underpinnings. “Ethical and transformational leaders care about others, act consistently in their moral principles (i.e., integrity), consider the ethical consequences of their decisions, and are ethical role models for

others” (Brown & Treviño, 2006, p. 599). Transformational leaders contribute to observational learning about ethical values and conduct by demonstrating ethical behavior and communicating with employees about conduct standards, values, and purpose.

“There currently is no leadership theory that revolves around this notion of purpose pursuit...We lack theory of leadership effectiveness that specifically addresses what makes leadership effective in motivating purpose pursuit” (van Knippenberg, 2020, pp. 6-7). However, the principals’ leadership specific to *purpose*, meaning the desired outcome or intention the principal has for the organization, supports the development of conditions for capacity building of trust, culture, climate, and buy-in among teachers. Principals’ purpose pursuit contributes to influencing principals’ decision making. Nonetheless, minimal research has been conducted on *purpose* and how a principal’s purpose influences their decisions.

Decision Making

The perception of the organizations’ ethical behaviors influences decision-making and the practices of the members, including their attitudes towards specific jobs (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Perceptions are formed based on whether the “leader walks the talk and that these perceptions are responsible for follower trust in and identification with the leader and the organization as a whole” (Leroy et al., 2012, p. 257). Shagholi et al. (2010) found a profound link between trust and decision making. When leaders encourage followers to evaluate the ethical outcomes of their decisions and behaviors, they develop the capacity of followers to think more intentionally; thus, increasing their perception that

they can successfully perform their duties and fostering their self-efficacy (Bouckennooghe et al., 2015; Geijsel et al., 2009; Thoonen et al., 2011). According to Katz (1955), “the success of any decision depends on the conceptual skill of the people who make the decision and those who put it into action” (p. 36). Swanson (2003) discusses several decision-making constraints that articulate the way decision making works: (a) expertise, (b) mental models, (c) time pressure, and (d) external social influences. For rural leaders, the context of the rural community may also be a decision-making constraint, and the responsibility of decision making can be a source of stress (Davidson & Butcher, 2019). Nonetheless, constraints and stressors can be reduced through capacity building.

Building Capacity

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) consider capacity the necessary ability to carry out a course of action, “the self-belief in one’s ability” (p. 207). Understanding the capacities which influence leader behaviors is important for identifying and improving skills to lead the organization towards attaining its goals (Connelly et al., 2000; Slater, 2008). Followers look to their leaders for guidance; therefore, it is essential for leaders to believe in their own abilities and convey that to their organization. Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) assert:

Capacity refers to the belief of a person to be able to perform the tasks required for the job. The individual capacity belief is tied to the notion of self-concept and perceived self-efficacy. The actual capacity is tied to individual learning but also to the conditions for learning for the staff in schools (capacity building). (p. 635)

Principals' leadership affects school capacity, which is determined by the nature of their leadership (Newmann et al., 2000). Having leadership capacity allows the school community to share a common vision in alignment with strategies to guide the school community to attain their vision based on "common values and beliefs" (Wildy et al., 2014). The school community must work cohesively and support collegiality to move together towards the vision.

Cosner (2009) explored collegial trust in capacity building of 11 high school principals and found that collegial trust is a prominent part of capacity building effort. Similarly, findings by Youngs and King (2002) specified that "effective school principals can sustain high levels of capacity by establishing trust" (p. 643). Additionally, Slater (2008) and Lesinger et al. (2018) stressed communication skills as a focal strategy to encourage the development of the capacity of trust and collaboration in the organization. To further support the research, Yakavets et al. (2017) examined principals' actions focused on capacity building approaches and suggested, "Furthermore, team work and learning about new teaching strategies, as well as observing them in practice helped teachers feel valued and to appreciate their own learning and growth" (p. 363). The general consensus of these studies demonstrates a strong emphasis on trust; it must be communicated, encouraged, given, and received for the development of other capacities to occur.

Trust

A review of articles by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) of research bridging four decades provides a sound conceptual and empirical base for defining trust and

seeking to understand trust. Louis (2007) describes trust as the assurance or dependence on the ethical principles of others and the feelings that members of the organization can count on one another and keep the best interest of others at the forefront (Tarter & Hoy, 1988). Such ethical principles related to trust include integrity, justice, humility, and openness. Moreover, trust is a reciprocal relationship. Costa (2003) and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) assert that trust is dependent on the expectations individuals place on one another based on behaviors. Additionally, Shagholi et al. (2010) assert the relevance of prior experiences, potential future interactions, and their influence on trust in organizations.

Trust as an Essential Element

One of the most common elements embodied to garner a genuine following is trust. Trust is a key factor in building relationships with followers to promote the buy-in and support needed to work towards a common organizational goal. “Increasingly, trust is recognized as an important component in well-functioning organizations” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 549). Likewise, Balyer’s (2017) research founds trust in schools has effects on a school’s operations, and trust is a vital resource for principals developing improvement plans, as trust is thought to be one of the integral elements of schools. Trust is an essential factor in various leadership approaches, expressly in the transformational leadership approach. With regard to education, it is especially significant that teachers experience trust in their leaders. “The smooth functioning of schooling is a product of both the relational and institutional trust of the people involved in the whole educational system” (Yin et al., 2013, p. 14).

Hoy, Tschannen-Moran, and fellow collaborators explored the effects of trust in schools through quantitative and qualitative studies while simultaneously creating survey instruments designed to measure trust, leading to an ensemble of comprehensive work spanning the past 20 years (Cosner, 2009).

Facets of Trust

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) assert that trustworthy leadership demonstrated through behaviors related to benevolence, honesty, openness, competence, and reliability is developed through recurrent exchanges over time. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) say, “there is empirical evidence that all of these facets are important aspects of trust relations in school” (p. 556), and they maintain the significance of each trust facet depends on the referent of trust and the kind of relationship between the persons. “Indeed, by definition of the facet of reliability, trust must be maintained, once established, through repeated and consistent behavior of the school leader” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 269). Benevolence is the confidence that one’s well-being or interest will be taken care of by those to whom the trust is given (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Reliability is the degree to which one can rely on another to follow through with what is required (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Competence is having the capacity of skills needed to accomplish a task or expectation. Honesty is relative to one’s genuineness in character, integrity, and truthfulness. Finally, openness is the capacity to demonstrate transparency and not withholding information. (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Trust Between Principals and Teachers

Trust is crucial in the effectiveness of a leader to guide staff to make changes. Trust within the organization facilitates the capacity of leaders to promote goal attainment, efficiency, and openness to change (Hernandez et al., 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

A qualitative study by Louis (2007) examined how trust in administrators affects the ways teachers feel and discuss district initiatives. The study compared trust settings centered on four dimensions: vision, cooperation, teacher involvement, and data-based decision making. Leaders must trust the expertise and input of followers, and in turn, a feeling of being trusted creates a sense of loyalty to the leader (Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). When teachers trust their principals, feel supported, and have a sense that principals trust them; they are more likely to feel efficacious and innovative, moreover affecting school performance (Balyer, 2017; Yin et al., 2013).

An evaluation of trust was conducted by Shagholi et al. (2010) using a sample of 903 employees of educational organizations in seven Iranian districts of Mashhad with a survey questionnaire focused on three variables: trust, decision making, and teamwork. Findings indicated (a) employees sampled believed trust was existent within their organization; (b) the relationship between trust and decision making was statistically significant; and (c) there was a substantial relationship between trust and teamwork (Shagholi et al., 2010). Consequently, the correlation analyses showed strong correlations among the three variables of trust, decision making, and teamwork (Shagholi et al., 2010).

Betrayal or Lack of Trust

The betrayal or lack of trust can be detrimental to an organization. The absence of trust hinders progress, and once trust is lost, it is difficult to regain. Loss or betrayal of trust can result in weakened organizational efforts (Cosner, 2009; Louis, 2007; Shagholi et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). “When distrust pervades a school culture, it is unlikely that the school will be effective” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Loss of trust can lead to low morale, defensiveness, a decrease in work ethic or motivation, cynicism, and overall negative relationships. Leaders must avoid losing trust by protecting relationships and cultivating trust in the organization.

Cultivating Trust

Research on school climate and trust indicates principal and teacher behaviors affect the quality of trust in relationships within the school community and demonstrate significant associations between trust and school climate (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust affects the culture of the organization, plays an important role in effective, successful leadership and is defined as confidence in the leader/leadership of the school (Browning, 2014). Likewise, trust improves cooperation, is necessary to nurturing the climate and culture of a campus, and helps garner support from teachers to work collectively towards a shared vision (common goals) and purpose (Hong et al., 2020; Wildy et al., 2014). Similarly, Thoonen et al. (2011) found that “leadership practice can foster collaboration and a climate of trust” (p. 520). If teachers trust their principal, they are more satisfied at work (climate), they have an increased sense of loyalty to the traditions of the school (culture), and they are motivated to work collaboratively to reach

goals (shared vision and purpose). The principal is ultimately responsible for fostering these conditions.

Culture and Climate

It is commonly accepted that educational leaders must have a vision that is concise to promote a positive school culture and climate that nurtures student success (Gurley et al., 2015; McCarley et al., 2016). High leadership capacity development is dependent upon principals' behaviors. Yukl and Becker (2006) explain that organizational culture is based on organizational members' "shared values, beliefs, and norms" (p. 214). Variables influencing a school's culture and climate include principal/teacher relations, trust, shared leadership, teacher to teacher relations, professional learning communities, collective responsibility, and self-efficacy (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Wildy et al., 2014). Dumay (2009) found, "culture homogeneity is positively associated with (a) the principal's transformational leadership and (b) the teacher's collective decision making relative to pedagogical aspects" (p. 523).

A positive school climate is a component of organizational health. Organizational health and trust are associated with one another. Research supporting the context of trust was conducted by Tarter and Hoy (1988), who examined the correlations between facets of school health and faculty trust. Tarter and Hoy (1988) noted seven interaction patterns that define the organizational health of secondary schools: (a) institutional integrity, (b) principal influence, (c) consideration, (d) initiating structure, (e) resource support, (f) morale, and (g) academic emphasis. The seven interaction patterns can be applied to elementary schools as well as other types of organizations to demonstrate relations

between trust and organizational health.

Additionally, Barley (2007) determined an emerging theme in one of four cases in an exploratory study to be a culture of caring, “According to teachers, the principal creates a comfortable environment for change by presenting new ideas and supporting teachers’ efforts to innovate” (p. 8), with the principal commenting on the importance of including the school and community in processes to promote buy-in and a sense of ownership. The relationship among leaders and followers shapes the culture of the organization and influences behaviors to produce desired outcomes (Minckler, 2014). A study by Sarros et al. (2008) found the leadership factor of *articulates the vision* was significantly connected to organizational culture.

Similarly, Moolenaar et al. (2010) and Saĝnak et al. (2015) point out that transformational leaders empower participants within the organization, leading to a culture of innovation, and significant positive relationships are found between psychological empowerment and a positive climate. Psychological empowerment is defined as being intrinsically motivated to do work, immersing oneself actively in that role with attention to tasks, and expecting that the work will make an impact because it is meaningful (Spreitzer, 1995). Saĝnak et al. (2015) examined the mediating effects of psychological empowerment on the relationship between transformational leadership and innovative climate. Results indicated that “transformational leadership is a significant predictor of psychological empowerment and innovative climate in schools” (p. 156).

Additionally, in a study of 764 participants in 50 elementary schools, Saĝnak (2010) found that “transformational leadership has a significant effect on ethical climate.

The more transformational leadership behaviors are realized, the stronger will the ethical climate is” (p. 1147). Furthermore, for transformational leadership to be authentic, it must have ethical foundations; otherwise, it is not transformational.

Implications

Professional development specific to rural contexts and needs is necessary (Smith et al., 2014) to developing rural principals, including principal preparation programs. Furthermore, Stewart and Matthews (2015) suggest that policymakers and local and state administrators focus on professional development for small school principals to help with isolation and an overwhelming workload. On the same note, Parson et al. (2016) agree with the need for principal professional development and recommend rural school principal training that targets evaluation practices and policies customized to the needs of rural principalship.

Effective educational improvements must have an explicit framework, combined with comprehensive capacity for school reform, and inspire a culture of “teacher learning” (Thoonen et al., 2012, p. 444), which can be challenging for administrators and teachers burdened with accountability and stress to make changes. Longitudinal studies are needed to explore “changes in schools’ capacities and growth and their subsequent effects on teaching practices” (Thoonen et al., 2011, p. 497). Professional development is needed for principals to understand the focal points of building school capacity and to help address the stressors and challenges of leadership in rural contexts. Data from the research informs policymakers, state agencies, principal preparation programs, and practitioners in the field (Finnigan, 2012; Klocko & Justis, 2019, p. 32).

Nonetheless, rural school principals seeking to make changes should consider a transformational leadership approach due to the dynamics in rural school settings. The nature of a rural school setting necessitates the development of capacities for teachers to be equipped and motivated to work collectively with the principal. Aside from the many challenges in a rural school setting, gaining teacher's support can also pose a challenge; however, the dependence on teachers' trust, buy-in, and support are required to advance the organizational vision.

Limitations

A majority of the research reviewed is specific to leadership, including leadership in rural education and industry-based organizations. There are gaps in the literature and research specifically related to rural transformational leadership. However, this paper attempts to integrate the conceptualized themes of rural principal leadership and transformational leadership.

Furthermore, according to the literature, research on rural principals is limited compared to the studies of non-rural principals. Budge (2006) and du Plessis (2017) concur more attention has been given to the research of urban principal leadership compared to rural principal leadership, and research of rural principals' roles has been disregarded concerning "experiences, challenges, and opportunities of the rural principal" (Parson et al., 2016, p. 65). Also, rural principal research has been found to be more limited to localized areas as opposed to national or global areas.

There has been limited research with regard to purpose leadership and a lack of theory concerning leadership effectiveness in addressing purpose and its relation to

leadership in organizations (Kempster et al., 2011; van Knippenberg, 2020). Balyer (2017) and Zeinabadi et al., 2010) assert that there is limited research on trust in educational settings (public schools). Additionally, “Trust has been difficult to study, not only because it is a multidimensional construct but because it is a dynamic one as well” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 570). Likewise, there have been minimal educational studies conceptualizing the relation of school leadership and school climate (Griffith, 1999).

Conclusion

Based on the studies in the literature, transformational leadership is an effective leadership approach that significantly impacts the overall relationship with teachers, culture, climate of the organization/school, a shared vision, and can indirectly lead to increases in student achievement. Learning is affected by instructional practices, which are influenced by leadership expectations and behaviors. Principals’ decision making and allowing teachers to participate in decision making contribute to transformational leadership practices.

Perceptions play an integral role in how leaders are viewed or accepted; therefore, leaders must be inclined to shape those perceptions by their actions and character. Followers’ perceptions of the leaders’ altruistic motivation and establishment of a just work setting add to the appeal, credibility, and legitimacy of the role model. In leadership, there is no one best way to lead (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999), but it is understood that a leader’s moral fiber (Harris et al., 2006) matters enough to shape the context of an organization and leader-follower relationships. The field of leadership is

widely diverse and ever-evolving; therefore, continued research and exploration of the field are ideal. Bass (2000) asserts:

The future educational leaders of learning organizations will be transformational. They will be democratic in their relations with teachers and students but also know when they must accept their responsibilities to take charge. They will see themselves as change agents dealing with a multiplicity of problems faced by schools in the 21st century. They will help their teachers and students to learn to be adaptable and prepared for the New World of globalism, diversity, the Information Age and the net economics. They will convert mandates and problems into challenges and opportunities. (p. 38)

Common elements that emerged strongly from the literature are the concepts of *trust* and *change*. Executive leaders aim to influence improvements (change). Transformational leaders focus their efforts on motivating and building others to higher selves for the good of the organization by inspiring a vision (change). Rural principals are the principle change leaders in their schools. The capacity of trust is crucial as a foundational element to influence the culture and climate of schools, stakeholder buy in, and ultimately, to embrace change towards a shared vision. However, effective change cannot happen without trust and a purpose. A principal's purpose(s) drive decisions and direct the development of building capacity.

Encouraging commitment from followers is important for organizations as a whole. Martin and Costa (2016) argue that trust is essential to transformational leadership and the organization. According to Louis (2007), "Administrators need to address the

current level of trust in a building prior to initiating a significant change. If trust is low, trust issues need to be addressed if other organizational improvements are to be introduced on solid ground” (p. 18). Implications for administrators include exploring behaviors that foster the development of trust. Allowing followers to participate in planning enables leaders to foster relational trust. Allowing teachers to participate in decision making promotes collaborative efforts and self-efficacy.

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Appendix A

Table 1A

Summaries of Relevant Literature

Date	Author	Summary
1955	Katz, R. L.	Katz reviewed the three-skill approaches (technical, human, and conceptual). The skills are developable skills. Effective administration is dependent on these skills.
1985	Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J.	This study explored principals' instructional management job behaviors of 10 principals at a single school district. The researchers used questionnaires and documents, including but not limited to: evaluations, goal statements, memos, narrative reports. Supervisors' and teachers' self-reports differed from the principals' self-reports. Researchers found that principals frequently engage in instructional management behavior.
1988	Tarter, C., & Hoy, W.	Researchers explored two aspects of trust: a) faculty trust in principal, and b) faculty trust in colleagues. One thousand eighty-three teachers and principals participated in the study; a 44-item organizational health inventory. Results indicate that trust and health are clearly related, but operate differently in the school setting.
1990	Bass, B. M.	In this paper, Bass described leadership techniques; namely, transactional and transformational leadership. Bass discussed the different styles of the leadership approaches. Implications revealed that training and professional development can promote transformational leadership dimensions.
1990	Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D.	Data from this study showed that trust in a transformational leader was not dependent on personal attributes or an individual's ability to develop relationships (p.395).
1992	Kirby, P. C., Paradise, L. V., & King, M. I.	Researchers investigated two types of leadership (transformational and transactional) characteristics and behaviors in this mixed methods study. Qualitative results of the investigation indicated the importance of professional development, and suggest specific leader behaviors influence followers to perform at higher levels. Teachers' confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy are improved as a result of transformational leadership.
1995	Spreitzer, G. M.	Psychological empowerment in the workplace was examined in this study of 393 managerial employees. Results indicated that the four dimensions (meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact) contribute to the construct of empowerment.

Date	Author	Summary
1999	Avolio, B. J., Bass, B. M., & Jung, D. I.	This study tested Bass' (1985) six-factor model with a larger, broader sample of 3,786 respondents to explore a revised MLQ survey. The study used Bass' (1985) six-factor model, and tested 8 alternative models. The best fit was the six- factor model. It was found that "transactional contingent reward leadership correlates with transformational leadership" (p. 458).
1999	Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P.	Researchers contrasted four components of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) with pseudo transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is linked with ethical character.
1999	Griffith, J.	This study surveyed the relationship of leadership to climate, in addition to school structure and student population characteristics referred to as school configuration. Survey data was collected from 122 elementary schools using six student scales, and seven parent scales. Findings showed that schools with changes in principals had less agreement of perceptions from students and parents concerning the school environment.
1999	Hoy, W. K., & Tschannen-Moran, M.	This study examined faculty trust in schools. The researchers reviewed literature, (more than 150 articles) on trust. Fifty teachers from 50 schools in five states took the Trust survey and responded to three additional scales. Vulnerability was found to be common across most definitions of trust. Five facets of trust emerged as common themes: benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness.
2000	Bass, B. M.	This article explored how transformational and transactional leadership related to the creation and maintenance of the learning organization. The researcher studied the meaning and components of the leadership styles and how the leadership contributes to the organization, and the components of transformational and transactional leadership.
2000	Connelly, M. S., Gilbert, J. A., Zaccaro, S. J., Threlfall, K. V., Marks, M. A., & Mumford, M. D.	"This study assesses the criterion-related validity of constructed responses of key leader capabilities" (p. 68). The study included 1,807 participants using Mumford et al.'s (2000) leadership capacities model. Results indicated focal influences on effective leadership, and leaders' capabilities.
2000	Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D.	This study collected survey data from a sample of 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students. Surveys explored relative effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement. Findings showed significant effects on the conditions, but moderate effects on engagement.

Date	Author	Summary
2000	Mumford, M. D., Marks, M. A., Connelly, M. S., Zaccaro, S. J., & Reiter-Palmon, R.	Participants completed a specified number of measures, however, the researchers focused on a subset of measures (leadership skills opposed to abilities, personality, and motivation). Findings indicated increases in expertise and skills as levels of leadership increased. For example, mid-level officers performed better than junior officers, and senior officers better than mid-level officers.
2000	Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Youngs, P.	This longitudinal study found variations in schools' professional development focused on capacity. Researchers addressed five aspects of school capacity: teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources; and principal leadership. Findings suggested that professional development was related to the original capacity level and principal leadership, less on funding and outside resources.
2000	Treviño, L. K., Hartman, L., & Brown, M.	Treviño et al., summarized pillars of ethical leadership. They interviewed executive leaders. The researchers discussed practical steps for fostering an ethical leadership reputation.
2000	Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K.	This review centered on the literature on trust as it relates to relationships in schools. The authors explored the nature and definition of trust; facets, bases, and degrees, and the following dynamics initiating, sustaining, breaking, and repairing.
2002	Youngs, P., & King, M. B.	This multi-year qualitative study examined how principal leadership at four schools addressed professional development in three areas of school organizational capacity: teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community, and program coherence. Findings indicated that effective principals can establish high levels of capacity building. New leaders should be aware of the schools' norms and values. (p. 63)
2003	Costa, C. A.	Survey data from 112 teams was collected in a study examining relating trust with perceived task performance, team satisfaction, and two factors of organizational commitment. Findings support trust as important to team and organization functioning. Trust was positively linked with perceived task performance and satisfaction.
2003	Dantley, M. E.	The article explored purposive leadership, as grounded in prophetic spirituality. The aim of the article was to offer an alternative to a positivistic approach.

Date	Author	Summary
2003	DiPaola, M., & Tschannen-Moran, M.	This study examined the experiences of principals or assistant principals in Virginia through a survey questionnaire with a total of 1,666 responses. The principal's role has increased in responsibilities and managerial duties. Results showed participants need more professional development to meet their job expectations.
2003	Swanson, R. A.	This longitudinal 4-year case study examined decision making behaviors and variables that influenced the process. Results demonstrated that decision-making premises are both mediating and constraining in the decision-making process.
2003	National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	The number and percentage of rural and non-rural public elementary and secondary students, by district and state is listed. This site provides public information on rural education in America.
2005	Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A.	Researchers conducted seven interlocking studies examining ethical leadership construct, and developed a new instrument to measure ethical leadership and explore connections with other constructs. Ethical leadership was found to be a predictor of outcomes such as perceived leader effectiveness, followers' job satisfaction, and willingness to communicate problems.
2006	Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K.	This review of literature focused on ethical leadership and related concepts with moral dimensions (spiritual, authentic, and transformational leadership). Researchers discussed antecedents and outcomes of ethical leadership.
2006	Budge, K.	This research utilized a case study approach. It examined "the influence of rurality and a sense of place on rural leadership" (p.3). Researchers interviewed 11 leaders. Data showed that leaders viewed <i>place</i> as more problematic than filled with potential for most students.
2006	Harris, A., Brown, D., & Abbott, I.	The article explored the personal experience of an executive headteacher. Key themes: building leadership capacity, changing school culture, ensuring rapid change, forging collaborative partnership & external links, establishing whole school evaluation & planning, and signaling moral purpose and securing momentum. Researchers found that executive leadership is a strong tool for implementing changes.
2006	Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D.	This study used two forms of surveys to assess effects of transformational leadership on teachers, their classroom practices, and increases in student achievement. Participants included: 2,290 teachers from 655 schools. Results indicated that the leadership approach had effects on the classroom practices, but not on student achievement.

Date	Author	Summary
2006	Yukl, G. A., & Becker, W. S.	Yukl and Becker reviewed empowerment and what has been learned in the past half century. They examined the use and effects of empowerment programs.
2007	Barley, Z.	This study investigated factors that school staff believe contribute to success in high performing rural schools. Researchers interviewed 21 principals of rural schools about what they thought contributed to the success of the schools. Findings showed schools to be high needs and high performing.
2007	Holloman, H. L., Rouse, W. A., & Farrington, V.	Holloman et al., discussed purpose driven leadership as a constructive leadership model that challenges an organization to define its purpose, maintain integrity, encourage character, prevent burnout and sustain vitality. The researchers examined strategies as tools, and language to help educators.
2007	Louis, K. S.	This multi-year longitudinal, qualitative study examined how trust in administrators affects the ways teachers feel and discuss district initiatives. The analysis compared trust settings centered around four dimensions: vision, cooperation, teacher involvement, and data-based decision making. The study pointed to three variables that contribute to trust: perceived influence over how decisions are made, a sense that decision makers take stakeholder interests into account, and an agreed upon and objective measure of the outcomes of implemented decisions.
2007	Malloy, W. W., & Allen, T.	The case study investigated rural teacher retention overcoming barriers that might have been a barrier to retaining teachers. Twenty-eight teachers agreed to participate in surveys, observations, and small group interviews. Findings suggest that the elementary school is a resiliency building school. Based on the interviews, a closer examination is needed.
2007	Monk, D. H.	Monk examined teacher recruitment and retention in rural schools, identifying characteristics of rural schools: high turnover, below average number of highly qualified teachers, low salaries. Student characteristics that attribute challenges and difficulty recruiting teachers: large number of special needs and limited English students, and highly mobile students (migrant).
2008	Munsch, T. R., & Boylan, C. R.	This study evaluated the rural teacher practicum and 14 pre-service teacher/students' views and values of teaching in remote Alaska. Findings indicated lack of experience in a rural setting. Participants reported that the practicum was beneficial and increased their knowledge of rural teaching and living.

Date	Author	Summary
2008	Sarros, J. C., Cooper, B. K., & Santora, J. C.	This study examined the relationships among transformational leadership, organizational culture, and organizational innovation. Results from 1,158 survey responses determined that intellectual stimulation was not a predictor of organizational culture or climate for innovation. The dimension <i>articulates the vision</i> was strongly related to climate for organizational innovation.
2008	Sharifah, M.N., Zaidatol, A. L. P., Suhaimi, A.	The qualitative study collected data from three rural principals representing three types of schools: excellent, average, and low performing. The researchers interviewed the principals three times. All principals completed the Teaching and Learning program, and principals practice all components of the program. Principals should be continuous learners.
2008	Slater, L.	This qualitative focus group study explored communication as a skill principal's need to influence leadership capacity in their schools including sharing decisions making, encouraging collaboration, openness, and facilitating trusting relationships with stakeholders. Participants from 14 elementary schools. Methods used: focus group interviews, and researcher field notes. Findings showed that leaders can use multiple communication strategies to foster shared leadership and build capacity.
2008	Starr, K., & White, W.	This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory approach to analyzing data of semi-structured interviews of 76 principals by means of questionnaires, discussions, and field notes of observations. The study aimed at exploring challenges of small rural schools and principals' perceptions of the challenges. The study concluded that the context of rural schools is significant.
2008	Wahlstrom, K., & Louis, K.	This quantitative study examined the interactions between principals and teachers, and factors present as a result of the interactions. It also examined how the relationships between principals and teachers impacts instructional practices in the classroom. Data from surveys was collected (4,165) from grade k-12 teachers in sample schools. Three types of instructional behaviors emerged that describe effective practices.
2009	Cosner, S.	This qualitative study explored collegial trust in capacity building of 11 high school principals, who had expertise in capacity building. It was determined that trust is a key factor to capacity building in organizations. Cultivation of trust was found as a focal factor of capacity building work of principals. (p. 253)

Date	Author	Summary
2009	Cruzeiro, P. A. & Boone, M.	This study focused on rural schools' shortage of qualified applicants for a principal vacancy, and qualities superintendents look for in potential applicants. Results indicated that the states in this particular study did not experience a shortage of applicants, and identified specific characteristics sought in principal applicants (flexible and versatile, confidence, communication skills, and ability to multitask).
2009	Devos, G., & Bouckennooghe, D.	Principal's perceptions of their roles in leadership help them understand their leadership behavior and how it relates to school climate. Researchers examined school climate variables and teacher perceptions; they identified three types of leadership. Evidence suggested that principal leadership roles are important factors in leadership practices.
2009	Dumay, X.	This study explored transformational leadership and its effects on teachers' commitment using a sample of 660 teachers. A model tested impact of principals' TL leadership, commitment mediated by culture, and collective efficacy. Results found that schools have little effect on teacher commitment.
2009	Geijsel, F. P., Sleegers, P. J. C., Stoel, R. D., & Krüger, M. L.	This study examined teachers' psychological states, organizational conditions, and principals' leadership practices, and teachers' learning. Three hundred twenty-eight teachers participated in the study. Findings suggested internalization of school goals into personal goals mediated organizational and leadership factors on teacher efficacy.
2010	Msila, V.	Ten rural schools claiming to use transformational leadership qualities participated in a study using focus group interviews and observations of participants registered in an advanced certification program. The ten schools faced common challenges and had similar features: poverty, lack of resources, no parental involvement, and low morale. Results suggested that participants learned to be transformational leaders in their schools through the program, with significant increases in their abilities over time.
2010	Moolenaar, N. M., Daly, A. J., & Sleegers, P. J. C.	This study examined the relationship between principals' positions in the social networks of their schools with relation to transformational leadership and innovative climate. Participants included 702 teachers and 51 principals in 51 elementary schools. Findings showed that transformational leadership and principals' social network position is positively associated with innovative climate.

Date	Author	Summary
2010	Sağnak, M.	The researcher studied the relationship among transformational leadership and ethical climate. Seven hundred sixty-four teachers in 50 elementary schools participated. Researchers used two instruments; one to determine principals' leadership style, and the other to determine the ethical climate. It was determined that transformational leadership is a significant predictor of ethical climate.
2010	Shagholi, R., Hussin, S., Siraj, S., Naimie, Z., Assadzadeh, F., & Moayedi, F.	This quantitative study examined trust and its relation with decision making and teamwork. Trust affects the relationships within the organizations. When leaders allow employees to participate in decision making, trust is built from both parties. These elements lead to highly cooperative teams and the development of high performance in the organization. This study measured trust from a sample of 903 employees working in educational organizations. Results indicated that employees believed trust existed in their organization, trust and decision making are related, there is a notable relationship between trust and teamwork.
2010	Zeinabadi, H., & Rastegarpour, H.	This study used two models to investigate the relationship between transformational leadership, procedural justice and teacher trust in principals. Trust is a key factor in school improvement. Researchers explored four components of transformational leadership. Trust is important in the decision-making process and to promote empowerment of those in the organization.
2011	Harrison, L. M.	The author discussed two tenets of transformational leadership: (a) change is the central purpose of leadership, and (b) leadership transcends one's position in the organizational hierarchy. The usefulness of the two tenets was described and analyzed.
2011	Kempster, S., Jackson, B., & Conroy, M.	In this article, authors examined the manifestation of purpose in daily leadership practice, to connections and differences between corporate and social ideas of purpose.
2011	Thoonen, E. E. J., Slegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., Peetsma, T. T. D., & Geijsel, F.	This study explored transformational leadership practices in relation to building capacity for teacher learning, organizational conditions, motivational factors, and teaching practices. Five hundred two teachers from 32 Netherland schools participated. Findings reported that when teachers engage in learning activities their practices are positively affected, thus increasing self-efficacy. Transformational leadership behaviors are necessary to foster improved teaching practices.

Date	Author	Summary
2011	Williams, J. M., & Nierengarten, G.	K-12 administrators participated in this mixed methods study of surveys and focus group interviews concerning districts' needs and to address those concerns. Principals provided recommendations for improving policies and resources.
2012	Bottery, M., Wright, N., & James, S.	This article described a portrait (narrative) methodology concerning two nationally recognized head teachers as leaders in education for sustainable development in their schools using two different approaches. Researchers analyzed similarities and differences in both approaches. Findings suggested that in order for the headship (leadership) to be successful standards should be agreed upon within their practice, personal approaches, and moral drive.
2012	Finnigan, K. S.	This qualitative study examined leadership and motivation in three low performing schools. Analysis of principals' behaviors and their links to teacher motivation followed. The analysis focused on principals' transformational leadership behaviors. Results suggest principles transformational leadership behaviors are significant to teacher motivation, and their self-belief to improve students' performance.
2012	Leroy, H., Palanski, M., & Simons, T.	This study measured authentic leadership, behavioral integrity, affective organizational commitment, and work role performance from data collected from 25 industry-based organizations. Findings show that authentic leadership and behavioral integrity are positively related, and organizational commitment is related more highly with leader ratings of work role performance.
2012	Mayer, D. M., Aquino, K., Greenbaum, R. L., & Kuenzi, M.	This research included two studies which investigated antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership. 254 participants of various industries participated in the study. Results indicated that moral identity can be a source of motivation for leaders' behaviors.
2012	Sun, J., & Leithwood, K.	This study examined the nature of transformational leadership and its effects on student achievement. Researchers explored three variables: school level, school type, and leadership measure. Findings showed that transformational leadership has small, significant effects on achievement.
2012	Thoonen, E. E. J., Sleegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., & Peetsma, T. T. D.	The development of capacity over time was examined in this study. Capacity was measured in this longitudinal study in the areas of leadership practices, school organizational conditions, teacher motivation and learning. Data was collected from 1,020 teachers in 32 Dutch elementary schools. Results suggested that it is important to improve leadership as an initial step to building school wide capacity.

Date	Author	Summary
2013	Krasikova, D. V., Green, S. G., & LeBreton, J. M.	This article served two purposes: (a) to review, summarize, and integrate current literature on the topic of destructive leadership; and (b) to propose a theoretical model that links the psychological processes to antecedents and outcomes concerning destructive leadership.
2013	Yin, H., Lee, J. C., & Zhang, Z.	Yin et al. explored teachers' perceptions of trust in their colleagues on their sense of empowerment. The study utilized a survey given to 1,646 teachers. Results indicated higher scores in trust in colleagues, efficacy, and empowerment, and lower scores in general teaching efficacy and participation in decision making.
2014	Browning, P.	The study examined three components considered pathways to building trust through leader behaviors: leader, leader/follower, and situation (contextual leadership). Researchers concluded that relational leadership behaviors fostered follower trust.
2014	Bush, T., & Glover, D.	This article examined extant writing on leadership models. It examined theoretical literature, its conceptualizations, and to determine if concepts are supported by research evidence. The analysis indicated that the leadership models discussed give uni-dimensional perspectives on school leadership.
2014	Hernandez, M., Long, C. P., & Sitkin, S. B.	The study investigated three components considered pathways to building trust through leader behaviors: leader, leader/follower, and situation (contextual leadership). "Findings suggest that relational leadership behaviors are the central determinants of follower trust creation" (p.1886).
2014	Minckler, C. H.	This quantitative study examined the correlation between school leadership and the development of strengthening teacher social capital. Results showed positive moderate to high relationships between (a) transformational leadership and conditions that nurture social capital, (b) leadership and teacher social capital, and (c) leadership and teacher collective efficacy.
2014	Smith, L. F., Latham, D., & Anne Wright, K.	Principals of large and small rural schools participated in this mixed methods study examining leadership practices in relation to effective leadership in their schools. Findings showed that leadership practices varied depending on the context of the rural schools. Important rural school needs identified include local curriculum, communication, and parent involvement.

Date	Author	Summary
2014	Urick, A., & Bowers, A.	This quantitative study examined various leadership styles: transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and shared leadership. Additionally, researchers examined the importance of principal perception and core leadership behaviors. Effective styles of leadership can address many issues in struggling schools. School contexts also revealed principal types: controlling, balkanizing, and integrating.
2014	Wildy, H., Sigurðardóttir, S. M., & Faulkner, R.	This qualitative study builds on a set of case studies exploring <i>place</i> and its impact on principal's work, and the significance of <i>place</i> in principals' preparation and development. The goal of the study was to address how rural principals build leadership capacity of staff. Data was collected through interviews and observations in two schools. Results showed the principals had an appreciation of <i>place</i> and had a strong connection to the school community.
2015	Bouckennooghe, D., Zafar, A., & Raja, Usman.	This study measured the mediating effects of ethical leadership, psychological capital (efficacy, hope, resilience) in relation to follower-leaders goal congruence, and in-role job. One hundred seventy-one employees and 24 supervisors participated in the study. Results indicated that ethical leadership has positive effects on followers' job performance.
2015	Demirtas, O., & Akdogan, A. A.	This study investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and ethical climate, turnover intention, and affective commitment. Four hundred forty-seven employees of various industries/organizations participated. Results showed that ethical leadership has direct and indirect effects. Ethical leadership is positively linked with ethical climate.
2015	Gurley, D. K., Peters, G. B., Collins, L., & Fifolt, M.	This qualitative study investigated graduate students' educational leadership and their familiarity with shared mission, vision, values and goal statements along with their perception of impact these concepts have on leadership practices in schools. Results demonstrated that participants had limited knowledge or ability to recall key organizational statements. Preparation programs need to focus on the construct of understanding leadership statements: mission, vision, etc.
2015	Quin, J., Deris, A., Bischoff, G., & Johnson, J. T.	This quantitative study explored leadership practices, principal preparation programs, and schools about transformational leadership practices. Ninety-two teachers participated. Findings indicated that principals of high performing schools use the leadership practices more than principals of the low performing schools. Inspiring a shared vision and challenging the process are the transformational leadership practices that had the most impact on student achievement.

Date	Author	Summary
2015	Sağnak, M., Kuruoz, M., Polat, B., & Soylu, A.	This quantitative study examined the role of principals and the effects on psychological empowerment on teachers' behavior, and factors of transformational leadership: initiating & identifying vision, providing individualized support, and providing intellectual stimulation. The findings showed significant positive relationships between psychological empowerment and transformational leadership, and between psychological empowerment and innovative climate.
2015	Stewart, C., & Matthews, J	Researchers investigated rural principals' understanding of state standards and the need for professional development using surveys. Findings indicated rural principals are less proficient in knowledge of leadership standards compared to teaching standards, rural principals have different needs than medium sized rural school principals, and less time was spent networking with other principals.
2015	Tschannen-Moran, M., & Gareis, C. R.	This study examined variables that indirectly influence student achievement, including the key variable of trust, and four paths of indirect influence and mediating variables. There are several facets of trust, and three correlates of trust principals can attend to, to enhance faculty trust of the principal. The study also explored principals' behaviors for cultivating trust.
2016	Martins Marques de Lima Rua, O., & Costa Araújo, J. M.	Researchers analyzed the mediating effects of organizational commitment on the relationship between transformational leadership and trust using a sample of 58 employees in a quantitative study. Findings indicated that transformational leadership had positive effects on organizational trust, but are not influenced by organizational commitment.
2016	McCarley, T. A., Peters, M. L., & Decman, J. M.	This quantitative study explored the correlation between teachers' perceptions to what extent principals demonstrated transformational leadership, and the perceived climate of the school. Transformational leadership theory was reviewed and discussed along with its theoretical framework. The principals' impact on school cohesion and student performance are indicative of their leadership style. Principals' primary responsibility is to make decisions to improve teaching and learning while including and inspiring stakeholders. The study reviewed the relationship between transformational leadership and school climate. Transformational leadership factors are related to "intimate teacher behavior" (p. 336).
2016	Özbağ, G. K.	This study aimed to look at the connection between five factor personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and ethical leadership. Findings indicated that three of the items are important antecedents for ethical leadership: openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

Date	Author	Summary
2016	Parson, L., Hunter, C. A., & Kallio	This qualitative survey's intent was to develop an understanding of the rural principalship based on principals' lived experiences. Eighty-one principals participated in surveys and focus groups. Results showed that principals have multidimensional roles, responsibilities, and challenges.
2016	Toytok, E. H., & Kapusuzoglu, S.	This study sought to identify school managers' influence of ethical leadership behaviors on culture from teachers' perspectives. Three thousand, three hundred, and two teachers in 323 schools participated. Researchers used two leadership scales to collect data. Results suggested that ethical leadership is a significant predictor of organizational culture.
2017	Balyer, A.	This study proposed to discover teachers' opinions on their trust in their school principals. Results showed that teachers do not trust their principal in all sub-themes. Principals should be selected carefully.
2017	Bouwman, M., Runhaar, P., Wesselink, R., & Mulder, M.	This study sought to examine the extent transformational leadership is related to team learning, the mediating roles of participative decision-making, commitment, task interdependence and teachers' proactivity. Participants included 992 teachers and 92 teams. Transformational leadership has direct and indirect positive effects through all mediators.
2017	du Plessis, P.	Researchers conducted a qualitative study of five schools to understand how rural leaders deal with challenges in their work, examining the practices of rural principals with successful school improvement efforts. Findings indicated that it is beneficial for rural principals to use a rural lens as a strategy to foster their leadership and ongoing training.
2017	Neissen, C., Mader, I., Stride, C., & Jimmieson, N. L.	This study explored the relationship of teachers' perceptions of their principal's transformational leadership and their thriving. Areas examined: energy resources (emotional exhaustion), and two dimensions of work performance (task mastery and proactivity). Two hundred teachers participated in the study. There was no direct link between the teachers' thriving and the perceived transformational leadership behaviors of their principals.
2017	Pietsch, M., & Tulowitzki, P.	This study investigated direct and indirect links between leadership styles; instructional, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire and teachers' instructional practices. The researchers surveyed 3,764 teachers. Findings indicated principals' behaviors affect teachers' instructional practices directly and indirectly, "work setting, innovation capacity, and motivation" (p. 644).

Date	Author	Summary
2017	Yakavets, N., Frost, D., & Khoroshash, A.	This mixed methods study explored principles' actions focused on capacity-building approaches. Data was collected from 20 schools and 11 educational organizations from six different locations. Findings highlighted opportunities and challenges of building capacity, professional development is an important motivator for teachers, and school culture is significant in creating conditions to develop capacity.
2018	Canales, M. T., Tejada-Delgado, C., & Slate, J. R.	In this study, 206 teachers, 35 school board presidents, and 37 superintendents/principals serving dual roles in rural school districts participated in surveys regarding their views of effective leadership behaviors. Data from the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire was collected. Superintendents/principals had lower scores in the surveyed areas than the teachers and/or school board presidents.
2018	Jensen, U. T., & Moynihan, D. P.	This longitudinal study analyzed data from 256 organizations. An understanding of how transformational leadership dimension of communicating an inspiring vision is examined through a media rich framework. Findings indicated that communication matters, and suggested that face to face communication has a positive effect, but diminishes when the organization grows larger.
2018	Lesinger, F. Y., Altinay, F., Altinay, Z., & Dagli, G.	This case study's aim was to examine the role of inspectors in relation to leadership, trust for the school culture. The researchers interviewed eight inspectors using semi structured interviews. Recorded interviews lasted 40-50 minutes and later transcribed and analyzed. The researchers coded the data thematically.
2018	Ninković, S. R., & Knežević Florić, O. Č.	This study explored the link between transformational leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and perceived collective efficacy. One hundred twenty teachers participated in the study. Findings demonstrated that transformational leadership is positively linked to collective teacher efficacy even though not all components of the leadership approach are equally significant for determining collective teacher efficacy.
2018	Mayes, E., & Gethers, K.	The way teachers perceive their principals impacts student learning and organizational effectiveness. A blended model of leadership including transformational leadership is necessary in fulfilling principal responsibilities. This study explored blended leadership styles, using professional development models, and how these factors can focus leadership on creating a purpose, encouraging a climate of high expectations, allocating leadership, improving teaching and learning, and planning professional development.

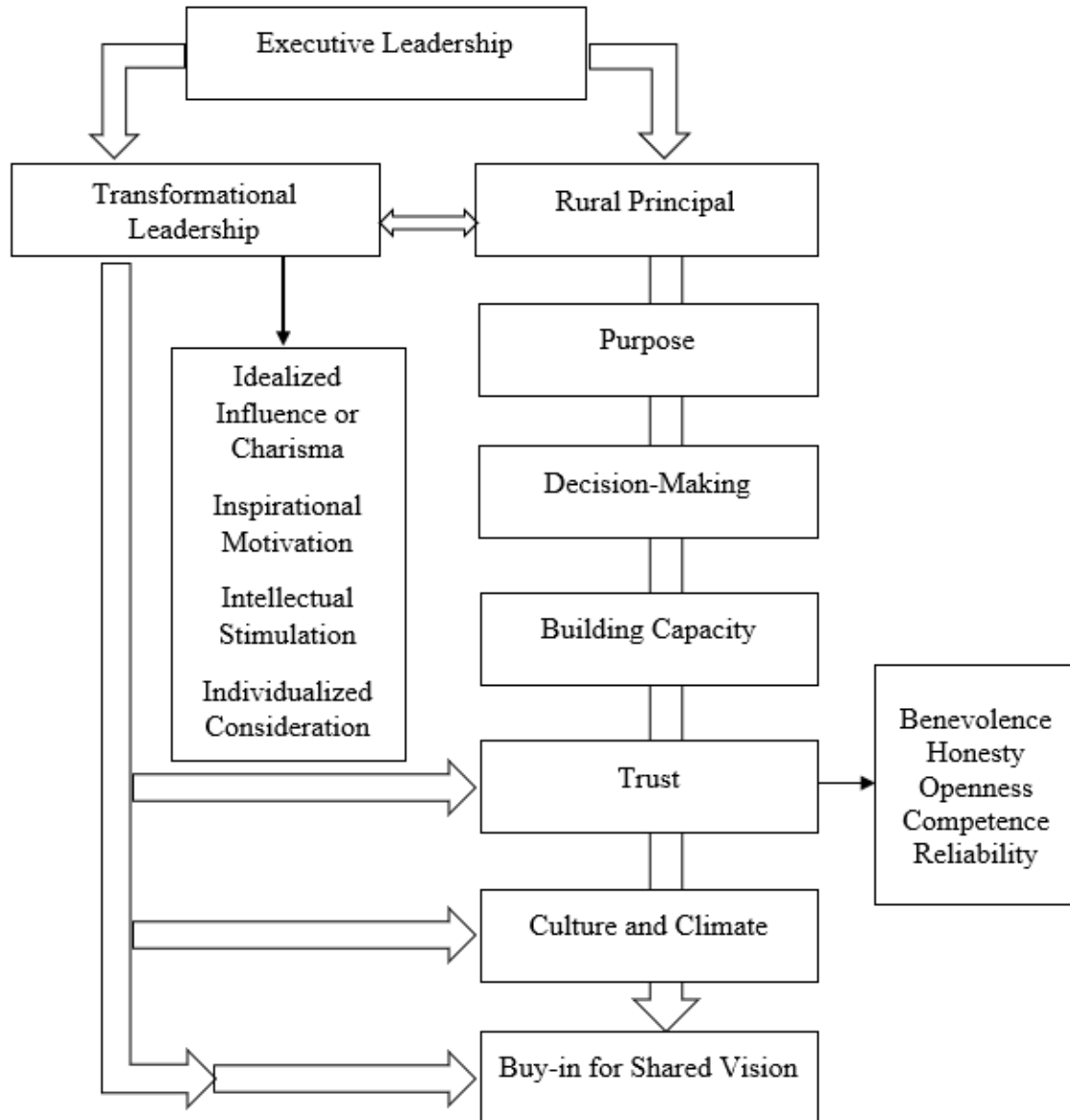
Date	Author	Summary
2018	Preston, J., & Barnes, K. E. R.	This review of leadership in rural school literature spans the years 2005-2015. Two overarching themes emerged from the literature: successful rural principles are people centered, and are agents of change.
2018	Preston, J. P., Jakubiec, B. A. E., & Kooymans, R.	The research design for this study was document analysis targeting benefits and challenges of rural principalship. The study was completed in three phases. Findings highlighted that principal with a historical connection to the community have an advantage in the hiring process. Other challenges include: various responsibilities, lack of resources, gender discrimination, and accountability issues.
2019	Boies, K., & Fiset, J.	The study builds on prior research about principal effectiveness based on their own cognitions, otherwise looked at as leadership behaviors towards teachers, and the development of trust. Thirty-three elementary principals and 245 teachers participated in the study. Findings showed support for three behaviors: supporting, developing, and active management by exception.
2019	Daniëls, E., Hondeghem, A., & Dochy, F.	The study focused on effective leadership practices and principals' leadership development. Various definitions of leadership emerged. Effective leaders are able to manage and understand instructional needs of the schools, allocate resources and personnel...all decision-making practices.
2019	Davidson, S. L., & Butcher, J.	In this qualitative study researchers interviewed 10 rural superintendents about their experiences with applying principle-centered leadership in their districts. Results suggested that principle-centered leadership helps superintendents become effective leaders. Superintendents' beliefs and personalities play a role in the methods and actions used to apply principle-centered leadership.
2019	Eisenschmidt, E., Kuusisto, E., Poom-Valickis, K., & Tirri, K.	This study examined moral virtues and how they create a purpose for ethical leadership. Researchers interviewed 4 principals concerning their perceptions of their work and the relation to moral virtues. Findings indicated that virtues appear to motivate leaders to attain their goals and solve challenges morally.
2019	Klocko, B., & Justis, R. J.	In this quantitative study the role of the rural principal is affected by lack of resources, wearing many hats through multi-faceted responsibilities, and expectations of his/her role in the community. Stress levels continue to be part of the role.
2020	Dictionary.com	Definition of <i>purpose</i> .

Date	Author	Summary
2020	Hong, J., Francis, D. I. C., Wang, Q., Lewis, L., Parsons, A., & Neill, C.	This mixed methods study investigated teachers' capacities and the role of trust. Researchers surveyed and interviewed 27. Four themes resulted from the interviews: (a) common goals and vision for students, (b) beliefs in colleagues' competence, (c) emotional safety and comfort, and (d) being vulnerable with colleagues.
2020	van Knippenberg, D.	The study explored the process of how meaning-based leadership motivates purpose pursuit through the analysis of the proposed concept and contextualized operationalizations of leadership. There is no best measure of purpose pursuit.

Appendix B

Figure 1B

Conceptual Framework Model of the Research Focus Statement



Note: The research focus is on leadership, specifically executive leadership, and transformational leadership specific to purpose with rural principals as my primary subjects, and how purpose influences principals' decisions related to building capacity of

trust, culture, climate, and buy-in among teachers for shared vision.

A Principal's Endeavor to Employ Transformational Leadership: A Case Study

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Abstract

With many changes occurring in the midst of moving into a new facility, and in addition to being in year two of school improvement, tensions are high and perceptions have taken a toll on the school climate at Riverside Elementary. Ms. Garcia, the school principal, has attempted to implement turnaround reform efforts through transformational leadership by attempting to build capacity for trust, buy-in, climate, culture, and a shared vision.

Erroneous perceptions; however, have led to a deficiency of trust among administrators and administrators and teachers. The case presents opportunities for discussion and examination of situational factors, and how transformational leadership might be applied in those circumstances.

Key words: Transformational leadership, trust, purpose, climate, culture, shared vision

A Principal's Endeavor to Employ Transformational Leadership

Questions arise about what we know and do not know about educational leadership and learning, the science of learning, assumptions of learning, and the definition of learning (Myran & Sutherland, 2018). Questions also arise about the role of a principal in regard to learning. We do know a principal's primary responsibility is to make decisions that improve "teaching and learning" (McCarley et al., 2016, p. 325) while including and inspiring stakeholders, supporting, and building capacity for the development of "more effective school systems" (Harris et al., 2006). We also know that principals' leadership is integral to the effectiveness of the overall organization (Browning, 2014), but the way teachers perceive their principals impacts students' learning and organizational effectiveness. Teachers' perceptions of the leader and leaders' behaviors influence their perception of empowerment (Sagnak et al., 2015; McCarley et al., 2016). Leaders influence organizational climate by their leadership style, motivation, decision making, and behaviors (Browning, 2014).

A blended model of leadership, including transformational leadership, is necessary in fulfilling principal responsibilities as Mayes and Gethers (2018) found when they explored blended leadership styles, using professional development models, and how these factors can focus leadership on creating a purpose, encouraging a climate of high expectations, allocating leadership, improving teaching and learning, and planning professional development. This suggests that specific leader behaviors influence followers to perform at higher levels; thus, having an indirect effect on student learning

and achievement. The principals' impact on school cohesion and student performance seems indicative of their leadership style.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is versatile and comprises four dimensions or factors: idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 2000; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kirby et al., 1992; Neissen et al., 2017; Zeinabadi & Rastegarpour, 2010). Leaders who center on inspiring or motivating followers and building their capacities are more able to accomplish their goals because followers are more apt to work toward improvements if they are motivated (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Teachers' confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy are improved as a result of transformational leadership (Kirby et al., 1992).

According to Bass (1990) leaders intellectually stimulate followers by showing them different ways to look at problems while learning to be problem solvers and to highlight rational solutions. Leithwood and Jantzi's (2000) model expands on Bass' work and described "transformational leadership along six dimensions: building school vision and goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; symbolizing professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions" (p. 5). Browning (2014) suggests there are ten significant practices commonly used by transformational leaders: (a) openly admits mistakes, (b) offers trust to staff, (c) actively listens, (d) provides affirmations, (e) makes informed/consultative decisions, (f) is visible around the school, (g) remains calm and level headed, (h) mentors and coaches staff, (i)

cares for staff, (j) and keeps confidences. A transformational leader motivates and empowers others to guide them towards a change; generally, a common goal or vision for improvement, or development of leadership practices within the organization (Balyer, 2017; Kirby et al., 1992). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) and Urlick and Bowers (2014) assert that transformational leadership is aimed at developing people and the organization, consequently improving outcomes.

Culture, Climate, and Trust

Variables influencing a school's culture and climate include: principal-teacher relations, trust, shared leadership, teacher to teacher relations, professional learning communities, collective responsibility, and self-efficacy (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Wildy et al., 2014). It is commonly accepted that educational leaders must have a vision that is concise to promote a positive school climate that encourages student success (Gurley et al., 2015; McCarley et al., 2016). Dumay (2009) focuses on understanding teachers' decision making and principals' transformational leadership related to school culture and found, "Culture homogeneity is positively associated with (a) the principals' transformational leadership and (b) the teachers' collective decision making relative to pedagogical aspects" (p. 523).

With regard to education, it is especially significant that teachers experience trust in their leaders. "The smooth functioning of schooling is a product of both the relational and institutional trust of the people involved in the whole educational system" (Yin et al., 2013, p. 14). According to Balyer (2017), teachers' trust in the principal has an effect on performance in schools. Trust impacts culture and plays an important role in effective,

successful leadership and is defined as confidence in the leader/leadership of the school (Browning, 2014). Trust improves cooperation, culture, student achievement, and is crucial in the effectiveness of a leader to guide staff to make changes (Hong et al., 2020; Wildy et al., 2014).

Principals should empower teachers to motivate the organization to work toward a shared vision (Balyer, 2017). According to Devos and Bouckenooghe (2009), principals' perceptions of their roles in leadership help them understand their leadership behavior and how it relates to school climate. Urick and Bowers (2014) examine principal perception and core leadership behaviors as important factors in effective school leadership. Moolenaar et al. (2010) and Sagnak et al. (2015) point out that transformational leaders empower participants within the organization, leading to a culture of innovation, and significant positive relationships are found between psychological empowerment and transformational leadership, and between psychological empowerment and innovative climate. Psychological empowerment is defined as being intrinsically motivated to do work, immersing one's self actively in that role with attention to tasks, and having the expectation that the work will make an impact because it is meaningful (Spreitzer, 1995).

Vision, Purpose, and Decision Making

"Transformational leadership succeeds in promoting the development of a vision" (Harrison, 2011, p. 51) through intentional purpose(s). Based on the studies in the literature, transformational leadership is an effective leadership approach which has an impact on the overall relationship with teachers, culture and climate of the organization, a

shared vision, and can indirectly lead to increases in student achievement. As the following case study illustrates, purpose not only influences decisions, but for the transformational leader purpose drives decision making. Decision making as a purpose is the reason something is done (Dictionary.com, 2020).

Several themes emerged from the literature including: trust as an essential or key element of transformational leadership, teacher and principals' perceptions of confidence in one another, the influence of principals' behaviors on teachers' perceptions, and how those behaviors affect the culture and climate in schools (Shagholi et al., 2010).

Transformational leaders who trust and value individuals, who allow them to participate in decision making, and who foster a culture of innovation and confidence are effective leaders (Balyer, 2012; Browning, 2014).

Betrayal of Trust

The betrayal or lack of trust can be detrimental to an organization. The absence of trust hinders progress, and once trust is lost, it is difficult to regain. Loss or betrayal of trust can result in weakened organizational efforts (Cosner, 2009; Louis, 2007; Shagholi et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). "When distrust pervades a school culture, it is unlikely that the school will be effective" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 585). Loss of trust can lead to low morale, defensiveness, a decrease in work ethic or motivation, cynicism, and overall negative relationships. Leaders should avoid losing trust by protecting relationships and cultivating trust in the organization (Cosner, 2009; Costa, 2003).

Context of Case Narrative

The construction of a new elementary school was the perfect opportunity for the elementary principal to utilize transformational leadership to resurrect a failing campus. The previous years spent in the old facility (with no repairs made due to the construction of a new facility) and low accountability performance ratings had taken a toll on morale. The principal's efforts to employ transformational leadership values the efforts, sentiments, and visions to build the trust needed for buy-in, to implement reform efforts, and shape capacity for climate, culture, and a shared vision. The principal was determined to guide teachers into rekindling their purposes.

The elementary school in this case, Riverside Elementary, is a public school that supports 630 students in a rural school district. The campus grade levels include PK-5th grade. It is the only elementary school in town. The district also has one middle school and one high school. The district supports high numbers of low socio-economic students (82.4%) and minority students (89.2% Hispanic). Demographics of the campus have seen an increase in immigrants and the English learner student population remains at an average of 26%, which has been consistent for the past four to five years.

The superintendent has overseen the district for six years, but is planning to retire at the end of the current school year. The number of years of experience for a majority of remaining central administration staff, including the assistant superintendent, is less than five years. To complicate matters further, the assistant superintendent was the previous elementary principal of Riverside Elementary.

Riverside's principal, Ms. Garcia, was born and raised in the community; having been a student in the same elementary school where she is the principal. She has the most experience as a principal within the district compared to principals at the other campuses; however, she is in a supervisory role over teachers who had been her teachers in her primary years, and she has family members working under her supervision. There was some talk in the district about favoritism.

Under Ms. Garcia's leadership, the elementary campus met the state accountability standard for the first two years. The third and fourth years, the campus did not meet the state standard and was rated Improvement Required. After two years of receiving an Improvement Required rating, Ms. Garcia was informed by her superintendent that the implementation of a turnaround plan was going to be necessary for the upcoming school year.

Case Narrative

Ms. Garcia started her fifth year as principal in chaos as she directed the movement of furniture and boxed materials from the former campus's makeshift storage (the cafeteria), to a brand-new elementary facility. Teachers moved into the new building two weeks prior to the start of school; the move was stressful. Usually, administrators set those two weeks aside for in-service activities and required training; however, administrators set those regular agenda items aside to move. Ms. Garcia knew beginnings mattered, and Riverside was not off to the beginning she'd anticipated.

The excitement of moving into the new facility was soon overshadowed by the multitude of new procedures and routines including: drop off and dismissal, schedules,

emergency plans/drills, and acclimating to the changes. However, the biggest challenge the teachers and Ms. Garcia faced was the implementation of the turnaround plan as a cohesive, collaborative unit to support increased academic achievement. “How will I motivate teachers to focus in the direction of school goals and let them know that I’m their biggest supporter when they feel so overwhelmed?” Ms. Garcia thought to herself. “This is not the time to be their friend, we have so much work to do,” she sighed and returned her attention to the turnaround plan.

The turnaround plan was meant to put programs and non-negotiable strategies in place to guide the campus out of school improvement. The campus administrators, instructional coach, and teachers used weekly PLC meetings to analyze data, programs and resources, share information, and gather input from staff members. The plan included an observation feedback cycle similar to a walk-through, but with post conferences after each observation and a plan/focus for the next observation. The observation cycle was in addition to the annual TTESS teacher evaluation process. Ms. Garcia, her assistant principal, and the instructional coach placed staff members into three groups; each selected a group to work with. Teachers had to use a common lesson plan template with essential elements included in the plans. Administrators reviewed the lesson plans weekly and provided feedback on lesson plans via email or in person. As a strategy to keep all staff members informed, they scheduled mandatory staff meetings once per week, every Wednesday after dismissal of students, unless otherwise specified.

Ms. Garcia used transformational leadership strategies throughout the implementation of the turnaround plan to convey high expectations, focus efforts, provide

coaching, and encourage problem solving (Bass, 1990). The administrators and staff implemented the changes with fidelity; however, after a couple of months, Ms. Garcia observed that teachers appeared apathetic, and some of the most seasoned teachers seemed cynical about the changes and expectations.

Their apathetic and cynical attitudes created a negative climate and diminished motivation. Teachers felt overworked and underappreciated in this most taxing time for the campus. They could not possibly do all of the things the campus administrators asked them to do. Some teachers, those close to retirement, led the charge of defiance and gossip about campus administrators. Ms. Garcia often found them congregating in the hallways. Unbeknown to the principal, this group of teachers had made complaints to the central office administrators concerning her leadership.

It was a surprise to Ms. Garcia when the assistant superintendent, Mrs. Simpson, visited her office and announced that the school board would like to see some changes. She had barely come into the room when she said,

I have had several meetings with the board over the years and they are concerned that teachers have complained that you are unapproachable. Basically, it has to do with your facial expressions. They think you are mad all the time. Don't get me wrong, I know you are under a lot of pressure, but maybe you need to smile more. The faculty doesn't feel like they can come to you like they used to. They also think that you are always complimenting your sister's work and not theirs, so you need to make that situation better. (Ms. Garcia's sister had been hired several years prior to her becoming principal). Another thing, they feel like they are

working their tails off and it's never good enough for you, so think of some ways to make them feel appreciated. I'm going to give you the heads up, your sister will not be on your campus next year. We're not sure what she will be doing, but the two of you will not be working together.

Ms. Garcia was stunned. She had in fact given all responsibilities concerning her relatives to the assistant principal in order to curb any perceptions of favoritism. Perhaps, she should have explained this to others and not just the assistant principal. She thought about explaining it to Mrs. Simpson, but the assistant superintendent did not give her a chance.

With high stakes testing creeping up on the calendar, tensions went higher than ever. Ms. Garcia knew she needed to get everyone back on track regarding campus initiatives. After Mrs. Simpson's visit, Ms. Garcia made it a point to always acknowledge staff with a smile or greeting, regardless if she received a response or not. She kept an open-door policy to meet with staff as they needed to see her in an attempt to let them know she genuinely valued their interests, and often caught up on her own work after school hours. Ms. Garcia created a "shout out" board in the teacher's lounge to post positive comments about things teachers did for the campus. Teachers could occasionally find treats like flavored coffees and pastries in the lounge as well. Ms. Garcia worked to find ideas that she thought would help improve the climate of the campus and alleviate the apathy and cynicism. Ms. Garcia remembered that transformational leaders meet the emotional needs of their employees (Bass, 1990), and she thought these intentional behaviors would help meet those needs.

Nothing worked. The teachers still gossiped and complained, but Ms. Garcia had no other choice but to move forward with the turnaround plan requirements.

Visioning Activity

The campus faculty implemented the turnaround plan requirements, but it was not until a group of representative teachers and the administrators met with regional support from the Education Service Center that an *Aha* moment came to light. The regional support person asked the group a simple question, “What is your vision statement?”

Mrs. Garcia’s heart stuttered. Transformational leadership required stakeholders to be on the same page. She knew a visioning activity was needed because no one in the room could answer the question the regional support person asked. All of the strategies and implementations meant nothing unless the teachers and she had a shared vision.

Representatives from each grade level, department, and administrators participated in a visioning activity facilitated by their professional service provider (PSP). The representatives who participated in the visioning activity had the task of imparting the information and results of the activity and the new vision statement with other staff members in their departments/grade levels. Ms. Garcia asked that the vision statement also be included in the daily announcements so that all staff and students would learn and know the vision statement by heart.

Despite conducting the visioning activity, the lack of motivation persisted and the climate continued to decline. During an in-service meeting with her staff Ms. Garcia directed the agenda with the aim of revisiting and clarifying *purpose*. She started by simply giving the definition of purpose; (a) the reason for which something exists or is

done, made, used, etc. (b) an intended or desired result, objective; (c) determination, resoluteness (Dictionary.com, 2020).

Ms. Garcia wanted teachers to remember why they became educators, and to consider the why behind everything that they did as teachers. She wanted them to understand that all the initiatives and strategies they had been asked to implement had a purpose. “For example,” she said, “We ask teachers to collect data. You collect the data. We talk about it, but what do you do with it?”

There had to be a purpose beyond collecting the data and discussing it in order to move the campus in the direction of improvements. It then became a mission that everything that was expected from staff such as lesson planning, utilizing resources, PLCs, and meetings had to serve a specific purpose and be justified according to campus needs with a goal or objective in mind.

Ms. Garcia could often be found modeling lessons for teachers in their classrooms, participating in lesson planning, and researching resources for teachers to utilize in their lessons. Ms. Garcia also considered that since she was asking staff to work purposefully, she would need to follow up and celebrate even the smallest measures that headed in the direction she was expecting. The administrative campus staff worked to create an infrastructure where collaboration was valued, celebrated, and rewarded. Ms. Garcia had a visible presence around the school. She frequently visited with teachers and students during lunch time and recess, under no pressure situations.

Timing

A sense of relief fell over the campus as testing season came and went. Now it was a waiting game to see if the campus had made enough progress and growth to climb out of school improvement. Teachers focused on end of year activities.

Ms. Garcia received yet another unexpected visit from the assistant superintendent, Mrs. Simpson.

Mrs. Simpson began by sharing that she knew how rough the year had been with all the changes, moving an entire campus from one location to another, the school improvement plans, and then her health. (Ms. Garcia rarely missed a day of work, but this year she had been hospitalized with pneumonia for five days, causing her to miss the grand opening of the new facility.) “You did say,” Mrs. Simpson said,

that it has been a very difficult year for you so, I’m just going based off of what you’ve stated in the past and think it’s time to make some changes. You also know the school board has wanted to see changes in how teachers perceive you. Things are okay right now, but it’s been several times over the years that I’ve heard this from the board. I am aware that you’ve poured your heart into your work here and there’s no doubt that teachers trust that you have expertise in content and in doing your administrative work, but they don’t care for you. It’s not all of the teachers that feel that way, but we just can’t afford for any of them to leave since it’s so hard to bring teachers to teach here. I’m giving you an option. You can continue to be the principal for one more year, and you know, if we don’t get out of school improvement you won’t have a choice but to move to

central office or you can go ahead and make the change. If the campus does make it out of school improvement, at least you left on a good note. Think about it over the weekend and let me know on Monday.

Ms. Garcia drummed her fingers on her desk after Mrs. Simpson left, but she really wanted to heave her office phone through the window. This was not fair, not after all of her hard work and effort. If the results from the state assessment remained unfavorable, then the change in position would be inevitable.

At least they had given her the choice as to when the move happened. Regardless of her best efforts to transform the climate and culture, the overall perception was that the campus needed more changes. She had to face the facts. She did not have the administrative support to stay in the position of principal. She had given seventeen years of her career to this campus; starting as a teacher and working her way up. So, it was with a heavy heart that she made the decision to leave the campus.

Ms. Garcia announced her departure during her last staff meeting. The announcement caught teachers by surprise and some had tears; then, there was a group of teachers who smiled and snickered as Ms. Garcia spoke. Ms. Garcia concluded her meeting with an excerpt from a book a teacher had given her; it was about seasons changing and being brave in the face of change. She told her staff that they could always reach out to her if they needed anything and that she loved them. She wished them well, and she left the room.

There was complete silence behind her.

By the time school started the next fall fifteen staff members had resigned their positions at the campus. Several of the teachers had been loyal employees who commuted at least sixty miles to and from work; however, after receiving the news that Ms. Garcia was taking a different position, they decided to look for work closer to their homes. Others requested transfers to different campuses.

When state assessment results became available, Ms. Garcia smiled. She had guided her campus from an F rating to a C rating. The high expectations and hard work had paid off. Riverside Elementary had come out of Improvement Required status.

Teaching Notes

In this case study trust is an underlying factor that has been compromised or broken based on perceptions from both sides of the organization, and trust is essential when trying to implement a transformational leadership style. The principal did not feel supported by her administrators. The administrators appeased the teachers who had complained about her; decisions to move staff to other campuses happened without consulting her; so, trust was lost there. Teachers who perceived Ms. Garcia to have shown favoritism did not trust her, and their lack of support for Ms. Garcia in PLCs, staff meetings, and other daily functions continued to increase. The air of distrust was evident when one, or the other, walked into an area greeted by complete silence or physical disbursement. In addition to that, whispering and congregating in the hallways also prompted perceptions of distrust.

Ms. Garcia started the year out with a purpose, to motivate and inspire teachers in a time of great opportunity for change. A new facility would surely inspire innovative

teaching and improve campus climate. That was easier said than done with Ms. Garcia having to compile a list of things that did not work properly and provide training on new technology and logistics of scheduling, routines, and procedures. The list of tasks was daunting. Professional development focused on rekindling the teachers' passion and purpose for teaching and preparing strategies to meet the needs of students who had not met standard while challenging students who had. Despite small celebrations along the way, teachers felt frustrated with the expectations put in place through the turn-around plan, which overshadowed the good things happening on campus. Teacher professional development occurred through the implementation of regular meetings and PLCs. Teachers learned to work collaboratively with each other in PLCs, desegregate data purposefully, and make intentional changes in instruction based on the needs of students and feedback from administrators. The relationship between the principal and followers, however, had been affected and evidently could not be repaired.

Discussion Questions

1. Ms. Garcia displayed several of the key transformational leadership practices in her actions and behaviors. Take a moment to reflect on Ms. Garcia's actions and behaviors. Discuss which key transformational practices Ms. Garcia's actions and behaviors fall under (see the ten practices of transformational leaders (Browning, 2014) on page 4 of this case study).
2. What could Ms. Garcia have done with that small group of teachers who did not like her?

3. What resources do principals need to effectively communicate and practice transformational leadership?
4. Why might teachers resist change (in this case, specifically veteran teachers)?
5. What characteristics should principals in a turn around campus possess or embrace?
6. In what ways can transformational leadership style be used to influence capacity development in a school under high stakes testing pressure?
7. How can teachers and principals work together when there is a sense of mistrust?
8. What activities or strategies could the principal use to gain buy-in from teachers?
9. How could the principal respond to silent treatment or congregating in the hallways in a positive manner?
10. What are some ways in which you can regain trust as an administrator when you have lost trust from your staff?

Activity

In a group setting, participate in a visioning activity and determine how you could improve your current vision or vision statement.

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**Rural Elementary Principals' Transformational Leadership and
Trust-Building Efforts**

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Abstract

Purpose: Rural principals' trust-building efforts have not been comprehensively investigated, and there is a lack of research concerning how rural principals build trust with teachers in relation to their leadership style. The purpose of the research was to develop an understanding of how rural elementary principals build trust with teachers and how the principal's leadership style relates to their trust-building efforts. **Research Design:** A qualitative grounded theory approach was used to understand a phenomenon by examining the perspectives (Corley, 2015) and experiences (du Plessis & Marais, 2017) of rural principals and teachers, utilizing semi-structured interviews to conceptualize data to generate a theory. Data were analyzed through iterative, open, axial, and selective coding. **Findings:** Findings indicated that rural principals did not identify with leadership style labels but rather actions or behaviors related to their leadership approaches and efforts to build trust. The overarching conceptual theme, *support mechanisms*, emerged as central to the development of trust through leadership actions/behaviors. Teachers' perceptions pointed out that principals' supportive behaviors developed trust, and concepts within the emergent categories were related to trust facets of benevolence, reliability, honesty, openness, and competency. Principals identified with category sets of communication, relationships, provisions, rural context, and expectations, some of which had transformational underpinnings connected to trust. **Implications:** These findings help rural principals and the scholars who study them focus on leadership behaviors, such as communication, relationship building, expectations,

provisions, and transformational behaviors that support the development of trust-building.

Keywords: Rural schools, trust, principal, leadership styles, grounded theory, empirical article

Rural Elementary Principals' Transformational Leadership and Trust Building Efforts

A principal's leadership is integral to the effectiveness of the overall educational organization (Browning, 2014). Furthermore, "It is now widely acknowledged that trust is a critical determinant of individual and organisational [*sic*] effectiveness" (Chughtai et al., 2015, p. 654). Successful leaders develop and sustain followers' trust through their leadership behavior (Mineo, 2014; Yasir et al., 2016). This study focused on understanding how rural principals develop the capacity to build trust with teachers and how the principals' leadership style related to the principals' trust-building efforts given that personal and professional boundaries are often blurred in a rural setting. Additionally, the way teachers perceive their principal affects organizational effectiveness (Mayes & Gethers, 2018).

In a rural context, principals have the opportunity to build trust with staff because of the fewer numbers of staff and because of the profound personal and professional connections (Preston & Barnes, 2018). However, "few studies have taken into account that leadership varies across schools on the basis of school context" (Urick & Bowers, 2014, p. 122). Little is known about principals' perspectives on trust and the trust-building efforts of school leaders (Cosner, 2009), and research on trust in educational settings is limited (Balyer, 2017). The lack of research on rural principal leadership concerning building trust and the limited research on trust in educational settings posed the need for an inquiry. Because the analysis of principals' leadership effectiveness is largely based on teachers' perceptions (Mayes & Gethers, 2018), this study also included

teacher perceptions of principals' trust-building efforts. This study was delimited to rural elementary principals and teachers.

Research Questions

The research study centered on the following questions:

RQ1: How does a principal build trust with teachers in a rural context?

- How do teachers experience the principal's efforts to build trust?

RQ2: How does the context of a rural community, which blurs the boundaries between professional, personal, and social life, affect the building of trust in a rural school?

RQ3: How does a principal's leadership style relate to building trust in a rural context?

RQ4: Do identified themes vary by leadership style?

Literature Review

Principal Leadership

In education, a leader's primary responsibility is to make decisions that improve "teaching and learning" (McCarley et al., 2014, p. 325) while including and inspiring stakeholders, supporting, and building capacity for the development of "more effective school systems" (Harris et al., 2006, p. 399). A common premise found in the research demonstrates that leaders' approaches and behaviors influence followers and organizational processes (Bush & Glover, 2014; Daniëls et al., 2019; Slater, 2008). Moreover, leaders influence their followers in groups (organization) or individually (Bush & Glover, 2014), explicitly or implicitly (Krasikova et al., 2013), directly or indirectly (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). We also know that effective leaders are able to

manage and understand the schools' instructional needs and allocate resources and personnel (Daniëls et al., 2019; Sharifah et al., 2008).

Leadership Styles

Some of the most commonly studied leadership styles are transformational leadership, servant leadership, transactional leadership, autocratic leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. Additionally, most leadership definitions reveal assumptions about influences exerted by individuals or groups over others (Bush & Glover, 2014).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is versatile and comprises four dimensions: idealized influence or charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass, 2000; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kirby et al., 1992; Neissen et al., 2017; Zeinabadi & Rastegarpour, 2010). Bass (2000) specifies that charismatic and inspirational leaders express the vision and the means to attain the vision by setting high expectations and acting as exemplars. Leaders intellectually stimulate followers by showing them different ways to look at problems while learning to be problem solvers and highlighting rational solutions (Bass, 1990, 2000; Thoonen et al., 2011); thereby, fostering their innovation and creativity (Bass, 2000; Kirby et al., 1992). Transformational leaders provide a supportive climate, pay attention to followers' needs, and provide individualized consideration by caring and showing genuine concern for followers. Furthermore, transformational leaders raise their followers' confidence and commitment (Martins & Costa, 2016; Moolenaar et al., 2010). Transformational principals influence their teachers, most notably by gaining their trust,

building teachers to a higher self (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017), and allowing them to participate in decision making (Bouwman et al., 2017).

Servant Leadership

The servant leadership approach prioritizes the development and interests of individuals (De Waal & Sivo, 2012). Bass (2000) asserts that the servant leader's purpose is to serve others. Ten characteristics central to servant leadership are: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) healing, (d) awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of people, and (j) building community (Northouse, 2019). Parallel goals found within servant leadership include helping others grow as persons and supporting the development of their well-being, including becoming "wiser, healthier, freer, more autonomous, and more likely to become servant leaders themselves" (Bass, 2000, p. 33). Servant leaders do not hesitate to admit their limitations but rather look to others for input and collaboration to rise above them (De Waal & Sivo, 2012). Servant leaders are distinguished by their moral character and by signifying their absolute dedication to serve (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leaders use positive reinforcement and offer contingencies or rewards in exchange for followers meeting the required expectations (Bass, 2000). Transactional leaders have clear expectations and recognize work performance, both good and bad. They provide evaluative feedback to followers, value order, and set goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014) and objectives. Ultimately, transactional leaders

are focused on the organization (Kalkan et al., 2020; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leaders have control over their staff. Staff members are not given much opportunity to provide input in decision-making (Amanshukwu et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2015). Autocratic leaders can make crucial decisions quickly and independently. They provide a highly structured environment and provide clear direction for followers. Autocratic leaders keep group members on task to meet objectives and maintain clarity on the vision and mission.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leaders utilize a hands-off approach with little or no attempt to foster the growth of followers (Northouse, 2019). They give freedom to followers to make decisions independently, encourage creativity, and provide little to no supervision. Laissez-faire leaders are passive and often avoid making decisions (Aalateeg, 2017).

Rural Schools and Multifaceted Leadership

“About one-third of the approximately 100,000 public schools in the United States in 2010-11 were located in rural areas (32,000), more than in suburbs (27,000), cities (26,000), or towns (14,000)” (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010, p. 2). In Texas, 12.8% of elementary and secondary students attend rural schools (NCES, 2003). Principals should familiarize themselves with the school’s contexts and the community’s individualized qualities to be successful (Barley, 2007) because in small, rural schools, principals wear many hats and must develop relationships of trust

with many different individuals in their day-to-day activities. In rural schools, relationships between principals and teachers extend beyond the school walls, such as family, neighbors, friends, or members of community organizations (Wildy et al., 2014). These types of relationships can affect the work environment.

Canales et al. (2018), du Plessis (2017), Klocko and Justis (2019), and Preston and Barns (2018) examined leadership behaviors and practices of rural school principals. They reported that rural school administrators face many challenges, and the roles of principals in rural schools are often dual or multifaceted. All parties need to understand the relevance of the exclusive circumstances rural principals face to develop “effective leadership policies, practices, and programs within rural contexts” (Preston et al., 2018, p. 1).

Successful Rural Schools

Rural schools are nested in context and community. One of five components that principals identified as a key to success for organizational support and effective instruction was the “establishment of clear goals between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and the community and the school” (Barley, 2007, p. 4). An effective principal knows he or she must depend on the expertise within the school community to work collectively to bring about success. Preston and Barnes (2018) assert successful rural principals rely on teamwork and collaboration. Despite the unique composition of rural schools, a rural principal who nurtures “collaborative relationships with teachers, students, parents, community members, and senior educational leaders is positioned to succeed” (Preston & Barnes, 2018, p. 11). Similarly, Thoonen et al. (2012)

stated, “School organizational conditions such as participative decision-making, teaming, teacher collaboration, an open and trustful climate, cultures which value shared responsibilities and values, and transformational leadership practices can foster teachers’ professional learning in schools” (p. 443).

Trust

Louis (2007) described trust as the assurance or dependence on the ethical principles of others and the feelings that members of the organization can count on one another and keep the best interest of others at the forefront (Tarter & Hoy, 1988). Such ethical principles related to trust include integrity, justice, humility, and openness. Moreover, trust is a reciprocal relationship. Costa (2003) and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) asserted that trust is dependent on the expectations individuals place on one another.

Facets of Trust

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) assert that trustworthy leadership demonstrated through behaviors related to benevolence, honesty, openness, competence, and reliability is developed through recurrent exchanges over time. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) say, “there is empirical evidence that all of these facets are important aspects of trust relations in school” (p. 556), and they maintain the significance of each trust facet depends on the referent of trust and the kind of relationship between the persons. “Indeed, by definition of the facet of reliability, trust must be maintained, once established, through repeated and consistent behavior of the school leader” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 269). Benevolence is the

confidence that one's well-being or interest will be taken care of by those to whom the trust is given (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Reliability is the degree to which one can rely on another to follow through with what is required (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Competence is having the capacity of skills needed to accomplish a task or expectation. Honesty is relative to one's genuineness in character, integrity, and truthfulness. Finally, openness is the capacity to demonstrate transparency and not withholding information. (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Trust Between Principals and Teachers

Trust within the organization facilitates the capacity of leaders to promote goal attainment, efficiency, and openness to change (Hernandez et al., 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). A qualitative study by Louis (2007) examined how trust in administrators affects the ways teachers feel about and discuss district initiatives. The study compared trust settings centered on four dimensions: vision, cooperation, teacher involvement, and data-based decision making. Leaders should trust the expertise and input of followers, and in turn, a feeling of being trusted creates a sense of loyalty to the leader (Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). When teachers trust their principals, feel supported, and have a sense that principals trust them, they are more likely to feel efficacious and innovative, which affects school performance (Balyer, 2017; Yin et al., 2013). Trust is a key factor in building relationships with followers to promote the buy-in and support needed to work towards a common organizational goal.

“Increasingly, trust is recognized as an important component in well-functioning

organizations" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 549). Likewise, Balyer's (2017) research found trust in schools has effects on a school's operations.

Cultivating Trust

Research on school climate and trust indicates principal and teacher behaviors affect the quality of trust in relationships within the school community and demonstrate significant associations between trust and school climate (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust affects the culture of the organization, plays an important role in effective, successful leadership, and is defined as confidence in the leader of the school (Browning, 2014). Likewise, trust improves cooperation, is necessary to nurture the climate and culture of a campus, and helps garner support from teachers to work collectively towards a shared vision (common goals) and purpose (Hong et al., 2020; Wildy et al., 2014). Similarly, Thoonen et al. (2011) found that "leadership practice can foster collaboration and a climate of trust" (p. 520). If teachers trust their principal, they are more satisfied at work (climate), they have an increased sense of loyalty to the traditions of the school (culture), and they are motivated to work collaboratively to reach goals (shared vision and purpose). The principal is ultimately responsible for fostering these conditions.

Betrayal of Trust

The betrayal or lack of trust can be detrimental to an organization. The absence of trust hinders progress, and once trust is lost, it is difficult to regain. Loss or betrayal of trust can result in weakened organizational efforts (Cosner, 2009; Louis, 2007; Shagholi et al., 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). "When distrust pervades a school culture, it is unlikely that the school will be effective" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 585).

Loss of trust can lead to low morale, defensiveness, a decrease in work ethic or motivation, cynicism, and overall negative relationships. Leaders should avoid losing trust by protecting relationships and cultivating trust in the organization (Cosner, 2009; Costa, 2003).

Building Capacity

Findings by Youngs and King (2002) specified that “effective school principals can sustain high levels of capacity by establishing trust” (p. 643). Additionally, Slater (2008) and Lesinger et al. (2018) stressed communication skills as a focal strategy to encourage the development of the capacity of trust and collaboration in the organization. The general consensus of these studies demonstrated a strong emphasis on trust; it must be communicated, encouraged, given, and received for the development of other capacities to occur. With regard to education, it is especially significant that teachers experience trust in their leaders. “The smooth functioning of schooling is a product of both the relational and institutional trust of the people involved in the whole educational system” (Yin et al., 2013, p. 14).

Research Design

Participants

I used purposive sampling to recruit elementary principals of rural schools in the West Texas region from Education Service Centers 16, 17, 18, and 19. Purposive sampling is widely used when the participants have knowledge or experience of the phenomenon under study (Patten & Newhart, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2020, “Rural” section) defines rural distant and rural remote as:

Distant: census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster... Remote: census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.

Survey

I conducted a pilot study with seven doctoral candidates and two university professors from West Texas A&M University who understood my topic and accepted their feedback. The survey contained five descriptions of different leadership styles with the label removed. I wrote the leadership descriptions in a neutral fashion to avoid negative bias. The definition for transformational leadership in the survey was: motivates others, encourages creativity, acts as a role model, provides a vision and mission, provides a supportive climate, and tries new things. The definition for servant leadership was: acknowledges and validates followers' perspectives, concerned about the wellbeing of followers, committed to the personal and professional growth of others, empowers others to be independent and make decisions. The survey allowed only one multiple-choice response.

I sent email invitations to 100 rural elementary principals in the West Texas region service center areas ESC 16, ESC 17, ESC 18, and ESC 19 with a link to a Qualtrics recruitment survey. Fourteen principals responded to the research invitation; two principals declined to participate, two opted out of receiving emails, and 10 chose to participate. Two principals self-identified as transformational, and six principals self-

identified as servant. Both transformational leaders and two servant leaders agreed to be interviewed. Three principals serve in rural remote schools, and one in a rural distant school.

In the second portion of the study, I conducted identification of teacher participants through a snowball sampling method from interviews with the principals. Snowball sampling is a purposive sampling technique that uses participants to identify others to participate in the research, also known as chain sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Snowball sampling is a good technique to use when the initial sample is relatively small. I asked principals to identify teachers I could contact. I contacted teachers via email inviting them to participate in the research. The email included a hyperlink to a Qualtrics survey about their principals' leadership. Four teachers completed the survey, but only three teachers responded to the request for an interview.

Data Collection

I interviewed all principals and teachers who agreed to participate via Zoom. The interview questions centered around levels of trust, rural community, challenges to building trust, leadership style, and examples of personal experiences. I recorded and transcribed the interviews.

Data Analysis

I entered transcripts of the recordings into a table and sorted the responses by answers to the questions for each of the participants. I read through the transcript data line by line, looking for salient information that stood out. The first step was open coding as I identified significant words, groups of words, ideas, and experiences and highlighted

those items. I added direct quotes from the highlighted text to the table in the second column, followed by descriptive coding for further analysis and interpretation in the third column. In the second step, axial coding, I color-coded related codes (labeled items) for each question and placed them in a spreadsheet worksheet for each participant. I wrote comments to describe codes and then grouped the codes into related categories. Constant comparative analysis resulted in related subcategories within substantive categories. I created worksheets to make comparisons between the transformational principals, the two servant principals, and then I compared the principals to their teachers who responded. Additionally, an overall category comparison was made between all participants. In the third coding step, selective coding, data was centralized into a core category or central phenomenon that connected all other related categories to it. While one might think of coding or categorizing as a theme, according to Saldaña (2009), “a theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (p. 13). Once data no longer resulted in new or developing categories, the study reached saturation. Furthermore, I created a conceptual framework (see Appendix) of the emerging overarching theme, embedded categories and subcategories as a visual.

Findings

Transformational Practices

Although transformational leadership was not specifically mentioned in the form of a label by any of the participants, transformational leadership practices and behaviors emerged from the qualitative data more than any other style. Principal 1 allowed her teachers to have input, “They’re empowered in making decisions for our campus and

what's best for our students." Principal 2 gave an example of a veteran teacher who had received all distinguished appraisals for several years under previous principals.

However, when principal 2 came in with high expectations the teacher received some proficient and developing scores, which the teacher was upset about. The principal said,

T-TESS is a growth instrument... I want to grow, I want them to grow, I want our kids to grow. My whole focus is growth. Let's just be better, let's just be at a place that is better than where we were.

The principal continued to affirm and brag on the teacher's growth over time.

Furthermore, the teacher took the principal's feedback and applied it to her practice. The principal was excited about the teacher's professional growth because it had "taken fortitude" to make the needed changes.

Similarly, principal 3 gave an example of a teacher's response to her leadership; the teacher told her, "I am the best version of me I've ever been and the best teacher I've ever been because you cared enough to take time to work with me and find resources and things for me to be better." According to the principal, "She needed to be proud of herself and the growth she has made, and she'll continue to grow because she has that growth mindset."

The teachers interviewed felt supported by their principals' leadership style.

Teacher 1 mentioned:

We had principals in the past who shut down new ideas; she's on board for everything. She backs everything 100 and 10 percent... There have been several instances with upset parents this year and she has never been one to blame either

side. She's been a very good mediator and definitely always supportive of us whenever things like that happen. That's a big deal for me. It shows that she has confidence in us as teachers and that we know what we're doing and all that stuff, and so she always supports us whenever.

Teacher 2 described her thoughts about her principal:

I feel that she comes in with more of open eyes versus just like I'm an administrator, I already know all this, see all this. I think she comes in with open eyes and she's willing to learn new things even as well for herself. I feel that she is open for the teachers to be able to explore and teach in their own ways as well, not just got to shut them off and run by her ways only.

Teacher 3 believed her principal's leadership style was "forward thinking."

She's very appreciative of all that we do, and then she also allows us to take control of what we're doing kind of like teacher-leader type, so it's not just her "I'm doing all this." She allows us to have our own roles.

Additionally, when asked about her principal's leadership style, teacher 3 said, "I just believe that her leadership style is exactly what we need in a small [rural] school; someone who's going to come in, wants to make changes, not just leave things like they are." While referring to how her principal's leadership related to her trust in her principal she stated, "She instills confidence in me. She allows me to have leadership roles on campus. It just makes me trust and you know, respect her even more."

Interview Findings

From the interviews, five categories emerged. Principals support teachers through their communication methods, by forming relationships, by establishing clear expectations, through giving provisions, and through their supportive roles in the rural context. I present these category sets that emerged from the data in the following sections. I used the principals' and teachers' own words to present the findings. Several supportive practices that surfaced related to trust facets of benevolence, reliability, openness, honesty, and competence. Feelings initially came up as a concept in this study since participants used the words "I feel." As the data indicated few if any inclusions of emotions, feelings in this study seem to imply contemplated thought due to the interview process. I tested this assumption by substituting the terms think or believe for feel. The sentences made sense, consequently, I eliminated feelings or "I feel" as a concept or category in this study.

Communication

Categories and subcategories that emerged under communication include honesty, transparency, regularly scheduled staff meetings, feedback, input and decision making, presence, check-ins, open-door policy, and ensuring that listening, acknowledging, and affirming was occurring. Two principals stressed allowing teachers to have input in campus happenings. Principal 1 shared the agenda with teachers and let them add items to discuss at regularly scheduled meetings. She stated:

I make sure we have weekly staff meetings, but I make sure that teachers are on our agenda. They are able to input anything that is either going on in their

classrooms or anything they want to share... I want them to feel like they have input on what we're doing on the campus... I just feel that making sure that their voices are heard on this campus is the biggest way for them to trust me.

She also noted how having an open-door policy let teachers know that they could come to her at any time about anything.

I can walk in and if I can't talk to them right then and there, I'll tell them to give me a few minutes or to email me and I'll go find them afterwards. I want to make sure I have an open-door policy that they feel like they can come talk to me at any point and time about anything, so it doesn't have to be just class related, so they can just vent if they want to.

Consistent communication codes among the three principals comprise transparency and feedback. Principal 2 noted that some of her more effective trust-building efforts included providing feedback to teachers through evaluations and affirming their growth, being transparent and honest, and allowing teachers to be honest. She said:

If you want people to really believe in your leadership and support your leadership you have to be the first to put yourself out there and be honest and candid about who you are and what you believe, and not be afraid really to mince words about it, but you also have to provide the safety and in the environment to where they feel like they can do the same thing.

Additionally, principal 3 stated that transparency, feedback, having an open-door policy, and confidentiality are necessary for trust-building. She mentioned that she had

really focused on providing feedback the last few years even though “feedback is sometimes hard to hear.” The term confidentiality was used to express that the teachers knew that anything they said in the principal’s office stayed in the principal’s office, allowing them to visit her office more freely. “They know that they can come in and what you say is not going to go anywhere. They come in all the time.” She stated how her attention to communication builds trust:

A big way that I focus on trust-building is that I’m empowering them by giving them tools they need to be able to communicate to those teachers and other teachers, the students and their parents, and then just being there when they have an issue. I want to be sensitive to the parent’s perspectives, support teachers supporting the parents, tools, communication, talk them through the process of communicating with parents. I just have a lot of feedback from teachers saying you know; “I feel good that you’re there for us,” and that builds that relationship and trust.

Principal 4 stressed communication through feedback, transparency, and observations of teachers. She indicated that listening to her teachers and providing feedback by following up with teachers was important because this type of communication was lacking in the past:

I’m the kind of person that I’m going to listen to their concerns, and I may not always be able to do something about it, but if I can, I will; that I will at least follow through with them and let them know either way that way they know they’re being acknowledged.

All principals gave me permission to interview their teachers without hesitation. This substantiated transparency as they had nothing to hide and no fear of how teachers would respond. Teachers mentioned that their principals showed trust by listening to teachers, being honest, providing feedback, checking-in with them, having a presence, having an open-door policy, and providing an environment for collaborative communication. Teacher 1 commented:

She does a lot of check-ins... She just kind of listens to whatever we need or what we want from her and so that kind of established trust right away. She doesn't have a hidden agenda per se. She's just kind of there for us and whatever we need.

Teacher 2 emphasized that her principal built trust by checking in on teachers and she had a presence in the classrooms to observe and provide feedback. She stated:

I feel that when she does check-ins routinely, again not just on me as a teacher, but beyond as a personal individual checking in with like through the week of the year, the text after work, you know just different things like that's not constantly just work... I really feel like she had to say it a lot, like we can trust her and really reinforce that we can trust her... checking in on everyone, not just a few individuals. I mean really showing that she was there, like I said, just calling after hours or checking in whatever it needed to be.

She's always constantly checking in, "how can I help with... this is your goal," just meetings throughout the year, just popping into your classrooms and she's like, "hey I can give this little bit of feedback", or even when we'd go in and ask and say "hey will you stop by? Will you look at this table...can you kind of

observe this situation or this classroom,” and she would always be willing to be back in.

Teacher 3 said, “I believe that she builds trust with the teachers by being honest.” She went on to say, “She was my mentor my very first year teaching. We had a teacher mentor program and so she was someone I was able to come to, to talk openly, with questions she was very available whenever I needed her.”

Principals and teachers believe that communication is significant to developing trust.

Relationships

A notable connection between communication and relationships was the principals’ willingness to be available for teachers and to work alongside teachers as equals. The principals spoke of caring for their teachers and ensuring their actions demonstrated that care. Principal 2 said, “I work hard to be available to teachers during school or after hours... I wouldn’t ask them to do anything that I wasn’t willing to do myself.” Additionally, while speaking of when she first took over as principal, she mentioned to teachers, “Give me time; over the course of time, you’ll get to know my heart and you’ll get to know my motivations. I’m just a member of our team.” Similarly, principal 3 stated:

Relationships first, then empowerment... building those relationships... they know I care; they care, they care about me and I care about them, that mutual relationship building that trust empowers them. I trust them, I care... I focus a lot on my personal actions to build trust. If I’m going to ask them to do something

I'm going to walk in their shoes. I'm not ever going to make that separation of I'm up here and you're down there. I'm human. I make sure I'm there, I am present.

That's building trust because of that presence and caring attitude.

Teachers expressed they felt cared for. Teacher 1 said, "She's invested in us as people, that just automatically builds trust. And Teacher 2 said:

I feel that her style of leadership allows me to trust in her because I see that she genuinely cares not just on a principal level you know as far as actually caring for me as an individual and caring for her students as individuals. She really cares about the community and the students.

Rural Context

Comparatively, principals and teachers believed that building relationships was easier in a rural setting because of the smaller number of people.

Each principal identified areas that they thought made trust-building in a rural school easier, or better. Principals and teachers discussed school culture, housing, their actions in and out of school, understanding challenges of a rural context, and the different roles rural principals have and how those roles support teachers to build trust. All but one of the principals lived in the community where they lead. Two principals lived in school housing within view of the school facilities, one principal rented a house (not a school house) and was in the process of purchasing a home in the community, and one principal commuted to work. A focal point of living in a rural community was the visibility that comes with the position. In this study visibility refers to being watched by teachers, parents, and the community rather than having a visible presence at school. Presence was

noted as principals being in classrooms and available to teachers. Principal 1 spoke of being watched inside and outside of school because of the small community and social media, and knowing teachers and parents outside of school as well. She felt like everything she does is “under a microscope,” so she had to be “the best role model in and out of school, and doing that builds trust.” Principal 3 also felt that being observed in and out of school was a notable characteristic of rural communities, and that was a good opportunity to build trust through her actions. She mentioned:

I think it's very important to build trust in a small community. I mean in a small community all eyes are on you. I mean everyone knows who you are. People that I don't even know, they know who I am and so that trust is important, and of course I've worked at bigger schools too, 800 students so I have both perspectives...Word spreads very fast in a small community...And then, building that with the teachers to make sure they're building the trust within the community as well.

Principal 2 talked about how rural schools are similar (she worked at two different rural schools in her experience as a principal). She expressed the necessity for understanding the community and challenges of rural schools, and relationships:

Until you've worked in one there's no way to really understand the challenges, and so I just think that the culture of rural schools is so very different and you have to understand the way the community works... Small districts permeate every aspect of your life. There's not much degree of separation between home and school.

According to principal 4 the size of the rural school made it easier to get to know her staff, students, and families. It allowed her to be in the classrooms more. Teacher 1 indicated that her principal was able to focus more on teachers and students better than what she had been exposed to in a nonrural school: “She's a lot more focused on the teachers and the students. Like, although she does incorporate the community and things like that, she's more focused on the students, in us.” Teacher 2 stated:

I think it's maybe a little easier because we're smaller versus you know, I've heard from friends and things within the larger schools it's a little harder to get to know their administrator, maybe on a personal level and things like that.

Many Roles. Two principals mentioned they had many roles, one specifically stating she had to be a role model. One principal said that having more roles as a rural principal was tough. On the other hand, teachers did go into more detail about the roles of their principals. Roles that emerged in the data include mentor, curriculum specialist, instructional coach, role model, and instructional leader. Teacher 3 said,

I know her role, she's very busy ...because of the rural school, like she wears a lot of hats. She wears our curriculum specialist. That's where the instructional coach is... She's definitely more of an instructional leader instead of like the boss HR type of principal that kind of used to be around and so because she's such a great instructional leader.

Provisions

Along with supporting teachers through their roles, the principals supported their teachers by providing them with resources, training, and professional development.

Principals indicated that they would provide teachers with what they need to be successful. This was confirmed by the teacher's comments concerning the principals' provisions. Principal 2 spoke of giving her teachers time and resources to accomplish their jobs. She specifically recalled an experience in which she gave a teacher some resources, "We sat down and talked about stuff together. I think she just figured out that I really was about helping her grow and that I would provide her whatever resources she needed to do that." Principal 3 had a similar response, "Teachers will continue to grow. If they need anything at all student wise or personal, I just make sure I'm there and provide that. So, if it's resources, I provide resources." She also stated that she was willing to "help with lesson planning, resources from the service center, and extra training to help teachers get to be better professionals."

Teacher 2 pointed out that her principal "would always be willing to be back" in the classroom, "if we need more training, things like that." Teacher 3's principal found trainings or professional development opportunities for the teachers to attend:

If there's a really great PDs of what, you know, she wants to see on our campus, she's always searching for PD that we can attend that she's going to grow and create a better vertical alignment in our elementary school. She actually attends most of them with us which I think is really awesome, so she's hearing it as well as us, and then we can all still come together and kind of talk about it together.

Expectations

One principal explained that living in a rural community affected the principal's efforts to build trust, as "teachers and administrators are held to a higher standard."

Additionally, principal 2 said:

When I came here, for example, there was kind of this climate of uncertainty because my expectations were a lot higher than what had been held here in the past. They were very nervous about me and what I wanted from them, and what I expected, and I kept telling them that I expect a lot...I wouldn't ask them to do anything that I couldn't, and I wouldn't ask them to do anything that I couldn't give them the time or the resources to accomplish.

Teacher 2 stated that her principal set the "expectations since day one." When asked about her principal's leadership style, teacher 3 expressed:

I think it perfectly encompasses her expectations on the campus, the way she has been a role model for our students and our teachers ...she has clear goals that she wants to set for the campus and if you're not, you know, collectively wanting to reach those goals as well, she can find someone else who would be willing; as she should. We kind of have clear expectations of what we should take away from what we're working on and how to bring that to our classroom.

Challenges

Principals shared some challenges to working in a rural context. According to principal 1, dealing with parents can be challenging. She explained:

Sometimes it's how we deal with parents because... we've had parents in the community that have always been used to just going over teachers' heads and even going over my head. So, I tell the parent I'm not going to talk to you until you've met with the teacher and you found out what the other side of the story is. They (teachers) really appreciate that and so they know that I've got their backs when that comes down to that.

She also mentioned, "Living in a rural community affects efforts to build trust because new teachers need to understand that things that don't seem like a big deal in other communities are probably going to be a big deal here."

Principal 2 expressed that coming in with high expectations was challenging because past leadership had been "absent in certain ways." Teachers previously made many of the decisions, and it took a bit of time to get back the reins from the teachers. She said, "Sometimes their decisions are good, and sometimes I'm like no, that doesn't work and this is why."

Discussion

Answers to Research Questions

- RQ1: How does a principal build trust with teachers in a rural context?

The emergent overarching theme was that rural principals build trust with teachers through support mechanisms. Support mechanisms include forms of communication, actions that encourage the development of relationships, having high expectations, providing teachers with resources to do their jobs, and understanding the rural context (Preston et al., 2018) of the community and school (including its historical

context). This was supported by Slater (2008) and Lesinger et al. (2018), whose research stressed the importance of communication in developing the capacity for trust in the organization, and Yin et al. (2013), whose work emphasized that trust was essential to a smooth-functioning school. Findings suggest principals are honest and open, competent in their roles, and available to their staff and community.

How do teachers experience the principal's efforts to build trust?

Teachers spoke positively of the principals' trust-building efforts. They felt empowered (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017) by being allowed to have input, the level of collaboration (Preston & Barnes, 2018), being allowed to teach in their own way and try new things (Bass, 2000 & Kirby et al., 1992), and participating in decision making (Bouwman et al., 2017). This was substantiated by Daniëls et al. (2019) and Sharifah et al. (2008), whose research determined effective leaders understand how to manage and allocate resources; and Yukl and Becker (2006), Wahlstrom and Louis (2008), and Thoonen et al. (2012), who posited participatory input and collaboration in addition to creating a trustful climate and culture of shared values and responsibilities promoted teachers' professional growth. Rural school principals providing growth opportunities for teachers was in alignment with Barley's (2007) findings of teachers feeling supported by their principals providing professional development. Teachers especially appreciated the genuine care and concern (Bass, 2000) demonstrated by their principals.

- RQ2: How does the context of a rural community, which blurs the boundaries between professional, personal, and social life, affect the building of trust in a rural school?

The most notable feature described by the principals about leading in a rural community was visibility (being watched). This reiterated the importance of principals being good role models. Teachers brought up various roles principals took on as rural leaders. The roles indicated by teachers include role model, mentor, instructional coach, instructional leader, and curriculum specialist. These roles differed from those commonly stated in rural principal research, such as dual superintendent/principal, dual principal/teacher, and bus driver (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009).

- RQ3: How does a principal's leadership style relate to building trust in a rural context?

Participants described behaviors as methods related to building trust rather than a specific leadership style. Principals had the best interests (Tarter & Hoy, 1998; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999) of their teachers, students, and the community at heart.

- RQ4: Do identified themes vary by leadership style?

Identified categories or themes did not vary by leadership style. Transformational and servant principals had similar responses regarding their leadership styles. They did not specifically refer to or use the words leadership style, transformational, or servant, but instead spoke of behaviors indicative of their trust-building efforts.

Leadership labels in the study were largely irrelevant. Principals based their ideas and beliefs about their trust-building efforts chiefly on their behaviors, which I labeled as the overarching theme *support mechanisms* that foster the development of trust in rural schools. Principals identified with category sets of communication, relationships, provisions, rural context, and expectations, some of which had transformational

underpinnings connected to trust. The connection to transformational leadership was that the behaviors and practices that emerged aligned with prior research (Browning, 2014; Budge, 2006; Kirby et al., 1992; Shagholi et al., 2010) associated with trust. The emerging definition of trust in this study is the confidence teachers had in their principals.

Limitations

A drawback to qualitative research is that it can be susceptible to researcher-induced bias. For example, there was only one data coder in this study, the researcher, and codes can be subjective to the researcher's ideas, opinions, beliefs, knowledge, or experiences. Furthermore, the strengths of qualitative research do not go to validity and reliability; thus, the findings cannot be generalized to populations; however, the findings can be generalized to theory. Although the sample of participants was small and leadership labels were irrelevant, I believe we would find similar results with a larger sample of participants.

I could have potentially received more insight had I asked about negative trust experiences; however, I chose not to use any questions referring to positive or negative experiences in the interview guide because I did not want to lead the responses one way or another, and I did not want to influence responses by means of negative dominance. Kahneman (2011) points out that "the brains of humans and other animals contain a mechanism that is designed to give priority to bad news ... and negative trumps positive" (pp. 301-302), and in grounded theory, data should emerge naturally.

Additionally, the response to this research was less than expected. The nature of school systems in this unprecedented time of school closures due to COVID 19

presumably affected all schools differently. This could have posed limitations as principals and teachers may have been overwhelmed with additional duties and pressed not to give up their time for external activities such as this research.

Implications

Principals in rural schools focus on leadership behaviors, such as communication, relationship building, expectations, provisions, and transformational behaviors that support the development of trust-building. In this qualitative study, rural principals used 47 specific support mechanisms with teachers to develop trust between administration and staff. This study supports Louis' (2007) findings that "Administrators need to address the current level of trust in a building prior to initiating a significant change. If trust is low, trust issues need to be addressed if other organizational improvements are to be introduced on solid ground" (p. 18).

Trust-building should be taught in graduate schools because it goes to leadership including rural principal leadership. Insight of behaviors that develop trust will increase principals' awareness of how trust affects principal-teacher relationships and the rural organizational context. Whether or not trust can be taught is a contentious matter; however, behaviors that lead to the development of trust can be taught. Aspiring, new, and certified rural principals alike should engage in the professional development of trust-building efforts in rural leadership, such as supportive behaviors that foster trust. Professional learning communities for principals can establish networking and leadership learning opportunities to address such concepts as trust-building. Research is needed to explore the reciprocity of principal-teacher trust. Does principals' trust in teachers affect

outcomes and trust-building similar to faculty trust in the principal? A study by Canlı and Demirtas (2018), “found out that ‘Work Discipline, Compatibility and Personal Values’ themes are predominant in the opinions of the participants on the reasons of principals’ trust in teachers and the characteristics behind these themes are similar, teachers’ behavior towards students and the organization are also effective factors in principals’ trust in teachers” (p. 106). Although this study did not directly go to principals’ trust in teachers, it can be inferred that by allowing teachers to take leadership roles, provide input, and participate in decision-making, principals trust the teachers. Policymakers envision changes in school reform, school improvement, and student achievement; such changes can benefit from attention to trust within the school setting (Yin et al., 2013). Additionally, “the results of empirical studies have revealed that enhancing the trust relationships between people is of great importance for teaching and educational change” (Yin et al., 2013, p. 14).

While supportive mechanisms are not unique to principals, but relatively applicable to other organizations or fields of leadership, this study adds to the knowledge of rural principal leadership by focusing on the principals’ perspectives of their leadership style concerning trust-building efforts and how teachers experienced the principals’ trust-building efforts. The outcomes of this study benefit rural administrators exploring actions that foster the development of trust and trust-building efforts with teachers. Principal preparation programs and professional development can benefit from understanding the focal points of developing capacity, specifically trust, to help address the unique challenges of leadership in rural contexts.

The nature of a rural school setting necessitates the development of capacities for teachers to be equipped and motivated to work collectively with the principal.

Understanding how rural principals build trust with teachers and how their leadership relates to the trust-building efforts provides a point of reference to districts and administrators for addressing the distinct needs and relationships between principals and teachers in rural schools. Future research centered on the development of trust in rural contexts through support mechanisms would be of interest as would exploration of whether or not principals trust their teachers.

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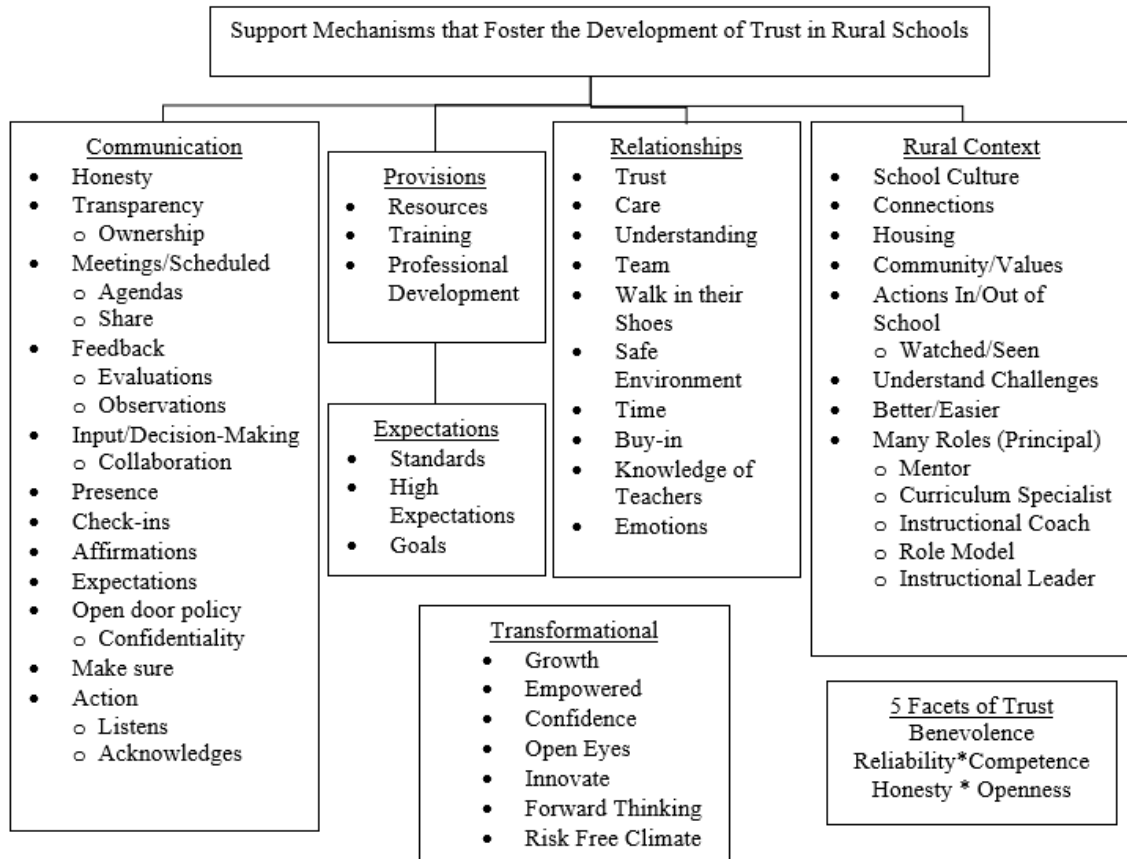
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Appendix

Support Mechanisms that Foster the Development of Trust in Rural Schools



Note: This conceptual framework emerged from the data to develop an understanding of how rural elementary principals' leadership style relate to their trust-building efforts.