

**How Far Do Master's Degrees In Education Contribute To The Success Of School
Principals In Alberta? And How Might These Programs Be Improved?**

by

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Abstract

The role of the school principal has changed significantly over the years, from school managers to instructional leaders (Blase, Blase and Phillips 2012). The principal's roles and responsibilities have garnered political attention as policies and regulations are set in place in order to achieve success (Brundrett, 2001). For example, the United States and its centrally driven 'No Child Left Behind' policy made significant demands on all schools and school principals. Most training programmes began in the 19th century, with contemporary programmes continuing the work initiated in the 1960s in leading US universities (Brundrett, 2001). How far programmes such as Master's of Education degrees have kept up with the new realities of the modern principal is an important question (Hallinger, 2013). Since M.Ed. degrees are considered by many school districts as qualifications for principal positions, my research investigation has focused on how they contribute to principals' success in the Canadian province of Alberta.

The aim of the study is to determine what the contribution of M.Ed. degree study is to school principal success. The objective is to identify the ways in which M.Ed.'s can be changed to improve their effectiveness in developing good leaders.

The research study will blend two methodologies. Firstly, there is a documentary analysis of the masters programmes taken by Alberta principals, while a consideration of the application requirements of school boards will open the study and identify the main pillars of principal efficacy and success looked for in Alberta as well as the M.Ed. programmes offered (whether online, on-the-ground, or a blend). Secondly a qualitative interview base of research will develop a depth of understanding in how successful M.Ed. programmes are for school principals and provide a range of information from which to draw from the documentary analysis which identifies M.Ed. programmes as a requirement.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my children
Maxim and Zoryana,
to know my personal commitment to:
lifelong learning and
determination for increased self-efficacy
as a professional,
a friend and,
most importantly,
as your father.

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**How Far Do Master's Degrees in Education Contribute To The Success Of
School Principals In Alberta? And How Might These Programs Be Improved?**

Chapter 1: Introduction

The role of the school principal has changed significantly over the years, shifting from local school managers to instructional leaders (Blase et al., 2012). At the same time, as Ball (2008) points out, education has become a major political issue and a critical factor in many governmental indices leading to increased centrally driven interventions. The principal's roles and responsibilities have garnered political attention as policies and regulations are aimed at improving for success (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2011). One far-reaching example of state intervention and direction is in the USA with 'No Child Left Behind' initiatives that began in the late 1980s and were ratified in a government Act in 2001 with the same name (Hayes, 2015). Here a whole programme of additional support for parents and young children was developed and effectively imposed on school principals to implement. The intention was laudable, and some of the results were very positive, but in many cases, the demands on schools were unrealistic given the local contexts and demographics. Similar projects followed suit in Canada with the First Nation, Metis and Inuit initiatives (Cherubini, 2010) and in the UK with Sure Start programmes (Gray and Francis, 2007). These all placed a heavy burden on school principals often without sufficient training or support but with targets and expectations (Brundrett, 2001).

Marzano (2003) argues that good school leadership is responsible for ensuring all the students in a principal's care will advance as lifelong learners in an ever-changing global society. In the sixth edition of *The Principalship*, Sergiovanni and Green (2015) discuss the complexities of the principal's role, including the

many dimensions of the interactions and relationship transactions that occur every day. In my experience as a school principal interacting often with other principals in my province it is clear that this book is often used as a key text by new principals as they explore the decision-making process through detailed examples of the transactions that they will face as a school leader.

In most developed countries training programmes began in the 19th century, with current programmes continuing the work of leading US universities' 1960s initiatives (Brundrett, 2001). In the Province of Alberta, Canada, it is a requirement that all applicants for the position of school principal have or are registered for a Masters of Education (M.Ed.), even though there is no formal provincial licensure programme (Mombourquette, 2013). Many school boards now take this further and require a completed M.Ed. This has led to a proliferation of M.Ed. programmes offered by local, out of province and online higher education institutions. The assumption in Alberta is that the study of education at this level enhances the ability of school principals to lead a school well.

Such an assumption was explored by Cowie and Crawford (2007) in an interview-based study of Scottish and English head teachers, considering the impact on practice in post of pre-service preparation programmes. Although they argued strongly for the efficacy of formal pre-appointment preparation programmes, going so far as to suggest that a lack of a requirement to complete them indicates a massive 'act of faith' on the employer's part, they did not find a direct correlation between the programmes and successful practice.

This same faith placed in M.Ed. degrees (with various concentrations) or alternative pre-appointment systems is identified as a challenge in many other areas of the world. For example, concerns have been expressed about the insufficient capacity of some educational institutions in East Africa to offer this professional development given the complexity of principals' roles today (Onguko, Abdalla and Webber, 2008). In a study of first-year principals based in Mexico Slater, Garcia and Gorosave (2008) concluded that such programmes are important, but cited misaligned principal preparation courses with 'in post' realities. What this suggests is that it is not only the existence of a preparation programme but the alignment of that programme with the in-service needs of new school principals that matters.

Apple (2013, 2015) questions the motives of educational theorist and practitioners in the development of society through teacher and school head development. His question 'can education change society' becomes an interesting one for this study when looking at the politically influenced directions and drives for change. How these influences are reflected in the education system, or otherwise in the drives for change that higher education educators might favour in their development of master degree concentrations and their intended impact on school leadership, and in turn on society. These are large questions that cannot be fully explored in this study but are important considerations.

How far courses such as the Masters of Education degree (henceforth M.Ed.) have kept up with the new realities of the modern principal has been identified by Hallinger (2003) as an important question. A key element of the investigation

presented in this thesis focuses on the capacity of these degrees to bring principals' success.

1.0 Aim of Study

The aim of the study is to determine the contribution of M.Ed. degree education to school principal success. In light of the absence of a formalized pre-appointment programme of preparation in Alberta, this research study considers a selection of current M.Ed. programmes available in Alberta regarding their value as effective qualifications and preparation for the ever-changing and increasingly complex role of the school principal as experienced by the participants. The intention of the study is to determine whether these M.Ed. programmes – which qualify an individual to apply for the position – in practice prepare these same individuals for principal-level roles and responsibilities as well as bringing them success.

1.1 Research Objectives

The focus of the study is to determine how far M.Ed. degrees contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta and how these programmes might be improved. The objective is to identify ways in which M.Ed.s can be changed in order to improve their effectiveness in developing good leaders.

The fundamental questions of this research study are:

1. What does the Province of Alberta suggest are the features and characteristics of a successful school principal?

2. What are school districts' requirements for the position of school principal?
3. What do successful school principals see as the key characteristics of effective school principals?
4. What characteristics do successful principals see as a necessity in a master's degree programme that would adequately prepare them for the position?
5. How far does the design and content of master's degrees taken by aspiring principals aim to engender effective school leadership?

These questions have a personal meaning for me as they are often discussed within my professional context and between colleagues. Each perspective on these questions results in myths stated as fact by my colleagues when discussing the validity of M.Ed. degrees as bringing success to one's role as a principal. In designing the inquiry and developing the methodology in a linear fashion, the five questions outlined above became fundamental to the larger complex inquiry I developed.

This study will benefit employers, future principal candidates as well as those higher education institutions directing M.Ed. programmes. An understanding of the most effective aspects derived from the large number of M.Ed. programmes currently available in Alberta will enlighten higher education institutions in relation to the design of the degrees they offer. The broader aim is that the findings will contribute to the improvement of principal efficacy and, ultimately, improve the development of school leadership in providing quality education in our schools.

1.2 Positionality

My experience as a teacher, school assistant principal and principal for many years in the province of Alberta had guided me towards this thesis topic. I have worked on two curriculum redesigns on provincial committees, 2 Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) projects, as a science consultant for a large school district and in various Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) projects focusing on Robotics programs in schools. These different experiences have allowed me to engage beyond my school and district to collaborate with colleagues in various school districts around Alberta and with members of the provincial education ministry. My concerns about the issue of school principal preparation arise from my experiences as an educator in the province of Alberta, 16 years of which have been in the role of educational leadership in a number of schools.

My experiences with good mentorship towards and within my early principalship have been varied. Many discussions with colleagues over the years brought into question the need for an M.Ed. Degree as a requirement in applying for school-based leadership. Various arguments are presented in conversation identifying the benefits of experience and on the job training, versus the pursuit of general M.Ed. degree from any field. Alberta accepts a range of degrees including those which are oriented towards disciplinary knowledge and subject teaching, such as science or fine arts Masters.

My preparation for school leadership included the completion of a Masters of Education with a concentration in School Leadership. I gained from this degree a

skill set that directly benefited me in my role and position and early on questioned why my colleagues would think differently. Being mindful of my experiences in preparation for this role, I recognised the complexity of the research question I had selected to journey with for the past six years.

The development of school principals is a pedagogic as well as a political issue. In my experience, senior leaders in the province must balance budgets, deliver results and be seen by parents and other voters to be focusing on the immediate needs of students and teaching conditions. Providing funding for the training of principals, especially in a vast and diverse province and at a time of significant growth in student numbers, is expensive. Putting the onus on aspiring principals to seek out and fund their degrees is less expensive. The providers of masters degrees are in competition with one another for this lucrative market and so are careful about the information they offer. Thus the study I embarked on is complex and multifaceted with a number of competing interests from different stakeholders.

Chapter 2: The Albertan School System and the Role of the Principal in Context

2.0 Historical Development of the School Principal in Alberta

From one-room schools to the recent formation of schools the size of small Alberta towns, we see education changing with the times. Chalmers (1967) has suggested that the transition of teachers in Alberta to the role of principal was based largely on necessity. This began with the one-room schools where an individual who had taken basic preparation in teaching helped educate children living in the western Canadian frontier. These early teachers struggled with students of a variety of ages, but non-standardized curricula and daily struggles to normalise the notion of education for all made this necessary. As these schools became more and more prominent, community support grew, and the education system in Alberta began taking root. Support for building more rooms in a given school to accommodate more students and teachers underlined the prosperity of the communities they served.

Organising the expansion of education provision required the creation of a set of hierarchies both within the school and from the principal upwards. Alberta moved from one-teacher schools to multiple teachers and a head teacher for smaller schools, eventually putting in place school principal positions (Jonason, 1955). As school structures grew to cater for more students and more teachers, an organisational hierarchy developed based on time and necessity (Day and Leithwood, 2007). This systemic growth moved a select few from the role of

individual teacher to leadership with very little support or prior qualifications appropriate to each elevation of responsibility, with the majority of training cited as “on the job experiences” (Lampard, 1976). In 1885, the Alberta School Act formally designated the role description titled ‘principal’, however it was not until the revision of the Alberta School Act in 1931 (Alberta Department of Education, 1931) that the establishment of a principal was required in any school where more than one teacher was employed. The identified ‘master teacher’ would fulfil the role of principal and all other teaching staff would become assistants to the principal. The shift in definitions of the principal position and its roles continued over the years, framed largely on the organisation of the school, student behaviour, and was given political credibility when the Alberta Department of Education (1952) mandated the principal to report to the Department. The next school act amendment concerning principals was enacted in 1972 (Alberta Department of Education, 1972), when each school was obliged to appoint one principal position, thus in fact beginning the end of the one-room school (Chalmers, 1967).

In 1988 the Alberta Department of Education provided a significant volume of information and legislation regarding the role of the principal being met by a ‘master teacher’. This has been outlined in a concise statement officially identifying the roles and duties of a principal in addition to the School Act:

A principal of a school must:

- (a) provide instructional leadership in the school;
- (b) ensure that the instruction provided by the teachers employed in the school is consistent with the courses of study and education programs prescribed, approved or authorized pursuant to this Act;

- (c) evaluate or provide for the evaluation of programs offered in the school;
- (d) direct the management of the school;
- (e) maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and during activities sponsored or approved by the board;
- (f) promote co-operation between the school and the community that it serves;
- (g) supervise the evaluation and advancement of students;
- (h) evaluate or provide for evaluation of the teachers employed in the school;
- (i) subject to any applicable collective agreement and the principal's contract of employment, carry out those duties that are assigned to the principal by the board in accordance with the regulations and the requirements of the school council and the board.

(Alberta Department of Education, 1988, c. S-3.1, s.15)

In the succinct history of the Alberta provincially-legislated role of the principal detailed above, the incremental changes to the roles and responsibilities of school principals were put in place with little direction or indication of the required development of skills in terms of the individual principal. Even the 1988 amendments to the School Act, which reflected over 100 years of defining a school in the Province of Alberta, offered no indication of developing the principal as a leader. However, over time the responsibility for ensuring student success became part of the role of the teacher who was to provide the foundation and support necessary for each student to learn and develop as a contributing citizen (LaZerte, 1955). As early as 1885 (Alberta, Royal Commission on Education, 1959), the direct stipulation that a teacher must be accountable to the public was specified, while there was no mention of a need for any evaluation of Alberta school principals until well after 1988.

The role of the school leader is important and is seen as beneficial by many governments, primarily as a means to develop their economies and communities by shaping effective citizens. The new demands of this position have developed an almost unrecognizable role as compared to even 40 years earlier (Marzano et al., 2005). That being said, the development of the school principal position in Alberta has not kept pace in comparison to many other parts of the world, including our neighbouring states where the principal standards and evaluations began taking form decades ago (Sergiovanni, 2009). One potential reason for Alberta being slow to evaluate the school principal could lie in the fact that both teachers and principals are governed by the same professional association with a unifying professional code of conduct. This framework includes 'in house' judicial decisions regarding grievances between its teacher and principal members. Further, it has been identified that Alberta's efforts have focused on principals evaluating teachers' instructional and professional abilities, rather than on the evaluation and development of principals themselves (Mombourquette, 2013). The province of Alberta does not have a formal standardized evaluation process for principals.

It could be argued that the current basic system in place is working and so not creating concerns or complaints, therefore may be considered as a 'good' government system. However, without some system of principal evaluation, the argument cannot be tested.

This issue is not peculiar to Alberta. Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, and Hill (2003) found that in 16 Southern Regional Education Board States in the USA, the majority

of administrators where principal evaluation is established alongside preparation programmes, found both to be valuable components in their training.

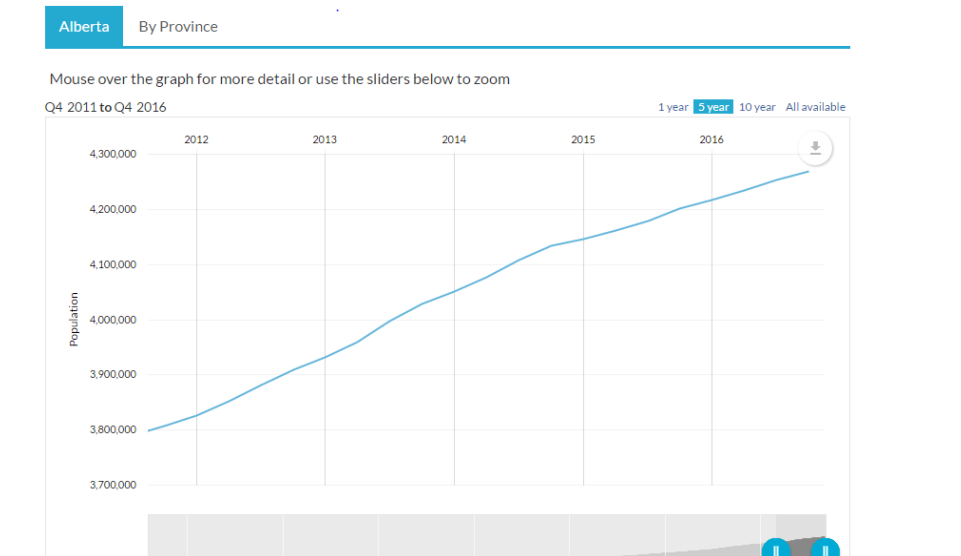
The history of education provision in Alberta provides the backdrop to the changes we see emerge in the role and responsibilities of the Alberta school principal. In 1996 the Department of Education in the Province of Alberta developed a three-year plan (Alberta Education, 1996) wherein they stated that the role of the school principal was key to a school's success. However, this plan was aspirational in terms of where the province wanted to be and was drawn up in a context where education funding had been cut considerably, and so was not implemented.

2.1 The Albertan School System in Context

The province of Alberta has a rich educational history. Over 4 million people live in this northern provincial state spread across a vast and geographically varied area. With nearly 1600 km between its most northern and southern schools, population density is less than 10/Km² in 16 of its 19 territories and only two have a density of 70 or more per square kilometre. The environmental challenges in educating Alberta's children, especially in the rural parts where students travel over an hour and a half by bus to and from school, also impacts its teaching and administrative staff. Alberta's population is expanding due to the province's prosperity and immigration of new Canadians and world refugees alike. Hence it

continues to see the strongest student population growth in Canada (Harris, 2016) (Table 1).

Table 1: Steady Population Increase in Alberta, Canada



Adapted from Statistics Canada, Cansim table 051-0005 (Estimates of Population, Canada, provinces, and territories).

As much of this population growth is a result of immigration the range of languages spoken in Alberta is huge, again presenting significant challenges to schools.

The Albertan school context is very different from its United States counterparts, where the same population might reside in one fifth of the landmass, bringing resource, teacher and student supply lines that are much shorter with the ability to focus on a more rural-based population. Education system challenges are considerable as identified by geography and demographics. Alberta's increases in population within these distances profoundly impact the need for more teachers, a

local school cultural response to their social and developmental needs and in turn more responsive school principals to these impacting challenges. There is an emerging need for many new principals who are prepared for the enormous demands of today's complex Alberta schools. Academic research about School Leadership or Administration in Alberta is limited and dated, with case examples focusing on instructional leadership and not on the additional leadership complexities of immigration, rural and urban demographic changes and access to resources that naturally occur in the province of Alberta. Thus, it is difficult to compare the needs of schools and their leadership of the Province of Alberta with other provinces, states or even within the province.

Table 2: Alberta Provincial Authority-Type Demographics

Authority Type	Number of boards	Number of Students	Percent of Province`
Public	42	<i>412,840</i>	70.4%
Separate	17	<i>136,451</i>	23.3%
Private	153	<i>23,225</i>	4%
Francophone	4	<i>5,679</i>	1%
Charter	13	<i>7,877</i>	1.3%
Totals	229	<i>586,072</i>	

Authority Information Report, <https://education.alberta.ca/apps/schoolsdir>

Table 2 represents the Alberta school authorities which are divided into five categories detailing the number of school boards, student size and the percentage of students in relation to the province. These school authorities are further subdivided into school districts within each of the authorities. These school district divisions have occurred in Alberta based on geography. Alberta has the historical inclusion of public authority type (non-religious) school districts and separate authority type (religious- predominantly Catholic) which are both funded with public tax dollars. School districts function as whole entities responsible to students, politically elected school board trustees and the provincial government's Minister of Education. Generally, this organizational structure of education is similar to other Canadian provinces. As in every large province or state, there are variations between school districts and individual schools driven by, for example, the difficulties in recruiting teachers and principals in isolated areas, or the shortage of teachers of English in areas of high immigration.

The role of principal begins at this school district level as they report to the school district superintendent. Principals in Alberta are charged by the Alberta Provincial School Act with the education of students within their designated schools. Provincially, we identify schools within these districts as generally organised into three divisions: Division 1 includes Kindergarten to Grade 6 (commonly known as K-6), Division 2 schools include grades 7 to 9 and Division 3 includes grades 10 to 12. School designations could be divisional or a combination of divisions, meaning a

Kindergarten to grade 9 (K-9) school, Kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) school or any other variation is possible.

All school 'principalships' in Alberta are drawn from those with qualified teacher status. That is, teachers must be recognised as qualifying for a teaching certificate with the government of Alberta. Further, after a probationary period teachers receive a continuous designation, approved by their supervisor or principal. Then Interested teachers may apply for the added roles and responsibilities of a school assistant or vice principal position depending on the school district nomenclature which then classifies them as a school administrator. The terms 'assistant' and 'vice' principal for the purpose of this study will be considered equal, as the terms are used interchangeably amongst school districts.

After receiving a continuous designation within their school district at the level of administrator, an individual can apply for a school principal position, which also has a probationary period before a continuous designation is granted.

Once a teacher or administrator has gained a continuous designation status they are free to seek posts in any of the three divisions of schools. Thus administrators with the majority of experience in division 1 could in theory, and in my experience often do in practice, gain jobs in division 3. This is vastly different from the Ontario provincial perspective where they are designated as qualified within a specific division (Leithwood, 2003).

Nonetheless, both school teachers and school administrators belong to one and the same professional organisation of Alberta Teachers Association

(www.teachers.ab.ca and henceforth ATA) which governs, advocates and promotes public education in Alberta as well as focusing on improving professional practice of its members. It is common in North America for teachers to form union groups for professional development, political representation and membership standards. However, it is not common that both teachers and school principals hold equivalent membership within the same union: for this reason, Alberta is unique in its approach to a shared professional union. This collaboration between the principal and teacher benefits both with collective salary bargaining, member disputes, and the protection of members from litigation.

Both the ATA and the school districts are responsible for professional development of both teachers and school administrators. There is no requirement for 'upgrading' or 'recertification' once having attained a continuous designation within their level. In terms of professional development from the ATA within the province, the main focus remains on the teacher's needs and not on the principals and is best identified with the Teachers' Conventions held all over Alberta. In contrast some other provinces in Canada and our United States colleagues have developed protocols/ systems for certification or re-certification for education system employees with a main focus on teachers. There is no licensure protocol for principals within the province of Alberta except for being a 'master teacher' as recognized by an M.Ed. Degree.

For school principals, as described above, there is no specific requirement for appointment, although they are expected to have experience and designation as a

teacher and administrator. However, in 2009 a recommended framework named the Alberta Principal Quality Standards for School Principals (Alberta Education, 2009) was developed. This is included in its entirety in Appendix B. Although there is little documented evidence to suggest that existing research on school leadership informed the development of these guidelines the literature review in chapter 2 does suggest that the guidelines have a sound evidence base. The Alberta Principal Quality Standards document has been variously named since its inception, such as the Alberta Principal Guidelines, Alberta Principal Standards, Alberta Principal Quality Practice, Principal Standards in Alberta, and Principal Quality Guidelines in Alberta. For the purpose of clarity in this study all variants of the document are referred to as the Alberta Principal Quality Standards, using the APQS acronym forthwith. At the writing of this thesis, this document is identified as a guide, not as the direct evaluation tool for principals.

This study utilizes the APQS as the baseline of successful principals and compares them to our participants' knowledge and experience currently and during their masters degree programs. These guidelines are identified as the first provincial standards for school principals outside of the Provincial School Act which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The principal quality standards as identified by the Alberta Government's Ministry of Education (Alberta Education, 2009) exemplify the ideal characteristics of the Alberta school principal. These characteristics are derived from Alberta's Learning Commission Report (2003) where two of the 95 recommendations directly

related to the school position of school principal. All of the recommendations came about from public demands to revitalise the education system and its associated practices after years of downsizing and financial cutbacks. However, these two recommendations sparked a new leadership framework, which in turn led to the development of the 2009 APQS.

The need to identify an educational leadership framework was not a new idea as many US counterparts in the educational field had also been working towards such standards. Thus, the Alberta-specific characteristics have been explored and compared to international principal standards in this thesis. The analysis featured in the literature review suggests that the quality standards developed by Alberta broadly reflect the key features used to describe good principal leadership characteristics internationally and nationally. Research by Burger et al. (2007), Hattie (2009), Stronge et al. (2008), and Marzano (2003) supports the idea of similar national and international contexts to the APQS.

Thus, the first and historically central characteristic identified in the APQS is instructional leadership, a feature of all of the models detailed in the literature. Instructional leadership is a foundation of one of Tucker's (2009) four characteristics and has featured prominently in the work of Burger (2000), Hattie (2009), Stronge et al. (2008), and Marzano (2003). Hallinger (2003) examines the domain of managing school operations and resources in terms of the new roles and responsibilities of school principals. In the general leadership literature, leading learning communities (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Leithwood, 2005; Fullan, 1999)

and fostering effective relationships have been described as critical to leadership success (Northouse, 2003; Sergiovanni and Green,2015), which is also reflected in the Alberta Principal Quality Standards. The latter show a very sound theoretical and practical basis in the professional literature in education.

Alberta has a high quality education provision as confirmed by its ranking in various international measures such as Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which indicate exceptional levels of education for its citizens (Alberta Education, 2006). Given these results it is difficult to see any fundamental change in the near future to the current practices surrounding education, employee certification and professional development.

2.2 Conclusion

At a time of increasing demands on school principals to deliver sustained student academic results and high staff levels of competence and efficacy, it is important that the training of school principals is as effective as possible. Despite the current position in international leagues tables there is urgency, particularly with Canada's growing population, to train the increasing number of new principals effectively to the position. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will contribute to the debate about school principal development in Alberta, and may inform the development of master's programmes that successfully support the development of effective school leaders.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

It is much easier to be a good teacher in a good school. A school is much more likely to be a good school when an effective leader is in post. Marzano (2003) draws on a substantial research base to argue that it is likely that a principal will be an accomplished one when all the appropriate supports are present. He does this through an identification of common teacher focuses such as instructional leadership as a measure of a principal's success, thus using student performance as the outcome variable. However, Marzano glides over the various other areas of a principal's responsibilities such as the management of multiple groups of employees who contribute to the school day. Marzano's identification of these supports remains general and lacking the comprehensiveness required to develop a general theory.

Clearly, as Young and Levin (2002) argue, the development of suitable leaders is a complex phenomenon given that every school is different, with different pressures, and every new principal comes with a wide range of experiences and skills. DuFour and Eaker (1998) argued for a change in approach to developing principals and schools based on an extensive US based study looking at a significant amount of research, mostly of a qualitative type, and drawing on a large number of case studies. They concluded that a key characteristic of good principals is that of instructional leaders. However, their reasoning is more nuanced than previous research based only on quantitative data. DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that those adopting a stance on improving student achievement from a position as

leaders of the learning environment as a whole achieve good student performance along with enhanced development in a wider sense. Within the Alberta context, this argument is precisely the basic definition of a school principal: one who is a master teacher (Alberta Education, 1996). This focus on leading learning as a master teacher is seen as a primary responsibility of a principal. However, it does not fully reflect the current realities facing new leaders such as human resources, financial responsibilities and citizen responsibilities like immigration of refugees and their success in a new school.

Yager and Yager (2011) undertook an intensive study in four US elementary schools with data collection based on a framework focusing on school based team leadership and using trained researchers to interview staff and observe school practice gathering data on a range of outcomes including academic mastery, social interactions and character building to gain a rounded view of the impact of leadership teams. Hence the approaches taken by these principals in leading school improvement projects and their impact on the outcome offer an enriched insight into effective school leadership. Yager and Yager's findings suggest that where school leaders have had school based leadership training they are more likely to go on to 'have a significant impact on classroom practices of teachers and create workplace settings compatible with instructional practices known to be effective' (p8).

As mentioned earlier, although the focus on successful leadership of learning is clearly much broader in this study, it still did not cover the wider role of

principals, encompassing as it does finance and project management, site maintenance and community relations and a host of their responsibilities. In my own experience as a principal these other responsibilities take up a significant amount of time and it is perhaps only when these are in place that focused attention can be given to instructional leadership and change management.

The leadership field is replete with award winning books, while the references in this literature review are comprised of essential leadership selections from both business and education faculties, and from the insights gained through research based on empirical studies focusing on school leaders. There are main focuses to draw on in utilizing business leadership literature within the educational leader context despite their primary target readership. The first is the heavy use by principal training programs of these mainstream book store best sellers to inform and draw examples from the business world into the public education world. The second is the potential for prospective or first year principals using the business literature as a first source guide to their leadership due to the fact that there are few easily identifiable and well known principal leadership books.

The impact of business literature on educational leadership is apparent in the language being used in educational practice where we hear catchy slogans like 'from good to great', and indeed in some of the role titles in the sector, such as CEO.

3.0 Good Leadership from the Business Perspective.

A book commonly used in leadership training in Alberta school districts as well as a noted bestseller in business leadership training is *The Leadership Challenge*

by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (2012). This book has created a movement change in the language used in business and in educational leadership through its five domains. In my experience of working with principals from across Alberta, it is evident to me that among established principals looking for new challenges and those applying for the first time, the language they use and the concepts they discuss often reflect those presented in this book. Thus I will use the five domain categories as a means to examine the professional literature that sets the foundation of what good leadership is in business. Kouzes and Posner's domains are: model the way; inspire a shared vision; challenge the process; enable others to act; and encourage the heart. These will be discussed in turn.

'Modeling the way': Maxwell (2002) writing from a business perspective states that modelling is one of the basic everyday acts that every leader requires. Robin Sharma's (2010) book *Leading without a Title* for prospective school leaders presents a new servant leadership view on 'modeling the way', where everyday actions and choices of leadership are compounded by an individual's leadership character. Each leader who sets out to serve the school community models in their particular way and brings their own experience, character and style to 'model a way' forward. Sharma offers examples of a leader's successful daily interactions used to teach (or model) practice for others in the organisation: he argues that modelling the way in turn unifies and brings cohesiveness to the whole.

A good leader sets the path towards a vision and is often seen as carrying the flag forward and ahead of others (Maxwell, 2002). The term 'the way we do

business' is a phrase often used to describe modelling in both the education and business worlds. At times underlying this modeling success is the shaping of a common culture which has close connections with inspiring a shared vision.

'Inspiring a shared vision' is a commonplace phrase in education circles. A good leader inspires those around them to achieve a particular reality or goal which can be manifest via many sources and experiences that are unique in context. Welch and Welch (2005) identify examples of how to inspire people and emphasise the importance of creating a culture around you that knows where you want to go. Jack Welch's experiences at General Electric developed the famous 4E's that should be exhibited by a great leader: energy, energize, edge and execution, without which the foundation of a shared vision is impossible.

However, these examples are based in a factory system of employees who may receive bonuses for achieving manufacturing targets which are a common measure in the business world. Within the education world, simply importing Welch's 4 E's would not be as simple. Schools are maintained by public servants, teachers and principals who, currently at least in the province of Alberta, are not paid bonuses on student graduation rates or reading level scores in each grade. The 4 E's or a variation of them are simply expected in schools, not rewarded and definitely not punished for lack of achievement.

Simon Sinek (2011) states that a great leader supports the establishment of a shared vision that inspires organisations' greatest achievements, and without this they dwindle. In education similar tales of visionary leadership are less common,

perhaps because they are more difficult to measure. However, visionary leadership in education is generally incremental, at times responsive to the community needs and always changing with new students and the impact their families have within the community. The educational dimensions that parallel this are 'understanding and responding to the larger societal context' and 'embodying visionary leadership'. These are best reflected as principals respond and react to social contexts and changes. These are generally incremental changes such as increasing numbers of refugee families joining our school community, but can also be sudden emergencies, as illustrated by the very recent experience of a whole city (Fort McMurray, Alberta) being displaced due to a massive fire/ floods, sending students to a neighbouring city and requiring immediate deployment of creative solutions whilst ensuring a stable environment for all in the school. It is often that societies react emotionally to emergencies or social challenges, whereas the school and specifically the school principal needs to react rationally and provide ethical measures to bring stability to their school communities. Thus, for example, when refugees from a burning city arrived and needed housing, closing the school for use as a shelter was not the best option: securing and separating the school gym, and requesting funds to do this, meant that teaching could continue safely and refugees could be supported in the short term. The public rarely recognizes these moral responsibilities and duties of the school principal, yet they are often expected. It is exactly these types of challenges to the school, not usually anticipated, which are excellent training scenarios for school principals. These few Alberta examples have a common thread

where the principal, along with school colleagues, takes on ethical and community responsibilities as pillars of the society, developing strategies many times to fulfil the needs of the community and within this development, we see true inspiration in carrying out a vision.

‘Challenge the process’ means to search continually for opportunities by investigating and taking risks (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Steve Jobs stated the need to ‘challenge the status quo’ and to ‘ask questions in ways not asked before’ (Isaacson, 2015). Business, as education, is in a perpetual state of change with new concepts, research and processes available, therefore a successful leader’s impact can be measured by the ability to create efficiencies and maximise efficacy (Robbins, 2003). However, when principals who have been recently installed in the position work on creating and challenging process, Earley and Weindling (2004) noted that they find information gathering demanding. Their findings concerning newly appointed principals or principals who had limited experience identified that a lack of information or knowledge of current processes and culture of the staff in a school made for difficult decisions in streamlining staff efforts or in changing school procedures. The educational dimension that parallels this area and one that also involves a copious need for information involves managing school operations and resources. Today’s principal is most successful when he or she is able to balance all these responsibilities and restrictions by setting the tone of managing the school operations, many times setting new methods and systems of practice with quality information at hand.

Great leaders are also often measured by their ability to **'enable others to act'** (Kouzes and Posner, 2012), thereby building capacity in their organisation and raising a village of leaders with deep knowledge and wide experience of decision making (Wheatley, 2006). Sir Isaac Newton modestly commented on his success by stating 'if I have seen further than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants' (Gleick, 2004), a quote that can be seen as Newton thanking those who led before him, or those whom he led that aided him in his successes. Enabling others to act begins with building relationships, fostering collaboration and strengthening the capacity of those who spearhead the organisation (Burns, 2010). It has been studied in the executive 'EQ' emotional intelligence framework (Cooper and Sawaf, 1997), whereby authentic relationships are seen as driving opportunities based on the well-being of the collective, while the concept of social success is based on the notion that most businesses are 'people businesses'. This domain focuses on the role of the principal in nurturing other leaders, at various levels, and in developing a succession plan linking mentoring and coaching as examples of this empowering. Business leadership literature often focuses on the 'self' as the leader and the development or examples of their personalities and identities. The educational dimension focuses on the term 'enable together', and the equivalent to this area is known as developing and facilitating leadership in a school.

Covey (2013), Sharma (2010), Maxwell (2002), Blanchard (2010), Robbins (2003) and many other business leadership writers emphasise **'encouraging the heart'** (Kouzes and Posner, 2012) to achieve successful leadership. 'Encouraging

the heart' is noted by many of the above authors as an important aspect of leadership as it involves recognising individual contributions and acknowledging challenges as well as celebrating team accomplishments. Placing authentic emphasis on this area builds trust capacity when times get tough. The educational dimension equivalent to this area is 'fostering effective relationships'.

Business leadership has a very interesting connection with education leadership and at times a symbiotic relationship. As the pendulum swings between cutting edge theories and business-inspired concepts, the praxis of the same theories is based in the realm of education. In other words, even though education does take leadership and effectiveness concepts from other areas (such as business), these concepts still require testing and proving within the educational profession. There is a shared terminology, which may not always be helpful, between the two realms and a relationship exists between the field of education and the rest of the world, but when education embraces a concept not of its making, it rebrands it when it takes ownership of that essential idea.

3.1 Good Leadership in Education: The International Perspective.

Defining what constitutes good school leadership on the basis of the literature involves casting a wide net to capture the essence of what is deemed 'good' over and above local contexts and special circumstances. In exploring and making connections between various research projects that have attempted to identify effective qualities in school-based principals, it is critical to examine the

collective understanding of these qualities in a larger context. In relation to three English speaking and easily comparable education systems found in England, the United States and Canada respectively, I will identify the particular focus of each country in terms of leadership ideals in order to help establish a broad-based template that will serve to define 'good school leadership' and reflect current principal roles and responsibilities.

Hattie's (2009) ground-breaking investigation *Visible Learning* synthesised over 800 meta-analyses and over 50,000 studies. This volume summarises in specific detail almost every aspect of the educational profession linking a range of factors to performance outcomes. Hattie also argued that a principal acting as an instructional leader who assumes multi-faceted responsibilities can be a significant factor in a given school's improvement. It is important to recognize the many academics who have questioned Hattie's work including Snook (2009), who questioned the validity of the effect size calculations, Terhart (2011) who identified an extensive set of challenges to Hattie's approach in combining empirical research and conceptual work within education, and even Hattie (1984) himself who identifies in his earlier work the challenges associated with meta-analysis research and specifically in coding. It is in the last reference where I really gained an appreciation for Hattie as a researcher, where the challenges and organization of a meta-analysis were identified in a systemic approach. Unfortunately, Hattie limited his analysis to the wider areas of visible learning and not on the specifics which gives his work a very narrow view on the success of schools. For example, his cut off

points in effect sizes within studies take little account of the sample size, and the lack of critical evaluation of the studies he included in the meta-analysis makes this a very narrow assessment of our field of work. Because of this Hattie's study can only be considered as a partial view, while at the same time recognizing that his work did evaluate a massive collection of research which has now impacted our educational field. His conclusions form a refrain which is repeated and built on throughout the study because of the large number of studies he references which, taken with care, can be extremely useful.

During the early part of this century, researchers and theorists sought to develop a general theory of educational leadership. Burger, Webber and Klinck (2007) suggest that a general theory of educational leadership is possible and attempt to discern examples of successful leadership characteristics. Similarly, Hattie (2009) has also identified four areas of principal responsibilities that lead to school improvement. Burger et al.'s approach looked at school leadership characteristics in two different countries, Canada and the United States. Within this study, Burger et al. also provided a very interesting analysis of Canadian school reform initiatives derived from two Canadian provinces, Ontario and Alberta.

The study included insights into their different leadership policies and directions based on data provided by Leithwood, Fullan, and Watson (2003) in a research report titled *The Schools We Need: A New Blueprint for Ontario*. Identifying potential school reforms, Burger and his colleague's initiatives included undertaking public opinion studies, the use of student achievement data, consideration of

funding formulas, and stakeholder feedback. In both provinces changes have been based on the reform of Canadian education undertaken in the 1990s.

They concluded that external drivers had resulted in similar solutions and patterns of approaches to resolutions. When combined, both provinces passed over 15 special resolutions addressing excellence in school leadership. This research provided a good foundation for research in the Alberta context, particularly in informing the drafting of principal quality standards. The resolutions can be summarised in terms of four main dimensions of school-based leadership: instructional leadership; human resources and administration; teacher evaluation; and embodying visionary leadership.

Stronge, Richard and Catano's (2008) *Qualities of Effective Principals* also focuses on the four main dimensions set out by Hattie (2009), and by Burger and Krueger (2001), and argues that these constitute the main components of what it means to be an effective principal. However, they continue to exhaustively develop their argument through an expanded set of eight qualities of effective principals: instructional leadership; school climate; human resource administration; teacher evaluation; organizational management; communication and community relations; professionalism; and the principal's role in student achievement. They recommend that research be used as a guide for principals to increase their effectiveness in relation to these eight qualities. Their research is not focused on a specific context; rather it draws on different national contexts. This attempt to separate the overarching leadership qualities of a school principal from the particular local

context has its risks: however, it can provide a framework against which to explore leadership at a more local level.

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) in a meta-analysis study identified a shift in the accountability structures from the individual school teacher to the school principal. At the same time, their research reinforced the importance of the school principal in school success. They argue that an effective school requires an effective school principal and leadership group. Like Hattie (2009) they used a main measurement based solely on student achievement. One could argue this is a limited reductionist view and is contrary to the community culture and wider social role of schools described in the array of other domains that have been researched and discussed in the literature on developing models of effective school leaders.

Understanding the research literature available regarding school leadership qualities and domains, there is a general consensus on what dimensions of school leadership are important in the success of a school principal. By comparison Tucker's (2009) four general dimensions of an effective school leader, based on instructional leadership, human resources and administration, teacher evaluation, and embodying visionary leadership, are weighted in their own right as underpinnings to a potential general theory, thereby delineating the major divisions and schools of thought in the literature.

Tucker has spent much effort in describing and arguing that these are the four definitive dimensions of school leaders. His arguments are well founded in the literature and add to the work of Burger et al., (2007), Hattie (2009), Stronge et al.

(2008), and Marzano (2003). All four of these authors chime with Tucker's four dimensions in a research study conducted in the United States, England and Canada. The literature on school leadership is well developed with substantial similarities between authors. The most relevant for the purposes of this study is in research-based education systems like Canada's. I have drawn literature mainly from developed Anglophone countries and have summarised the characteristics identified under the following headings: Instructional Leadership, Human Resources and Administration, Teacher Evaluation and Embodying Visionary Leadership. The following section attempts to draw together a representation of key studies that have influenced thinking in this field. This is followed by a brief discussion of the different models of leadership presented in the literature.

Instructional Leadership can be considered as one of the oldest identified dimensions of an effective school principal (McEwan and McEwan, 2003) and continues to be seen as the key feature that distinguishes a successful principal. Its roots began in small schools where a principal may have managed the curriculum in a manner that was specific to the community's needs, thereafter building on this skills and knowledge base to develop larger understandings, which in their earliest form would have been aimed at students going to a college or university to attain an education equivalent to that of their principal (Fullan, 2003, 2008, 2011). Local knowledge needs held more significance in the early 20th century as a means to promote local education, whereas today's promotion and recruitment of students is in terms of international recognition through international standards and

examinations that a school provides (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). We have moved from benchmarking against local students' curricular needs and leadership qualities to benchmarking against international perspectives. Within this realm student achievement has also shifted from local to international verification as identified in the PISA project that compares student performance across different countries (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

The dimension of **Human Resources and Administration**, as described by Shani and Pasmore (1985), is a long-standing responsibility of school principals. From its onset, the role of the principal was to find people to teach students and maintain the school property (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009). These roles became more specialised and were eventually fulfilled by a range of professionals each dealing with different aspects of the combined role. For example hiring, management and other areas that come under human resources and administration have seen a considerable historical shift. We are now witnessing a competition in K-12 education where there are no geographical constraints on the search for teachers or school administrators. In my own experience as a principal I have been involved in recruiting specific language teachers and subject expertise, travelling across the nation and in the United States to find good teachers. This has become common practice in light of Alberta's current teacher shortage.

In addition, the communication between the principal and these employee groups has changed drastically (Miles and Frank, 2008). Educational policies, regulations directives, initiatives, financial obligations (Sorenson, 2013), payroll,

benefits and a plethora of management decisions (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009) has meant that the romanticised one room school has become a professional industry on the global stage and a major player in the political arena. Similar changes in the three countries cited above have been noted in the memoirs of students, teachers and principals over the years (see Burger et al., 2007; Hattie, 2009, Stronge et al., 2008; Marzano, 2003). Hargreaves and Shirley's (2009) research identifies that this is happening now, namely that the world of education is reaching out internationally while education itself is becoming more familiar, and degrees of separation smaller, including international students learning locally, validation of local education programmes with national and international systems, and the increased mobility and hiring of teachers from various training systems and accreditation degrees.

The **Teacher Evaluation Dimension** is a very broad issue, but commonalities in policy and protocols exist in all three countries under comparison (Miller, Linn, and Gronlund 2009; Tucker, 2009). This dimension is rooted in the need to identify and justify public servant employees and has a direct link to the political process. Evaluating teachers and increasing efficacy remains a common message in political elections as Ball (2008, 2015) describes the ever-changing new skills of classroom management, of pedagogy where making schools 'better' and more competent we make them more 'biddable'. Thus, implementing new, centrally dictated approaches, alongside more rigorously applied teacher evaluations takes the responsibility for deciding what counts as good teaching, away from the

individual school and out of the hands of the school principal leaving their responsibilities characterized as needing to be that of highly efficient compliance. A driving force for these commonalities could be based on labour force equalities in these same countries reflecting cultural norms that also extend to the teaching profession (Salend, 2008). Clear assessment of instructional quality and the construction of teaching and learning communities have seen a shared development of regulations (DuFour and Eaker, 1998) and invariably this falls within the realm of principal responsibilities.

It is difficult to discern differences in teacher evaluation documents between countries. However, none of these resources include a specification of the credentials the principal requires in order to be 'qualified' to administer teacher evaluations (Mathers, Oliva, and Laine, 2008; Peterson and Peterson, 2006).

The last dimension is identified as **Embodying Visionary Leadership** and can be seen as the newest transformation of the principal position (Gupton, 2010) and sets out what the future principal's role could develop into. This includes: developing and facilitating leadership (Hunzicker, 2012); advertising and promotions (Marzano, 2003); acting as a change agent (Fullan, 2003, 2008, 2011); promoting school innovations (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014); community business connections (LaRose, 1987); political engagement (but not necessarily involvement) (Pine, 2009); alumni communications; encouraging sponsors and benefactors; cutting-edge innovations (Patti, Holzer, Stern, and Brackett, 2012);

leading a community that embraces change and thrives on it (Reeves, 2009); and creating a highly effective and celebrated school community (Marzano, 2003).

Apple's (2015) perception of visionary leadership within a school from a community mindedness perspective could become quite political very quickly for a school principal. Apple adopts a critical pedagogy approach which advocates for education as a means to change society to achieve greater social justice. A principal adopting the later approach could be in conflict with the external political drive for ever improved levels of academic performance rather, for example, placing a greater emphasis on promoting social cohesion in the school and local community.

An example of what schools can do in enhancing and contributing to society through a visionary mind-set might be in the simple school practice of building empathy within the student population, which is often initiated through a school project or community fundraiser for a particular cause. The importance of selecting an appropriate recipient of the school's efforts is critical on many levels. If the school community poorly identifies with the 'needy' recipient, then the school leadership would not be seen as visionary. However, if an event such as the 2016 Alberta Fire which engulfed the city of Fort McMurray has a school principal take up an immediate charge in collecting items (blankets and food supplies as an example) for this community, they would be recognised as visionary for their efforts. Apple would argue that this type of effort by the school system could change the community mind-set and in turn create an additional identity for the school as the provider of humanitarian aid. In this case, many would see this as a positive societal

change initiated by the school system. However, with the various drives focusing on student achievement and the increasing demands on principal's time the idea of school leaders being everything to everyone in their community might not reflect reality.

Elmore and Shanker (2000) argue that this dimension is almost entirely unachievable by the majority of school principals. They further this argument by stating that most leaders in all sectors are creatures of the organisations they now lead:

'Nowhere is this truer than in public education, where principals and district superintendents are recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of practice... without being well socialised to the norms, values, predispositions and routines of the organisation, one is leading' (p8).

An adage lends itself to Elmore and Shanker's argument that if you keep solving the problems in the same fashion you did before, you will continue receiving the same results. With this perception, within a particular 'Petri dish' environment, visionary leadership could be seen as counter-culture.

This dimension may be seen as a 'catch all' description of a principal's qualities. On the other hand, visionary leadership can also be seen as sketching the undiscovered frontier of the principal's position, where the uniqueness of culturally-specific national attributes can be identified. For instance, the area of sponsors and benefactors for schools is seldom written about in England and Canada as compared to the United States, therefore this insight helps us to identify a localised uniqueness in the role of an effective principal.

Analysing the current trends from an international perspective on school-based leadership within the context of three English-speaking countries with a long history of public school education, it is training and development that sets the background to the question of governmental policies regarding school leadership. Apple (2015) writing from a Marxist perspective considers the case for education as a means to change society, a long standing area of debate (Counts 1938). Schools, he argues, as part of the system are a segment of society and therefore, to a large extent might be expected to support the reproduction of society. However, education could also be used as a means to change society (Apple, 2013) by being used as a means to achieve greater social justice, for example, with a focus on equity and disadvantaged groups or to shift society in a neoliberal direction where education is commodified. Ball (2008), on the other hand, identifies current themes, which take us in the latter direction, that are influencing our educational policies and enacting measurable change in the following directions:

- the subordination of education to economic imperatives,
- the policy convergence, across countries and across sectors,
- the 'privatisation' of public sector education,
- the 'joining up' of social and educational policies.

It is within this tension that the question of what principal development should look like sits, and what the role of higher education might be in developing programmes that develop principals who have the capacities to support the current direction of change or who challenge that direction.

The rate of change and the direction of the centrally determined development creates the need for higher education to support the professional development and certification (in some cases) of the public school-based leader. Elmore and Shanker (2000) would argue here that principals are not accustomed to systemic change by their nature, but need to be well educated and well experienced to implement it in their unique contexts. This is again exemplified by the American *No Child Left Behind* and UK National Curriculum programs where school leader preparation regarding education, development of resources and contextual circumstance development would have better equipped these schools for the 'systemic change' dictated.

The governmental need for school leaders' efficacy is reflected in the development of evaluation tools for these public servants. Thereby, the dimensions of key characteristics of success become the basis of evaluative measures as the international perspective on leadership in education is assessed by these processes.

3.2 Successful Leadership: Alberta Ministry of Education Perspective.

The Alberta Teachers' Association and the Government of Alberta (Alberta Education, 2009) outline a concise summation of their perspective on the quality standards a principal has to achieve. Using the Alberta perspective as a source for analysis provides a basis for considering the extent to which the master's programmes available to principals meet the dimensions agreed by Alberta as

essential to good principalship. Grounded in current theory, the following dimensions from this document are considered to be representative of the leadership needs of the province. The Alberta Department of Education collaborated with the Alberta Teachers' Association (whose membership includes both teachers and principals) in the creation of the Alberta Dimensions of School Leadership.

3.2.0 Alberta's Dimensions of School Leadership

- Providing Instructional Leadership;
- Managing School Operations and Resources;
- Leading a Learning Community;
- Fostering Effective Relationship;
- Developing and Facilitating Leadership;
- Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context;
- Embodying Visionary Leadership.

(Alberta Education, 2009)

3.2.0.0 Instructional Leadership

Instructional Leadership from the Alberta government perspective inspired the foundation of the Alberta School Act's management of education strategy. From the early years of education, one individual was selected from their school peers to be the leader of instruction because of their identification as a master teacher, which developed into the role of school principal. This dimension of instructional leadership research has grown considerably and is recognised and used in a variety of international contexts. However, what is different in Alberta is that the teacher evaluation dimension is identified as a particular aspect of instructional leadership.

The Alberta master teacher, now principal, holds this primary responsibility of teacher evaluation. Currently in the province, this dimension dominates the majority of available resources for both evaluating and developing instruction as when it comes to education reform, politicians focus on what they themselves and their constituents have lived through: the experience of being a student. Thus they make judgements on the needs of the education sector on this basis, as they feel they are qualified to do so because they once experienced the system themselves as students (Burger, 2000).

3.2.0.1 Managing School Operations and Resources

The Alberta approach to managing school operations and resources has developed into its own separate dimension. Similar explanations from the worldview of human resources and management discussed above can be used here. However, the need for a specific and separate ‘management’ dimension such as this reflects the ever-changing role of the school principal as a ‘business manager’ (Anderson, 1991) in addition to the role of instructional leader. This could in part be considered as based on the historical development of schools within the Alberta context, many of which continue to serve in rural settings far away from the amenities and services required to run today’s schools. These items might be as simple as the necessary repairs of facilities and the procurement of associated trades located far away, or the need to obtain school supplies requiring delivery to the school. The added responsibilities placed within this dimension create a truly

unique Alberta context by combining human resources, administration and school operations management.

3.2.0.2 Leading a Learning Community and Fostering Effective Relationships

DuFour and Eaker (1998) first outlined a concept of professional learning communities (PLC) and this notion began the transformation of schools based on the leadership direction of the principals in each school, with the latter guiding the vision while the community worked out the mission. PLCs have become common tools for school leaders to use in school initiatives. The strength of the PLC model in transforming school communities relies firstly on dialogue and relationship building between the stakeholders. While in conversation, trust is reciprocated through the development of successful projects. The leadership vision rests with the school principal while the collective drives the development of the vision. It is now widely accepted as an added responsibility of school principals that they foster effective relationships when leading a learning community (DuFour and Eaker, 1998).

A learning community that has the potential and design to self-adjust and learn continuously through the use of PLCs still requires a strong leader to keep the relationships and vision on track. Leithwood (2003) states that school leaders continually monitor organisational structures (including policy, traditions, practices, and professional development) for effectiveness by assessing multiple indicators and information. In other words, a continuous 'check in' keeps the

learning community 'in check'. Success is reached when the community meets its goals together.

Effective school leaders must be good at maintaining working relationships with all community stakeholders. PLCs have been touted as the one-size-fits-all 'Holy Grail' solution (Elmore and Shanker, 2000) to education in addressing Leithwood's organisational structures. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) suggest that even on the international stage where PLCs are at a developmental stage in comparison to the UK, Canada and the US, the system is still proving a positive effect on school improvement. Fullan (2003) identifies as its focus that schools should move from individual evaluations to establishing vibrant professional learning communities and the PLC is essentially at the core of school leadership.

However, these communities have their challenges if a school focuses on outcomes other than those of school performance. PLCs tend to focus on measurable learning outcomes as a means of judging effectiveness. However, in those schools in challenging circumstances such as areas of high poverty, other less measurable goals may need to be targeted before a focus on learning outcomes can bear fruit. Then all the previous arguments that PLCs must focus on instructional improvement are challenged as schools are more than a place for learning (Bryk, Camburn, and Louis, 1999). Yet these learning communities are often under pressures from many outside factors to comply with provincial, national and international performance reviews. As Furman-Brown (1999) suggests, PLCs must

look past standards and examinations because “community is really about the quality of day-to-day life in schools” (p.75).

3.2.0.3 Developing and Facilitating Leadership

Leadership development at a school is generally divided into two forms: the development of the leadership position, and leaders’ development of the staff under their direction. The teacher evaluation dimension is a very broad aspect of a principal’s roles, but is considered part of the second form in terms of developing the school staff. Definite commonalities in policy and protocols exist in many countries (Miller et al., 2009; Tucker, 2009). The clear assessment of instructional quality and building communities of teaching and learning as developed by DuFour and Eaker (1998) has been followed by the establishment of similar regulations in different international contexts. There are many examples of systems – including locally, nationally and internationally – designed for the evaluation of teaching quality and the effectiveness of individual teachers (Reeves 2009).

New principals creating their own identities in their position find it useful to focus on teacher evaluation as the core of their responsibilities due to the vast resources and generally accepted practices in evaluating teachers. Unfortunately, a principal’s own development as a leader can be unbalanced with a myriad of other aspects of the role left unsupported. Furthermore, it is more difficult to find resources for the specification of qualifications (skills, knowledge and evidence of effectiveness) that a potential principal needs in order to be ‘qualified’ to administer

a school. This is especially so for new principals who have difficulty finding the support they need for their own development. Principal evaluation is a necessary requirement from the early selection process to develop top administrators, and it has been argued that the selection of the right principal for a school is critical to the future success of a school and its students (Fullan, 2008).

Leithwood (2003) states that leaders enhance the success of their schools by promoting a community of trust and communication that fosters leadership capacity. A principal must become a lifelong learner who enhances their own efficacy and that of leadership's 'capacity building,' as Leithwood puts it. He shares an example of providing opportunities for staff to participate in the decision-making process, which in turn strengthens their knowledge base.

3.2.0.4 Understanding and Responding to the Wider Context while Fostering a School Culture

Fullan's (2003, 2008, 2011) work identifies the school principal as the 'change agent' or 'change leader' who sets the tone and pace for learning organisations, thereby helping to put them on the path to success. Mobilising teachers to higher levels of efficacy and the specific use of instructional leadership by the principal ensures that a new culture evolves within the school and specifically within each teacher, thus helping the principal to look to develop a broader sense of the principal's vision while incorporating the teachers' expertise in executing the school's mission. Fullan suggests that leadership includes seeing any

data collected as a means to strive for continuous school improvement. In building relationships, a meaning is constructed from the data, which in turn directs our planning in relation to this ever-changing school culture.

A new era of insight into leadership success arrived with Pearson's (2012) description of the 'transforming leader' and leadership for the 'twenty-first century', something not really covered in the Alberta dimensions list directly, while this is a concern that is appearing increasingly in the literature on leadership. These recent developments continue the focus started by earlier researchers, yet also concentrate on the effective relationships that are needed by the school principal. Creating, building and sustaining relationships throughout the school life is often very fluid and frequently fluctuates, thus requiring particular effort and focused determination as an added responsibility of the school principal. Each interaction is considered to further share the vision of the principal and encourage the school's mission.

There are more than lists of skills needed for principals, such lists are all well and good, but of little use unless the principal integrates the ideas into praxis in a holistic way. This helps to explain why it is so difficult to legislate for the separate characteristics because it is how they work together that is key. It is in making these a lived culture in the uniqueness of the school context that brings success. The criticism that can be made by stakeholders is that some principals only work on developing a common school culture focusing on community improvement at the expense of school performance improvement (Elmore and Shanker, 2000).

Marzano et al. (2005) argue that an effective principal will in turn influence teachers, who in turn influence students, which in turn influences student achievement, thus impacting on parents and public sentiment regarding public education. The extent of positive or negative influence cannot be clearly ascertained but is known to generate school success to a considerable extent. Marzano identifies four best practices in fostering good relationships and school culture: unity amongst staff; wellbeing or *esprit de corps*; working together towards a shared purpose; and envisioning the greatness that could be achieved. For these dimensions to truly gain a basis within a school culture, it is imperative that sufficient time is allocated to these practices both within the school and in terms of the school's understanding of education's wider context. For researchers such as Marzano, this is a common deflection from identifying a concern for the characteristics of the school principal and more to thinking about the whole school context and can be attributed to the scarcity of research currently conducted on principal evaluation in North America.

3.2.0.5 Visionary Leadership

Alberta continues to see itself as a national and international leader in education. Encouraging and recognising visionary leadership in Alberta is similarly reflected in the province's response to wider social contexts and fostering school cultures, and only brings out subtle differences that identify the specific local educational context. Unfortunately, this dimension is often expressed in terms of

responsibilities and not in exemplars so as not to limit what it means to be visionary. Not every principal can be 'visionary' in his or her leadership, at least not all the time; otherwise the new common vision will become a standard. As such, the definition and attributes listed for this dimension allow principals to discover their own direction by which to reach certain goals but become extremely difficult to develop systemically. The professional development surrounding this dimension often utilises case studies that result in hindsight assessments on what 'was' visionary in a specific context. The uniqueness and contextual specifics of a principal's work within this dimension could make this the most difficult task to master, but admittedly one of the most celebrated when achieved. Within the history of school principals, "few visionary leaders have had any effect on the dominant institutional patterns of American education" (Elmore and Shanker, 2000), yet this dimension continues to inspire change in both the principal leaders and school communities.

Of all the identified dimensions, visionary leadership should inspire and motivate the school culture to focus on excellence and its core building on the beliefs, mission and vision of the school community. Visionary leadership is linked to a considerable extent to the relationship the leader has with the community and is strengthened when a shared vision is celebrated. McEwan (2003B) identifies 10 traits of highly effective principals while listing visionary leadership as what separates and clearly delineates the best of school-based leadership from unsuccessful school leaders.

The Alberta perspective on the principal and quality standards is drawn from many research realms in the field of education. The illustration below identifies each dimension while sketching the theoretical background and its major authors, thereby introducing an academic foundation to the document created by the Alberta Department of Education.

3.3 Comparison of the Alberta Dimensions of School Leadership with Parallel Constructs

Table 3: Comparing Alberta Dimensions

Alberta's Dimensions of School Leadership	Parallel Constructs	Construct Authors
Providing Instructional Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing People 2. Focus on Academic Achievement 3. Instructional Leadership 4. Three models: mission; instructional programming; positive school learning climate 5. Principal as Lead Learner 6. Holistic Accountability 7. Teaching and learning processes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leithwood (2005) 2. Cotton (2003) 3. O'Donnell and White (2005) 4. Hallinger (2003) 5. King (2002) 6. Reeves (2004) 7. Heck, Larsen and Marcoulides (1990)
Managing School Operations and Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive school learning climate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hallinger (2003)
Leading a Learning Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborative School Culture 2. Professional Socialisation 3. Organisational cultures 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leithwood (2005) 2. Sergiovanni and Green (2015) 3. Deal & Paterson (1999); Fullan (1993); Sergiovanni (1999)
Fostering Effective Relationships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community of Practice 2. Professional Socialisation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northouse (2013) 2. Sergiovanni and Green (2015)
Developing and Facilitating Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspiring leadership in others 2. Developing People 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2004) 2. Leithwood (2005)
Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Holistic Accountability 2. Cultural Diversity and the Role of the School 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reeves (2004) 2. Banks (2004; Lindsey, Robins and Terrell (2003); Nieto, (2004)
Embodying Visionary Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transformational Leadership 2. Effecting Change 3. Setting Directions 4. Working towards a common school purpose 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Burns (1978) 2. Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) 3. Leithwood (2005) 4. Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2004)

The Alberta Dimensions of School Leadership are not directly linked back to the research they used to determine these broad categories. After careful consideration and research, Table 3 was constructed to draw out the themes and illustrate comparative theories and their authors that can be used to support the foundation of the Alberta Dimensions. This is comparable to the UK Education Department where governmental policy also drives particular outcomes or goals, yet usually in terms general enough for educational institutions to be able to put these into practice (Ball, 1994) as appears to be intended by the Alberta Ministry with the general outline for each dimension. The added references in the above table would make the APQS easily accessible if they had been included in the original publication. However, they might have also made the Dimensions of Leadership too narrow and as such an argument could be seen as to why they left the implementation to the individual.

3.4 Training of School Leaders

Based on the literature on what constitutes successful school leadership, the inquiry now looks towards the identification of leadership training that supports these dimensions in their programmes. The Alberta School Act and its revisions (Alberta Department of Education, 1931, 1952, 1972, 1988) identify the requirements that the school principal must commit to study for but does not necessarily stipulate that they must hold a master's degree to perform this role, only to be a master teacher.

The only other requirement for principals is that they should be a qualified teacher. There is no legislation on prerequisite qualifications for assistant or vice-principals, yet a graduate degree is often a stepping-stone to principalship (Marzano, 2003). Thus the progression usually means an individual goes from being a teacher to an assistant/vice principal, then to the position of principal. The following four systems of training school leaders, or a combination of them, are found in both graduate studies or in house/in school district programmes. However, just as Braun, Maguire, and Ball (2010) indicate in their UK study that educational policies often take contextual conditions into consideration and incorporate the culture of the school districts in which they are implemented, the progression towards school leadership in Alberta can often be different in actual practice than in policy. This is again evidenced by the placement of school principals within various grade level schools, and in the diversity of the leadership training programs found across Alberta (Mombourquette, 2013).

Smith (2009) argues that one of the critical aspects when it comes to the training of school leaders is to **'bridge the gap'** between theory and practice. Making learning meaningful for the school principal and directly related to their everyday duties by introducing scaffolding in theory and research develops foundational learning. Bridges and Hallinger (1995) identified the importance of problem-based learning for school leadership development. Posing commonly experienced situations in group learning dynamics strengthens learning through group-identified solutions to these challenges. When these situational scenarios are

paired with a set of related readings, realistic leadership problems offer opportunities to apply current knowledge and new information. Bridges and Hallinger also note that the instructor in these principal development courses is more of a 'guide on the side' rather than a 'sage on the stage' demonstrating respect for the school principal and their vast experience and knowledge.

An alternative method for the training of school leaders is the 'field-based system', where the aspiring school leader is working full time within their environment and is given projects to implement that parallel those of a school principal (Anderson, 1991). Through the use of research and the specific environmental needs the aspiring school leader is encouraged to reflect in discussion and written form via cohort-style planning and debriefing sessions that act as a proving ground before applying for a leadership position. This system might also be used by active school leaders to exchange ideas about solutions to common problems.

The third system in leadership programmes is what can be classified as an internship. This system, which can be considered as the final stage of business programmes, is practised in the education environment across a wide spectrum of approaches to best practice.

The essential premise of internship programmes is for the candidate to undergo a realistic and immersive experience under the direct supervision of a master practitioner (in this case a school principal). Smith and Piele (2006) state that being certified without an internship is 'akin to getting a driver's license

without behind the wheel experience' (p.20). However, internships in school systems can be costly, as they require the candidate to take either unpaid leave or a salary reduction for some time. Smith and Piele also argue against internships as the sole method of training as they support the notion that experience is the only requirement for the position of school leadership and as such internships make for a very expensive investment without a guarantee of long term success. Stein and Gewirtzman (2003) summarise their research on successful school administrator training programmes, arguing that the latter exhibit a combination of problem-based learning, field-based systems and an internship that balances experience with current research applied in meaning-constructed dialogue within a formal and evaluative programme.

Mentoring is the fourth leadership training system. The approach is a strategy that pairs new principals with more experienced mentors, and this can take on a variety of forms. Some mentorship programmes can be as spontaneous as casually meeting and engaging in dialogue to structured formal weekly meetings with agendas based on the growth of the new principal. The key to this system is to include mentorship training so that guidelines are set out and opportunities for discussions are both encouraging and informative for the new principal (Whitaker, 2012). To be effective, this mentoring needs proper management and evaluative measures to ensure a quality program, or there will be a risk that aspiring principals will have poor support and poor mentoring creating poor habits.

Spillane (2004) finds that many policies created to further leadership focus on the characteristics, skills and traits of traditionally successful principals, and this is also seen in the way that Alberta views its programs. Spillane notes that these are less useful endeavours as compared to defining specific measures of success working towards success in goals, rather than building successful skills in leaders which is more prudent. One problem with drawing school principals from the teaching population, for example, is that often they are very much part of the existing practice and culture and so find it hard to ask the Steve Job creative questions. So, there is a tension: good leaders know their contexts extremely well, and they interact well with their teams and share their vision – but this could also mean that they are not creative and remain in the traditional method they are accustomed to.

3.5 Training of School Leaders by the Alberta Ministry of Education.

In order to be considered a valid training higher education degree attainment for teachers or school based leadership in Alberta, the programme must be approved by a government authorised board. Within the Department of Education there is a committee that works together with the Alberta School Boards Association and the Alberta Teachers' Association, titled the Teacher Qualification Service Board (TQSB) (<http://www.education.alberta.ca/teachers/certification.aspx>). TQSB reviews on an annual basis the validity of teacher certifications as well as statements of qualifications from different higher education institutions from

around the world when compared to their Albertan equivalents. The following information is stated by the TQSB as being valid from recognised institutions:

12.0 Relevance to Teacher Education.

12.01 Subject to all other principles contained within this document, programs in liberal arts and science and in education will be considered acceptable.

12.02 Subject to all other principles contained within this document, programs other than those in liberal arts, science or education considered equivalent to liberal arts, science or education will be considered acceptable.

12.03 Programs not meeting the requirements of Principles 12.01 and 12.02 may be considered on a limited basis.

12.04 The Teacher Salary Qualifications Board has the right to determine relevancy of any and all programs as teacher education for purposes of salary recognition.¹

The above section is extracted from a governmental document that identifies the relevance of qualifications in very general terms and is supplied to both teachers and school leadership. A school leadership candidate who is required to have either enrolled on a master's degree programme or to have already completed one can choose any programme equivalent to a liberal arts, science or education degree. On the spectrum of teaching assignments offered by school districts matching the wealth of degrees being offered by higher education institutions, there is no

¹ <http://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Membership-and-Services/PD-TQS-1%20English.pdf>

requirement to attain a leadership-specific postgraduate degree when applying for a school leadership position. The lack of differentiation between the teacher and leadership development and certification is seen by Whitaker (2012) as a challenge to the efficacy of both positions, even though the leadership position is perceived as an elevation from a teaching position, yet the former position requires a vastly different set of skills and knowledge base.

3.6 Training of School Leaders by Both Higher Education Institutions and Other Training Programmes

Higher education institutions are entrusted with the training, development and certification of most teachers worldwide as overseen by the governmental control of school systems. When looking for commonalities within these institutions in terms of school leadership or the position of school principals, it is a struggle to find a similar expression of a general theory relating to training, evaluation and certification. Peterson and Cosner (2005) note that most American educational systems, as in Alberta, simply default leadership development to higher education institutions as an attempt to legitimize a situation where the government itself is unwilling to fund or provide concrete program parameters. Focusing on the wider US and Canadian options and their impact on the local Alberta context, there is a variety of understandings and interpretations of what is considered as good examples of school leaders' training.

The Levine Report (Levine, 2005) managed to bring some sense of order to the broad spectrum of the US education system. In his four year study Levine conducted a massive survey and review of the majority of education school alumni (15,468 members), education school deans (5,469 members), and school principals (1,800 principals) across the US as well as over 1,200 departments and schools of education. The press release for Levine's comprehensive national report indicates that the quality of programs for leader's ranges from 'inadequate to appalling' and underlined that the programmes reflected irrelevant curricula, low standards and instruction by weak faculty. Levine's work is U.S. centric, however, many of the masters programs identified in this study have been US based and it is important to note that these masters programs are impacting our school leaders in Alberta.

Levine's (2005) findings of weak faculty in the area of school administration programmes stated that approximately 6% of faculty had experience as a school principal and only 8% of faculty deans had acted as school superintendents. A further 47% of principals believed that university education faculties used outdated curriculum when trying to support their roles. From the principal responses to his survey, Levine identified that the most important element in these higher education institutions involved changing and improving their courses and delivery modes, which would make the curriculum more reflective of today's school, students, communities and their leadership needs. There was also a need to have faculty who could offer instruction based on relevant practitioner experience. He states that as schools have moved away from a century old model, so too has the role of the school

principal changed and as such the preparation of school leaders needs to be updated. Even though this study was published in 2005, there have not been any recent studies of this magnitude and although there might have been some minor variances, it is difficult to discern any substantial changes in school leader preparation since. Apple's (2015, 2017) perception on the political direction of Levine's findings where 6% of faculty had experience as a school principal could be understood as political manoeuvrability of higher education institutions to keep academics and theory in the forefront of the educational field. Similar to the adage that 'it is easier to control the product when you are controlling it is manufacturing guidelines'. Recognising that earlier local accreditation would have both given validity to both the successful school principal and their alignment to the local societal norms. In today's international educational smorgasbord selection available for accreditation Apple's view on political ideologies influencing a broader segment of school leadership and in turn of local society. The potential impact of this direction could result in the reduction of higher education institutions tenure positions in exchange for web-based instructors. Changing the opinion of a century-old model for school leadership, to an internationally accepted and accredited new model, based on wider political views and accepted educational theories (Schirmer and Apple, 2016). The question to consider is if the Alberta government's governance of education in this province is based on political platforms or sound educational research and practice when it comes to what could be widely

considered very lax position requirements and archaic model of the Alberta school principal.

Another area that has been identified as counterproductive in relation to the education system is the persistent discovery of low standards in higher education admissions and curricular expectations. Levine notes that higher education institutions have developed an aggressive approach to churning out course credits and degrees by lowering expectations and graduation standards as well as configuring course hours to allow full-time working professionals to participate in academic life. It was found that 73% of respondents had indeed worked full time while attending graduate school (Levine Report, 2005). Principal respondents discussed the different foci of the M.Ed. degrees and courses that they had attained: 63% felt that the specialisations with these degrees were valuable to their job and 56% identified them as high in quality. The highest approval value expressed for a course (80%) as deemed most relevant to a school principal was the school law courses. This high value rating is attributed to the fact that school law is one of the most novel responsibilities gained when a teacher becomes a school principal. The alumni report shed light on deficiencies in the programmes offered while underlining the new reality of the contemporary school principal's roles and responsibilities.

Levine has emphasised the diverse choices available in the form of degrees for the certification of principals and principal candidates, many of which may assist the school leader to grow in a particular area of instructional leadership, such as an

arts, mathematics or science focus. However, he also identifies the need to develop a dedicated Masters of Educational Leadership as a basic qualification. Levine found that in 2003 over 15,000 master's degrees in educational administration were awarded. This growing trend represents one-eighth of all M.Ed. degrees, implying that only 55% of all education faculties have programmes to educate principals specifically. The majority of master's degrees in educational administration are based in off-campus programmes for which surveys indicate comparatively negative evaluations of the adjunct professors who taught on these programmes. The latter generate huge enrolments and tuition fees that support the main campus. Levine (2005) identifies the lowering of expectations in these programmes by reference to the example of on-campus courses having more credit hours compared to their off-campus counterparts for the same 36-credit master's programmes. From one interview, a prominent professor in the leadership field indicated that "the programs offered around the country lack in rigor and fail to focus on the core business of the schools: learning and teaching" (p.30).

Although Levine's (2005) report relied on what might be considered outdated data and had several methodological limitations (Young, Crow, Orr, et al.,2005), his general findings cannot be simply ignored. With caution to the above, he raises many questions in terms of the efficacy of the current programmes offered and used as certification of skills and abilities in terms of school leadership in the United States. The Alberta or Canadian context can be viewed as paralleling Levine's findings as many if not all of the off-campus leadership programmes

originate from US 'bricks and mortar' universities and online degree-awarding institutions which Levine describes as little more than a 'grab bag' of survey courses (p28).

3.7 Content for Training School Leaders.

The content of school training programmes varies in terms of delivery method. For the purpose of this study and this section the training of school leaders is organised in three areas: training programmes provided by the employer or school district; formal higher education institutional programmes; and a hybrid of the two.

Higher education institutions offer abundant M.Ed. programme choices with specific leadership development options in over 20 different areas as identified by Levine (2005). However, within these varied foci there is a standard series of courses making up the 30+ credits required for graduation. The following list of courses is found in Levine's (2005) large-scale study that identifies the percentage of courses taken and their ratings in terms of how valuable they were in relation to job role and their quality respectively.

Table 4: Courses Leading to Advanced Education Degrees

Courses (Taken by Public School Principals in Preparation for or in Relation to Their Jobs) Leading to Advanced Education Degrees or Certification			
Course Title	% Who took Course	% Rating valuable to Job	% Rating high in Quality
Instructional Leadership	92%	78%	71%
School Law	91%	80%	73%
Educational Psychology	91%	66%	63%
Curriculum Development	90%	73%	59%
Research Methods	89%	56%	53%
Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education	88%	36%	33%
Teaching and Learning	87%	73%	63%
Child and Adolescent Psychology	85%	79%	60%
School Principalship	84%	73%	67%
Needs of Exceptional Children	70%	69%	57%
Schools as Organisations	64%	58%	54%
Organizational Behaviour	62%	63%	59%
Community/Parent Relations	58%	65%	56%
Managing Change	56%	67%	59%
Financial Reporting and Controls	56%	58%	54%
Human Resource Management	54%	64%	55%
Supporting Teachers for Instruction	53%	66%	58%
Ethics	53%	55%	55%
Politics of Education	49%	51%	42%
Economics of Education	46%	50%	51%
Conflict Resolution	41%	63%	58%
Negotiation	35%	42%	37%
Strategic Management of Innovation and Technology	34%	55%	47%
Average	66%	63%	56%

Source: Principal Survey from Levine (2005) Report

Mullen (2004) attempted a similar survey in the United States identifying what was described as the ‘best practices’ of higher education courses in

educational leadership and administration as well as their delivery models. Mullen found similar success and approval ratings in course titles from a statistically smaller sample of participants as Levine (2005) did from a much larger one. Both suggest that higher education leadership programmes need a content and delivery redesign.

Employer or school district training programmes are often generated by the need to fill the gaps that higher education institutions leave in relation to training school principals (Labaree, 2004). A master principal often leads these programmes with a focus on creating a professional relationship with new leadership, folding potential future principal leaders into their district's prevailing practices and pacing these potential new recruits or candidates over the year by holding frequent meetings that allow for discussion of the immediate challenges they face in their roles (Carr, 2005). Of the breadth of research available there is no common understanding of this across Alberta and in contrast the research has been criticised for its lack of uniformity (Mombourquette, 2013).

Further reviews of the current state of training programmes show a hybrid model of university and district partnerships becoming common in both the United States and Canada. These partnerships are very localised in terms of needs and content delivery and have been described by some in the literature as being quite successful in relation to building leadership candidate pools (Browne-Ferrigno and Knoeppel, 2005). These programmes focus on districts' need for succession planning (Schlechty, 2005) and higher education's role in delivering these

programmes in a new format, which is often workshop- or short seminar-based. The benefits of these partnerships are based on the application of general theory to immediate practice (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe and Meyerson, 2005; Levine, 2005). Whether these partnerships become commonplace, or even replace formal higher education-only leadership training programmes, is difficult to predict, as both organisations, in their attempts to accomplish their respective vision, think and operate very differently (Norton, 2002).

In contrast, Earley and Weindling (2004) advocate a standard two-phase process in the development of school leaders, with the second phase matching what is common in higher education programs, with an earlier phase focused on socialisation. This first phase differs as it builds on the early identification, pre-application and pre-appointment of a school principal with first-hand experiences such as modelling, observing and even taking on small leadership projects in which one is coached. The Earley and Weindling two-phase process in the Alberta context could benefit both the protégé principal and the school districts by providing influence over the curriculum required to develop successful principals. When the first phase is based on benchmarks, goal setting and continual collegial critique, it would present stronger candidates who then pursue applications for the position of principals. This early phase is currently not consistent in Alberta and would involve a considerable cost.

For higher education school leadership development programmes in the United States, a typical master's level credit structure is outlined in the Interstate

School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards by Murphy (2005), cited below (Table 5). This framework is common across many educational leadership degree programmes which, as mentioned above, are accessed extensively by Albertan teachers and principals:

Table 5: Common Leadership Degree Framework

Required Core Courses	Credits
Foundations of Educational Policymaking	3
Fundamentals of Curriculum Development	3
Action Research in Education	3
Technology for School Leadership	3
Educational Organizations & Leadership	3
Professional Courses	
Law & Ethics for School Leadership	3
School Finance and Records	3
Instructional Leadership & Supervision	3
Change for School Improvement	3
Building Organisational Capacity	3
Practicum/Seminar/or Paper	
Practicum/Seminar in Administration & Supervision	3

3.8 Key Characteristics of Good School Leaders by Review of Principal

Evaluation Metrics on Leadership Programmes

Aitken, Bedard and Darroch (2003), in a paper focusing on the design of master’s degree programmes in educational leadership, argued that research on the role, evaluation or support for school principals is a fairly recent phenomenon. It is true by any measure that the role of the school principal has changed dramatically

over recent decades, yet, as Bevins, Jordan and Perry (2011) have concluded, understanding the criteria for the selection of principals has not developed at the same pace. Additionally, there is little large-scale research that could inform the creation of a standardised evaluative methodology (Marzano, 2003), which in turn might parallel the in-depth and intricate teacher evaluation documents available and in some cases nationally recognised (Elliott, 1991).

Comparing the ISLLC-recommended courses (Murphy, 2005) with what Levine (2005) discovered in his large-scale questionnaire from table 4 (page 77), the required core courses are identified by 56% respondents finding them valuable in their success. In relation to their job, approximately half of the students in the leadership programme do not see a value to these core courses. When we look at professional courses the value increases to a 64% rating in relation to their jobs. Both numbers indicate an evaluation by Levine's study that points to lacklustre student ratings and a potential means of identifying what is currently of value in educational leadership programmes.

Table 6: Levine vs. ISLLC Standards

Courses based on ISLLC Standards	Courses as Identified by Levine (2005)	Percent rating valuable to job
Required Core Courses		
Foundations of Educational Policymaking	Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Education	36%
Fundamentals of Curriculum Development	Curriculum Development	73%
Action Research in Education	Research Methods	56%
Technology for School Leadership	Strategic Management of Innovation and Technology	55%
Educational Organisations & Leadership	Schools as Organisations	58%
Average		56%
Professional Courses		
Law & Ethics for School Leadership	Ethics	55%
School Finance and Records	Financial Reporting and Controls	58%
Instructional Leadership & Supervision	Instructional Leadership	78%
Change for School Improvement	Managing Change	67%
Building Organisational Capacity	Organisational Behaviour	63%
Average		64%

There is indeed a gap that has developed between the perceived value of the leadership training programmes by higher education institutions and their students' evaluation of their relevance. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2011) had identified the importance of including the voice of the principal as student in leadership development strategies and lessons by honouring the student as a professional adult. Working towards making theory practical in these programmes remains

challenging. These challenges might be reflected in how we define leadership and prepare leaders across the range of the higher education degrees available (Carter, Ulrich and Rhodes, 2005; Collins, 2002; Northouse, 2013), while being aware that the efficacy ratings of these programmes are averaging around 50%.’

3.9 Literature Summary

This study focuses on how far master’s degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta while also assessing how these programmes might be improved. The literature supports the importance of a school principal’s efficacy and its contribution to school and student success. However, in terms of specific research within the context of the Province of Alberta, an extensive search of recent literature has failed to reveal any research that explores the application requirements of holding a master’s degree and that links this to the perceived success of the school principal. Furthermore, the content and types of masters degrees being approved in the application process requirements for this position also will be investigated. The role of the school principal is becoming more and more demanding with increasing roles and responsibilities (Brundrett, 2001) and as such the implications, effectiveness and value of the requirements for applying to this position are investigated here.

Although there have been studies of principals in the Alberta context (Marzano et al., 2005) discussed earlier, there are no research studies to date that investigate this issue within the context of Alberta. This research study contributes to the overall scholarly knowledge on the subject, providing perspectives on the

current contexts of the participants, which is the first occasion in Alberta this has been researched, and identifies how far master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in the province. By sketching the landscape, my study will help inform prospective school principals in their selection of a master's degree, while it will also aid school districts in terms of their school principal hiring practices and assist the Alberta Government in the protocols and requirements surrounding this very important aspect of public education.

From a theoretical perspective there is considerable literature on both educational and business leadership, as well as research on the characteristics of good school principals in both the Canadian (Fullan, 2003; 2008; 2011) and international contexts (Anderson, 1991; Burger, 2000; Carter et al., 2005; Carr, 2005; Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood, 2005; Young and Levin 2002). Drawing on the literature and the specific data collected, it is hoped that the findings from this study will contribute to insights into ways to improve school principal practice and masters degrees effectiveness by:

- Updating the 1970s and earlier understandings of the roles and responsibilities of the school principal;
- Incorporating the Alberta Principal Quality Standards (APQS) as the basis of reviewing and understanding the characteristics of a school principal in Alberta, thus potentially improving policy;
- Informing higher education institutions providing M.Ed. degrees in Alberta of those areas school principals recommend as useful and meaningful as well as aspects they might consider outdated for the modern principal;
- Informing current and potential school principals of effective characteristics and skill sets they need to develop in order to be successful.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

The aim of this chapter is to outline the methodology, research design and methods used in this research. The use of a blended research design is explained and the reason for my choices in terms of the methods and methodology are discussed. Through the use of two threads of inquiry (documentary and interview methods) that combine the different strands of the research details, I will describe the participants, data collection and how I analysed my research. My interpretation of the results is explored from the perspective of validity and the risks engendered by my position as an insider researcher in the community of school principals, the latter being the main participants in the project. This issue is explored later in the chapter. Lastly, I will identify the unique nature of this research within the particular context of Alberta schools and explore the importance of the particular research method selected.

4.0 Statement of Problem

School leadership is ultimately responsible for the success of each school site. How school principals understand their roles and responsibilities as well as their efficacy can greatly influence their school success measures. The Alberta government has outlined the dimensions and competencies of school principal leadership positions (APQS located in Appendix B). Higher education institutions have also defined their understanding of the same in their education leadership preparedness curriculum. Lastly, the school districts themselves and current school

principals have their own understanding and practices of these government-outlined dimensions of school principal success.

4.1 Research Question

This study will focus on the extent to which M.Ed.s contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta while also considering how these programmes might be improved.

4.2 Research Tools and the Theoretical Basis of the Lenses Used

Clear observations in terms of the data collection can be made with some certainty when using document analysis. As Cohen et al. (2011) state, documentary analysis observes participants in their natural settings. Published documents link the participant's own claims to reality and often establish the context of this reality in addition to the conceptual parameters. The documents retrieved for the purpose of this study have been selected for their ability to respond to the research questions and have been gathered by researching openly available sources such as the websites of the Ministry of Education, Government of Alberta and individual school district websites.

4.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the training qualifications behind school leadership, recognising and taking account of contextual differences, while also considering the value of an M.Ed. in terms of preparing a leader for the position of school principal, in order to ascertain if the skill sets featured in these programmes contribute to success.

This study considers the features of a good school principal in the context of the province of Alberta, Canada, drawing on a range of sources, including interviews, application requirements and master's degree programme documentation, thereby building a picture of what is expected of a principal and what is provided by way of preparation to ensure success in that role.

Identifying the background context in Alberta, the study looks at three areas:

1. The views of serving school principals on the key features of an effective principal;
2. The content of MEd degrees recommended for and taken by prospective school principals in Alberta; and
3. The guidelines that Albertan school districts use to guide the hiring of school principals.

Looking at these three factors, the question as to what relationships can be discerned and in what ways do all these issues align is addressed. Thus, it is important to consider whether those experiences principals understand to be important in shaping them as effective leaders overlap with the requirements set down in master's level degrees and if they correlate with outlined employment requirements for the position of principal. The sources for principal professional development can include available opportunities within the province and, as discussed earlier, many principals turn to both business leadership and educational leadership authors for advice and roadmaps to success. The objective is to identify the ways in which M.Ed. degrees can be changed to improve their effectiveness in relation to developing good leaders.

4.4 Importance of the Study

Research in the field of principal leadership, evaluation and training is specific to geographical and national sites as education is mandated, governed and paid for from public tax revenues. On the surface, regional school districts appear similar in nature and in terms of overall purpose, thus they share certain commonalities. However, underneath the surface each school district acts and behaves differently. Given the particular and challenging situation Alberta finds itself in, with its growing population and the increasing diversity of this population, gaining insights into the effective development of good school principals is quite urgent.

4.5 Research Methodology

The methodological perspective adopted in social science research has more to do with finding a particular answer, or insight into a question or issue, than it does with finding a universally correct answer. As Moses and Knutsen (2007) argue, each person looks through different lenses depending on their cultural, demographic and educational foundations, thus shaping how they assign importance to different elements. Similarly, all school contexts are different, while each school leader brings with him or her a different set of experiences, capabilities and views about what it means to be a good leader, and how the school should be managed. The particular lens adopted is an interpretivist one (Sergiovanni and Green, 2015), while using the content of both master's programmes and school

hiring requirements to frame the development of interviews with principals and to guide the interpretation of the data that emerges.

Developing the methodological approach for my research required a deliberate and carefully considered set of methodological choices (Crotty, 1998). The methodology was naturally determined by the questions that guided this study. Muijs, Tolie and McAteer (2011) argue that the qualitative and mixed methods era of educational research that currently prevails has brought about a deeper understanding of the contexts of educational methods and educational reform by providing a balance of approaches to dealing with a complex environment. The complexities of the factors involved in educational research include context, environment, condition and experience as a foundation, which also introduces certain challenges when forming general theories.

For these reasons, this research study has opted for a multifaceted approach to organising the methodology and more importantly in justifying, respectively, the nature of reality in the question, the position of the principal, as well as the knowledge this research will garner (Crotty, 1998). This considers the highly complex, multifaceted role of the principal position which responds to – and is heavily influenced by – the local and wider social constructs within which it operates. This is due to principals’ strong communicative skill sets which allow them to effectively work within, between and around all of these constructs. The challenges are compounded due to the exploration of this research and the obligation to investigate the full spectrum of qualitative tools available. Therefore,

Blaxter, Hughes and Tight's (2006) fourfold categorization is used to inform the school principal's complex and socially-compressed role. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight recognise the fundamental methods for social data collection as based on documents, interviews, observation and questionnaires. The spirit of this understanding has also shaped this study.

Social science research takes on the challenges of human consciousness, attitudes and behaviour within a specific context. These complex variables require defining and explaining through connections between these variables, and then understanding and weaving these elements into relationships (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). My examination of the complex phenomenon of a principal's role and responsibilities requires a deep understanding of the relationships between the participants and their environments. My experiences as principal through a lived understanding allows for awareness and appreciation of these complexities where all too often decisions are made based on the weaving of information from various people.

Creswell (2013) describes several traits of qualitative research including identifying patterns, trends and variables given the application of a scientific approach. The calculation of these qualities in addition to a descriptive narrative delineating contextual specifics brings depth and meaning to the research. By delving further and gaining a deeper understanding of the micro elements of the inquiry, the research may also illuminate universal understandings of the research question.

Hattie's (2009) extensive meta-analysis of educational research confirms that historically quantitative and – more recently – mixed methods have been seen as offering reliable, scientific methods for research in the field of education. Creswell (2013) argues that through the collection and analysis of conversations and questionnaires, a narrative report can provide an understanding of the social reality studied. Qualitative research is often applied to areas that are of localised or emerging concern, the opposite of the case in a large-scale quantitative study that would not gather the critical comments, knowledge and viewpoints of participants.

Validity and reliability in research is identified by Cohen et al. (2011) as making up the key features of the quantitative method, where precise measurements validate the findings. In this method, careful replication of the experiments and research can produce similar results, over and over again. It is assumed that certain variables remain universal and as such do not impact on variances such as culture, demographics and other elements.

The range of research discussed in the literature review indicates that educational research proves to be more complex with a spectrum of variables found when comparing educational research from around the world. Creating validity in a qualitative or mixed methods-based study requires the researcher to have clear strategies in relation to collecting and analysing data, as well as strong competencies in relation to observational, interpreting and recording skills (Burgess, 1985).

The interpretivist perspective takes into account the researcher's values and ontological perspectives in terms of interpreting and analysing data by forming meaning when deciphering themes (Cohen et al., 2011). Through the observations and language of the interview narrative reports laid out in non-neutral terms (Scotland, 2012) aligned with an interpretivist methodology, the foundations underlying the current state of the challenges principals face in Alberta will emerge. Developing an understanding and realistic strategies for principal success will materialise based on a subjectivist perspective on the real world phenomenon of increasing school leadership efficacy. As with most forms of interview analysis, the social constructivist paradigm is the perspective used in the narrative analysis (Galletta and Cross, 2013) and will assist in identifying the particular context of school principals in Alberta.

Before deciding the methodological direction of the research, careful consideration was given to the many methods currently used in educational research. Action research as mediated through the Professional Learning Communities theory that DuFour and Eaker (1998) have advocated has been a fundamental method used in my professional career having conducted a variety of action research-based studies over the years. I am familiar with this method but decided not to utilise it due to time limitations, the scope required for the participant selection, and the physical distance between the researcher and the participants. I would like to note that the findings of this research might encourage further action research within my own context and among colleagues.

4.6 Broader Research Questions

The aim of the study is to determine the contribution of the M.Ed. degree to school principal success. The M.Ed. is specifically considered rather than other degree programmes available because an M.Ed is the qualification requirement for principals in Alberta. These fundamental questions have been addressed in section 1.2 and provide the foundation and direction of my inquiries.

4.7 Ethical Considerations and Insider-like Access

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ed.D. Research Ethics Committee at the University of Liverpool prior to commencement. Documentary data was collected from freely accessible documents available on the Internet. Participant permission letters, documentation, and research data storage met University of Liverpool standards and are detailed in Appendix A.

Research regarding the role of the school principal can be complex and context-specific in many cases. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to describe a detailed blueprint for a school principal to follow in their daily work. As I know from my own experience, this is because so many issues arise that cannot be predicted and which call for a range of skills, including, for example, quick thinking, knowledge of the context and legal requirements. The effective principal is required to balance both naturalistic and constructivist methodologies so as to be successful in the moment of the 'now' and in future moments not yet realised. These 'now' moments occur daily and are unscripted in the life of a principal. Thus, when researching the dynamics associated with the principal, the theoretical basis should

be considered as balancing these methodological perspectives both as a researcher and as an actor with 'insider knowledge' of the conditions. From the perspective of ethical study protocols (Burgess, 1985; Coghlan and Brannick, 2010; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2013), it is essential for my colleagues to be assured that I maintained both the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. It is just as important for my participant colleagues to respond to the research questions using their own language, almost forgetting my knowledge of current issues and the linguistic protocols of this profession in order to garner their own complexities and unique explanations of the context.

My position as a researcher is very much defined as an 'insider' (Brannick, Levine and Morgeson, 2007). I took the M.Ed. degree to further my goal of becoming a school principal and fulfilling that role well. Because of my depth of 'insider' knowledge, in addition to my connection with various organisations and associations whose membership makes up the pool of available participants, my interviewees were made to feel comfortable exploring ideas and explaining their views to me as a fellow principal.

My insider knowledge is also invaluable in the interpretation of the data, although careful examination of potential personal biases in relation to the study are important. Extreme care and consideration such as avoiding accidentally identifying my participants was exercised to avoid imposing my own views, experiences and possible prejudices on the interviews and on the data collected, thereby ensuring that any judgments on my part reflected the true nature and intent of the given

participant's responses. Qualitative studies always require the researcher to be self-aware and alert to their own position in the research. (Mercer, 2007). During the interviews, I specifically asked participants to rephrase or clarify their explanations if they had used professional 'jargon', acronyms as well as when avoiding questions.

4.8 Population and Sample

The participant population consisted of publicly-funded school principals in Alberta kindergarten to grade 12 schools. Potential participants were invited via the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) by way of emailing its membership list. They are all mandated to hold association union membership, specifically through the subgroup called the Council on School Leadership.

In developing my approach to the pre interview and interview questions I drew on the support of two school principal colleagues who acted as critical friends and scrutinisers. I was able to pilot the survey questions with them and to discuss them on completion. Their thoughts and suggestions were helpful in amending these for use in the research. A similar approach was taken in respect of the interview questions themselves. I was also able to use these colleagues to explore ideas for approaches to the identification of participants. Acknowledging the valuable time gifted to me by the principals participating in this research, I made every effort to maximise the effectiveness of my time with them. The pre-interview questions were streamlined and re-written to incorporate some of the original face-to-face interview questions which were seen as straightforward and potentially time distracting.

Figure 1: Recruitment Advertisement:

Research Project with School Principals



Are you an experienced Principal working in Alberta?

Would you be willing to share your knowledge and experience?

This project is designed to enhance Principal Leadership Programs and Masters of Education Programs?

I am conducting a study in How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta? And how might these programs be improved? And how far do masters degrees contribute to the success of principals in Alberta schools?

We are looking for...

- **Experienced and successful Alberta school principals (5+Years)**
- **Principals who are happy to share thoughts on what characteristics make principals successful**
- **What constitutes a successful school leader?**
- **What should make up the components in Principal Leadership training and in Masters of Education Degree Programs?**

If you are Interested, Principal Participants will be asked take part in an informal interview (~60min) as part of the study and to fill out a survey (~20min).

Survey and Interviews will be conducted May-June 2014

For further information or if you would like to participate please contact:

Principle Researcher: Walter Kowalchuk

Phone: (XXX) XXX-XXX

Email: walterk@

4.9 Selection of Interested Participants

Interested participants were directed to contact the researcher by email for further information about the study. An FAQ section was provided via email that included an estimate of the time commitment involved alongside other information regarding the research, as well as an Expression of Interest online application form. The information thus gathered was used to determine participation in the subsequent interview section. A participant's name and contact email was not used as selection criteria, but the short demographic-based questions in this Expression of Interest section was utilised to determine a broadly representative group of Alberta principals. Due to the limited response of 14 participants, a rationale for selecting participants was not required as a natural selection representing the Alberta context emerged through the variances in geographical locations, experiences and levels of school aged students.

From the available 14 principals who self-identified as interested in participating, a broadly-based group of research participants, only 13 formed the final study participant cohort and participated in the interview section. One participant was unable to commit to the Skype interview time frame. Permission to conduct the research was made with each individual potential participant, as recruitment was not made in terms of school district or specific school areas. Each respective participant was required to provide consent for their own participation, after which the individuals proceeded to the interview phase. The researcher sent a

'Participant Consent to Interview' form that was hand signed and returned to the researcher to confirm their participation. The following process was followed:

- Participant to submit consent for interview participation form;
- Participant will be asked to answer a 'pre-interview' survey, which will give the researcher a general background to the participant and will enrich the interview at the face-to-face stage;
- A face-to-face interview (potentially via-Skype) will be scheduled with the participants' consent.

The inclusion criterion was developed to keep the study within the unique Alberta context of successful school principals. The following inclusion criteria were observed:

- Currently-serving school principals in Alberta;
- Open to participating in this research;
- Principals must have been serving no less than five years in their principalship and have experience in at least two different schools.

Exclusion criteria included:

- Does not have a full, continuous designation as principal within their school district;
- Is currently employed outside of Alberta as a principal;
- Principal-level experience was not gained in Alberta.

The specific groups excluded from this study were new principals with less than five years' experience in the Province of Alberta, and any principal who had principal leadership experience outside of Alberta. These two parameters were made in order to ensure the data was localised to Alberta. The researcher is extremely familiar with the Alberta system and so brings insights to the research given my familiarity with this group. In addition, the intention is to inform the Alberta authorities of the current and specific context of Alberta as they consider the requirements for principalship and in particular the acceptability of the available M.Ed. degrees as supporting principals to develop into successful school leaders. Longer service indicates that principals have had time to reflect on the role, and in many cases have been involved in interviewing prospective principals and in mentoring those aspiring to the role. This selection of expert informants would not be possible if participants represented other contexts outside the Province of Alberta.

4.10 Data Analysis

Questionnaire and interview data analysis was structured following the guidelines outlined in Cohen et al., (2011, p.1132) and based on Simpson and Tuson (2003) and Miles and Huberman's (1984) work on organising various types of data and methods. The following strategies were adopted when using the NVivo programme:

1. Reviewing, analysing and coding early;
2. Coding densely at first;
3. Keeping track of data analysis over time;
4. Verifying intuitions with data;
5. Identifying themes and patterns;
6. Looking for thematic clusters;
7. Coding into hierarchies;
8. Ensuring conceptual coherence to the analysis.

Cohen et al., (2011, p.1132)

Data analysis of the threads required a strict rubric that resulted in keeping the data as close to the original intended meaning and context as possible. Cohen et al., (2011) provide an extensive framework that can be used to weave together each of these threads. Similar to grounded theory's understanding that researchers require a higher level of tolerance when it comes to uncertainty in the narrative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), the potential use of NVivo software proved beneficial in the textual analysis involved in all of this phase's steps, including transcription, coding, and interpretation and conjecturing of the interview data collected. Given 13 interview participants and a large amount of documentary items, a software platform has naturally streamlined the process of analysis.

Each thread's data was analysed for relationships between the documentary analysis and interview protocol respectively. A descriptive analysis of each question and comparison of emerging themes formed the specific Albertan response as a foundation from which to answer each question. Descriptive and non-neutral forms will be used to sort each response in the interview analysis. A table delineating each question and the data analysis strategies used to decipher their meanings was constructed. A constant comparative method as described in Cohen et al., (2011) and derived from Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used. This is the method by which coding and analysis take place simultaneously. Again, the use of NVivo assisted in the constant comparison and the researcher's 'memoing' (Cohen et al., 2011) of the data into themes and metaphors.

Glaser and Strauss' (1967) four sections that comprise the constant comparative method of data analysis were also incorporated. These include:

1. Establishing theoretical constructs across all previously coded interviews and documents through continual comparisons;
2. Forming emergent theories (single or multiple with evidence) as patterns and relationships become realised;
3. Forming theories and patterns into higher-level theories;
4. Final formation of a systematic and substantive theory incorporating all previous as it relates to the inquiry.

The four above sections were reviewed continuously during the data analysis stage. It was hoped that the theories would converge into one systemic and substantive overarching theory. However, the complexities of the research inquiry have proven to be more context specific to Alberta. The discussion and analysis will draw out the potential of any universal or generalisable theory.

4.11 Research Design

The research study blended two research methods. A documentary analysis of freely available master's programmes information alongside a documentary analysis of the application requirements of school boards began the study and identified the main pillars of principal efficacy and success. In addition, the information available for masters programmes online, alongside the application requirements of school boards, would identify the basic requirements/pillars for the position of principal. The second method involved qualitative interviews, which allowed for a depth of understanding and comparison with the documentary analysis. This process is identified below as 'threads';

these threads intertwined and at the same time became dependent on each other within the process.

4.11.0 Thread One: Documentary Analysis

The documentary analysis in this study was designed to focus on the Alberta narrative. With thousands of school-based principals in Alberta working in publicly-funded schools, the freely available documents regarding employment qualifications, professional development, certification, and education programmes offered were accessed. An investigation into these documents would build the foundation and baseline of the current narrative.

4.11.1 Development of the Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis forms the first thread of this study. Documents are not merely the pages of a story, but rather the historical record of a community's socially-constructed interpretation of reality, the meaning of relationships, and should be considered as important artefacts (Robbins and Alvy, 2004). Documentary analysis relies on living or historical texts that together attach meaning and understanding to the questions at hand.

Two types of documents were considered for this study as offering a foundation for comparison and thus establishing validity (Blaxter et al., 2006). The first are published documents that are available to the general public and referred to here as public documents (namely M.Ed. prospectuses and other published material). The second type are closed unpublished documents that are available to the select community for which they were written (such as application requirements for an advertised principal position).

An analysis of these two types of documents within this study would paint a mural of the historical and current state of the programmes which are offered for master’s study as preparation for the role of school principal, and the articulated requirements that schools ask aspiring principals to meet. Validating the quality of the documentary analysis as suggested by Cohen et al., (2011) involves moving from a wider embrace of the data to a focused observation on the critical questions, and this – while challenging – will add more colour to the discussion of Alberta’s specific context.

Table 7: A summary of the Documentary thread, method and sample(s) relationships

Documents Thread	Sample(s)
<p>1. Masters Prospectus Content of prospectuses, syllabuses and other relevant material concerning M.Ed. programmes undertaken by Albertan teachers (accepted by Albertan authorities as evidence re appointment to principal roles).</p>	<p>Intention: Through the use of the Freedom of Information Act, the government organised Teacher Qualification Service, who maintain a record of the professional development of teachers and administrators, will be asked to provide the following: A list of masters of education university programmes that are associated with an individual’s position as a school principal and a corresponding identification of the percentage of the total who subscribe to that university programme. From the information gathered, a selection of universities identified by the principal participants will be used within this documentary analysis.</p>
<p>2. Applications process in Alberta Applications process for principals’ documentation</p>	<p>The six largest publicly-funded school districts in Alberta (four urban and two rural) will be considered for this research, as combined they constitute 60% of the student population. They are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calgary School District No. 19 2. Edmonton School District No. 7 3. Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1 4. Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7 5. Rocky View School Division No. 41 6. Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14

4.11.2 Thread Two: Interview

The study's participants were school principals who had a continuous designation within the Province of Alberta. This study was advertised on many Alberta Teachers' Association digital communications, principal leaders' newsletters and list-serves where Alberta principals frequently communicated with each other. The participants who were finally interviewed were from both rural and urban schools representing various levels of publicly-funded kindergartens to grade 12 schools. A total of 13 participants were asked to participate in the Skype interview process.

4.11.3 Development of the Interview Analysis

Qualitative interview, which is at the centre of social research, is considered to be the best method for understanding the complexities associated with principalship (Sagor, 2010). Interviews, while time consuming, evoke a higher sense of the deliberate consciousness or knowledge of the connections between, and within, the participants, including the five senses that evoke emotionality and individual feelings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009) based on their context. The style selected for this study focuses on a mixed methods approach incorporating foundational background questions such as years of service as answered by short, closed questions. Questions such as those exploring leadership styles, which require in-depth explanation, were allowed adequate interview time to enable an understanding of the participants' socially-constructed interpretation of reality (Blaxter et al., 2006). In the first style, the analysis (closed questions) is straightforward to ensure no deviation in responses or need for interpretation.

The second style, open questions, requires a significant amount of planning and organising when recoding and analysing key terms and patterns in defining relationships and answers (Cohen et al., 2011). The laddering dialogue technique discussed in Cohen et al. was explored as a potential basis for the second style of questions. Due to the nature of this study, the subsequent grid analysis focuses on the gathering of similarities in responses rather than diverging into separate data streams. The advantage of this is that it facilitates the coding of responses as close to the original intent of the participant as possible, thereby generating coding hierarchies quickly. To assist in this, NVivo software proved beneficial in the textual analysis and in all the steps of this phase, including transcription, coding, and interpretation, and the conjecturing of the interview data collected.

Permission to participate in the study was a requirement prior to taking part in the study as indicated in the ethical considerations. The questions for the pre-interview survey were developed specifically for this research to identify general demographic features, leadership experiences, and the participants' education and training in relation to the standards set for hiring school principals in Alberta. The information was used to determine the province-wide representativeness of the study. The design of the questions required the participant to spend approximately 20 minutes to complete them. The Participant Pre-Interview Survey is located in Appendix C. The survey segment concentrates on the notion of the praxis of the principal. The experience and subsequent perceptions uncovered in this thread may be seen as representative of the general Alberta context.

4.12 Skype Interview

A Skype interview with each participant followed and featured questions that focussed on discussing the aims of the study. This instrument was intended originally to be face-to-face, but given the limiting time factors in terms of commuting to meet each participant and the sheer distance between participants and myself, a change to a Skype-based interview was requested by the participants. Some of the distances between participants and me could have involved seven hours of driving, and between any two potential participants living on opposite sides of the province could have amounted to a total of 15 hours driving. Organising and scheduling the interviews was framed around the participants' availability for a one to two-hour discussion via Skype. The nature of Skype allowed me to include a representative sample of the school principals in the Province of Alberta without the constraints of distance as all Alberta schools are provided with a high-speed internet service called 'Supernet' by the Alberta Government.

The interviews were based on eight questions that allowed for each participant to fully develop and express their views and perceptions. The questions were focused on the three larger research sections, namely: a) What is good leadership; b) Views on the Alberta Principal Quality Standards as examples of the Albertan context of good leadership; and c) What the interviewees saw their higher education institutions consider to be good leadership based on the programmes they graduated from. A pilot run of the questions was completed to identify gaps in the question flow and to review the depth of responses via the feedback of two critical colleagues. A consent form was submitted by all participants (see Appendix A).

4.13 Interview Method Procedure and Instrumentations:

All principals in Alberta were invited to participate in the research study (see Figure 1). Any information that could potentially identify any participant in the study was removed or generalised. Communication with participants and invitations were conducted exclusively by email until the Skype interview. The window for inclusion in the study was based on a duration of four weekly requests to participate. The principals were asked to provide information to confirm their eligibility to participate in the study. Validation of each participant's identification was conducted through the confirmation of their emails matching the school district website and contact information which is available to the general public.

After the Skype interview, both the interview transcripts and the pre-interview surveys were coded with pseudonyms so that confidentiality in the analysis could be retained. All of the interviews were recorded digitally, and transcribed with the assistance of NVivo software, after which common themes were identified by referring to the interview protocols.

4.14 Pre-Interview Survey Instrument Method

From a thorough examination of the literature on leadership styles as well as the data from the documentary analysis – which ran alongside the interview method – a set of pre-interview survey questions were developed. The main purpose of the pre-interview survey was to establish demographics and general perspectives prior to the Skype interview, thereby allowing the researcher to focus more time and to delve deeper in the

valuable face-to-face interview. McEwan (2003) states that the purpose of a pre-interview survey is to allow the researcher to code data earlier, thus identifying relationships between quantitative and demographic data respectively. This ability to understand the participant prior to the formal interview also builds a relationship between the researcher and the participant, thereby resulting in an authentic interview and genuine representation of the given participant's responses when coding the data.

The pre-interview survey (See Appendix C) had 17 questions to assist with the data gathering (see a summary at Section 3.1 above and in full at Appendix A). Questions 1, 2 and 5 focused specifically on the participant's demographics relating to gender, years of experience as a principal and level of education (including degrees granted and from which university). Questions 3 and 4 related to their interview preferences and validated their ability to commit to an interview. The second section featured seven questions (#7-13) that describe the professional role of the participant and specifically their years of experience in various administrative leadership roles, most of which utilised a Likert-style response. Question 14 specifically asks for the current school demographics and Question 15 asks the participant to describe aspects of their success as a school principal. The last two questions focus on the professional development of school administrators and specifically if the APQS guidelines are practised, experienced in professional development, or via on the job training opportunities.

4.15 Development of the Pre-Interview Survey Method Analysis

The following data was used in capturing potential participants for the study:

Table 8: Pre-Interview Question

	Question		
1.	Are you currently employed as a public school principal in Alberta?	Yes	No
2.	Is the school you are principal of classified as a rural or urban school?	Rural	Urban
3.	Do you identify yourself as a successful* school principal? *The definition of 'successful' varies from person to person, the important meaning here is that you self-identify that you are successful.	Yes	No
4.	Have you been a principal in more than one school?	Yes	No
5.	Gender	Male	Female
6.	Have you been a principal for more than five school years, only the current year is required to be in Alberta.	Yes	No
7.	Are you willing to participate in both a 60 min. face to face (Skype is an option) interview and a 20 min. survey surrounding questions about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • characteristics that make principals successful • What constitutes a successful school leader? • What should make up the components in Principal Leadership training and in Master of Education degree programmes? 	Yes	No

4.16 Participant Interview Instrument Method

In this semi-structured interview framework, considerable effort was made to design questions that followed closely the research study questions. Firstly, the intention in the design process was to identify the maximum number of questions that could be used to garner authentic and deep responses. McHugh (1994) suggests that preparation for the interview process is of utmost importance and must be planned thoroughly with questions

directed towards the intended research study questions, yet open enough to allow for individualised responses, as well as the freedom and fluidity of a normal conversation. Eight questions were developed with these points in mind and an approximate 60 minute interview would allow for between 5 to 10 minutes per question.

The eight interview questions were made up of three sections. The first introductory section focused on three general leadership questions and asked the participant to identify their own leadership style as well as the potential leadership characteristics they would look for in a principal candidate. The second section had one question that focused specifically on the APQS guidelines with the intention that the participant would speak openly about their experience with this document. The last section included four questions that focused on the content of M.Ed. degrees, their efficacy, practicality, and recommended concentrations for future syllabi.

The following interview questions were asked:

Introduction Section:

1. How would you describe your own leadership style?
2. What have been the main influences on your approach to leadership?
3. If you were interviewing a candidate for principal what would you say should be the key leadership characteristics that you would look for?

Understanding of Alberta Principal Quality Standards Guidelines:

4. Using the APQS guidelines as starting points (large printout will be made available for participant to reference), can you provide examples where you can directly link your success to the domains of the APQS guidelines?

Design and content of master's degrees taken by aspiring principals aim to engender qualities of effective school leadership:

5. Do you believe that current Master of Education degree programs are designed to bring leadership successes for principals? Can you provide some examples?
6. What characteristics are missing from master's degree programs that would greatly prepare and benefit principals today?
7. How do you see the APQS guidelines as being incorporated into the preparation (through master's level training), hiring and evaluating of Alberta principals?
8. If you were to design a Master of Education program that would be a mandatory prerequisite for all principals in Alberta, what would be your top five ingredients and why?

4.17 Validity of the instruments

Cohen et al. (2011) state that validity is key to both quantitative and qualitative research and as such should be checked over the study's full duration. Within the design of the study, triangulation between three sets of data was attempted. An effort was also made to have a participation sample that reflected the specific context of Alberta principals and to feature as many possible demographic assignments and experiences, thus providing an authentic data set based on the semi-structured open interview processes. The documentary analysis of both the master's prospectuses and applications process for principal positions completed the data triangulation. The questions used in both the pre-interview survey and the face-to-face Skype interviews were discussed and developed with my supervisor and then tested with two principal colleagues, returning to them with revised versions until satisfied. Their input was focused on the ethical aspects of the questions based on the Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Conduct and Professional Practice documents which all teachers and principals in Alberta must conform to. As a researcher, it is often very interesting to continue a line of questioning, sometimes forgetting the potential for unprofessionalism when searching for a solution or answer. This testing of the data-finding questions proved valuable, as I adhered to the ethical codes my principal participants and myself must adhere to as members of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

4.18 Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of the research study was the low response rate from Alberta's principal population. Invitations for participation were made available to 100% of principals by email. A total number of 13 interested potential participants responded, which is a low response rate. However, the advertisement for participation and interviews were conducted in June, one of the busiest times in the school calendar and the last month of the school year. This might have influenced the number of responses to the study invitation. Another consideration might also include the fact that a minimum inclusion criterion was made available in the Research Study Advertisement and may have deterred potential participants. It is unknown how many potential participants were affected by the inclusion criteria.

4.19 Methodology and Methods Summary

This research study began with questions I was passionate about answering in relation to the context of Alberta and specifically concerning my own professional practice. The study balanced my personal journey and the perspective of an unbiased researcher, which is why such a comprehensive data set was designed. The data collected and analysed could have proven unmanageable if not for the organisation of the threads of inquiry and relating back to the main questions of the study.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Data and Results

The purpose of this qualitative study is to consider the features of a good school principal at any level of the education system in the context of the Province of Alberta by drawing on a range of sources, including interviews with experienced principals, principal application requirements as advertised and relevant master's degree programme documentation in order to build a picture of both what is expected of a principal and what is provided by way of preparation to ensure success in that role. The methods chapter provides the rationale for the approach taken and details the data collection methods. This chapter contains the description of the data and the results of the analysis in terms of the research questions, leading to an evidence-based understanding of what the features of a successful school principal are in Alberta. This analysis will focus on the question "How far master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta?" The evaluation of the support government guidelines offer in the form of the APQS document can be seen in terms of how they contribute to principals' success, while identifying ways the programme might be improved is also discussed in this chapter.

The data sources collected included four separate parts: A1, pre-interview survey; A2, interview thread; B1, documents thread analysis; and B2, document application process in Alberta.

Table A1 and A2: Summary of inquiry threads and methods

A. Interview Thread	Method
Pre-interview Survey (p.108)	Short, closed questions response.
Skype/Face-to-face interview (p.106)	Semi-structured interview

B. Documents Thread	Method
Master's Prospectus (Section 5.2; p.176) Content of prospectuses, syllabuses and other relevant material concerning M.Ed. programmes undertaken by Albertan teachers (accepted by Albertan authorities as evidence re appointment to principal roles).	Documentary analysis Exploring emerging themes
2. Applications process in Alberta (Section 5.3; page 187) Application process for principals documentation	Documentary analysis Exploring emerging themes

The interview thread of this study was designed in two parts: a pre-interview survey and a Skype/face-to-face interview. These were conducted over the course of four months to gather the data.

5.0 Pre-Interview Survey: Description of participants

A total of 13 volunteer participants who met the criteria of experience and background as described in the previous chapter contributed to the data of this research. These experienced principals are distributed evenly over geography, type of school, gender, and number of years of experience, notwithstanding the small sample size cohort.

Of the 229 school authorities, school boards or school districts representing the many divisions in the Province of Alberta, the 13 participants are all administrators of

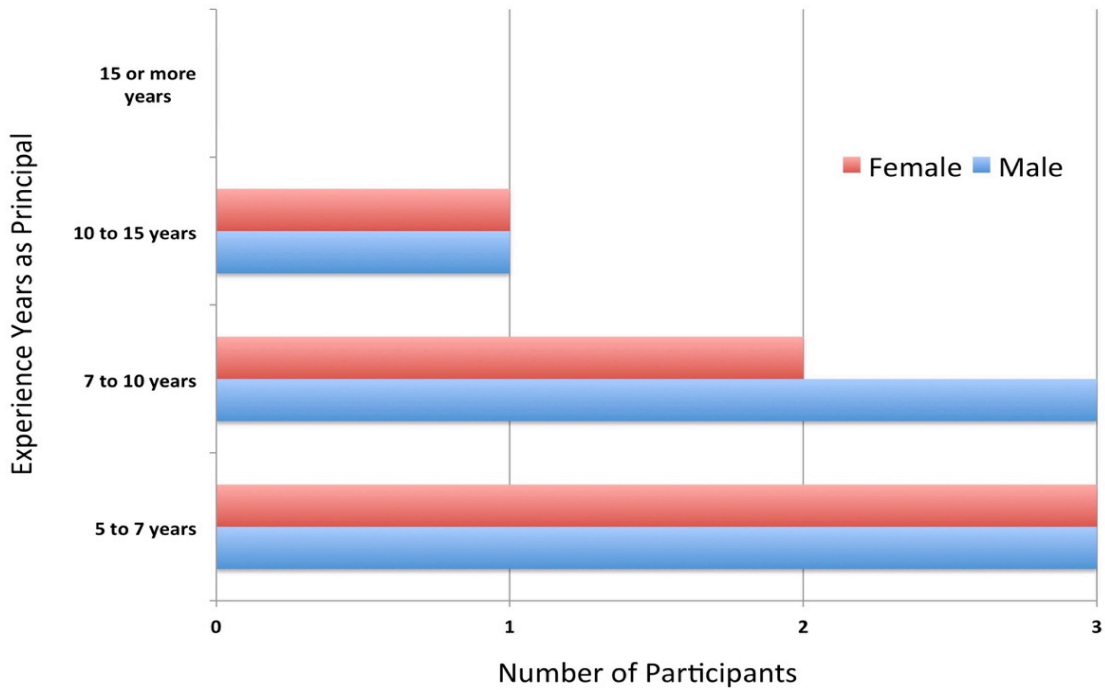
either public or separate school boards. These school types represent the majority in Alberta providing for over 93% of students as illustrated in Table A2 below.

Table A2: Alberta Authority compared to participants

Authority Type	School Board	# Students	# of Participants in Study	Rural or Urban
Public	Calgary School District No. 19	101,509	2	Urban
	Edmonton School District No. 7	79,974	3	Urban
	Black Gold Regional Division No. 18	8,891	1	Rural
	Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14	16,269	1	Rural
Separate	Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1	45,715	2	Urban
	Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7	33,575	3	Urban
	Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 41	5,509	1	Urban

The thirteen participants came from seven different school boards from around Alberta. The number of students from these seven school boards cumulatively represent approximately 50% of the total students in Alberta. Table A3 illustrates these school boards and the number of participants from each. The participants came from the four largest school boards within the province with the majority (11) from urban schools. This information is presented to show that the participants, although the only ones to volunteer, are representative of school principals across the province.

Chart A1: Experience years as Principal by Gender



In addition to the above participant information, a near balance between male and female principal participants was seen in this study. In total seven male and six female participants, all with 5 or more years' experience, responded to the study. Chart A1 show the gender breakdown. An equal gender representation is evident up to 15 years of experience with slightly more men than women in the longer serving category. There are no participants with less than 5 years of experience as per the methodological design and no participants with more than 15 years of experience in the study. No differences can be detected between males and females in terms of years of experience, although, given the small numbers any differences would not be discerned.

Chart A2: Experience by School Division Level

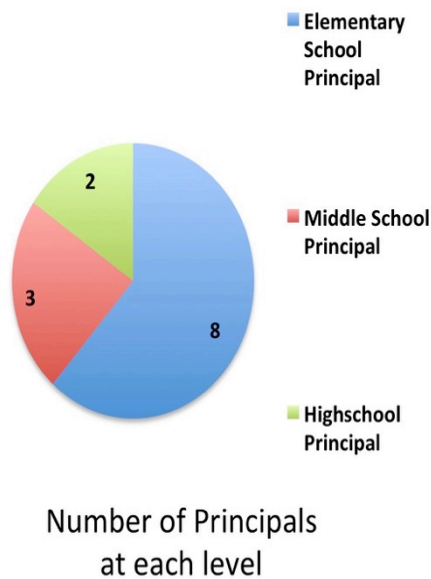
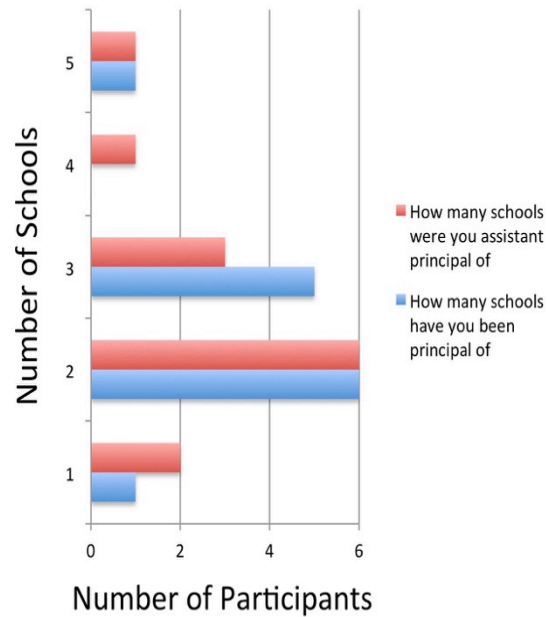


Chart A3: Experience Number of schools



Charts A2 and A3 show that the majority of participants are currently within an elementary school, middle school or junior high equivalent and two are in a high school position and have served in 2-3 schools as assistant and as principal. Chart A3 shows that the majority of the participants have worked at 2-3 schools where they served as an assistant principal and the same in the principal position. Naturally, fewer participants had been in five or more schools as a principal or assistant principal. It is also important to note that all participants worked at a minimum of two schools before receiving their principalship.

Chart A4: Experience Years in Administration

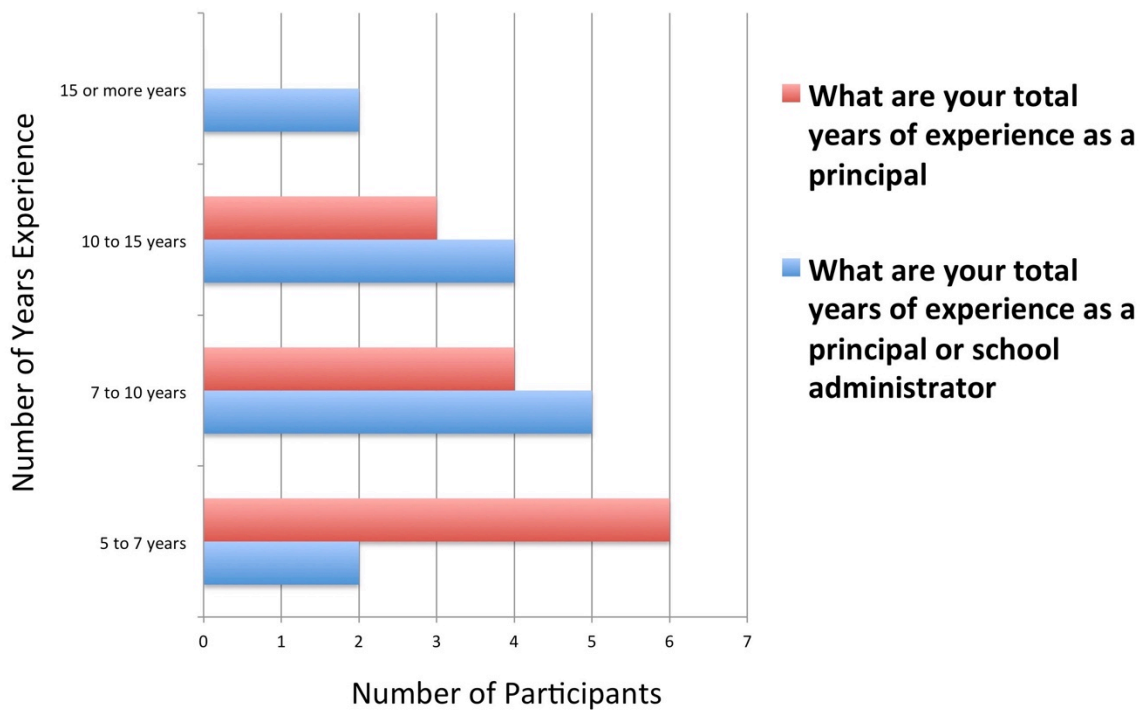


Chart A4 identifies the 13 participants by years of experience as a principal as well as years of experience as a school administrator. School administrators can be identified as occupying either assistant principal or vice principal roles within the school. A total of six participants had the longest experience (5 to 7 years), indicating that half of the participants are within their first phase of leadership based on the study's parameters.

The data shows some interesting differences between principals. Those who have been in the role for 10-15 or 7-10 years had served longer periods in previous administrative roles than those who have served as principals for a shorter time (5-7 years). This reflects the recent expansion of the number of schools within the province alongside increases in the number of principals reaching retirement age. As the demand

for principal positions changes over time, so does the length of the 'formative phase' of assistant principalship. In times of high demand for new principals, the experience requirements were identified as lower than when a decreased demand for principals existed. Earley and Evans (2002) identifies a parallel argument. in a research survey comparing UK independent and state school principal leaders where principals identified their own preparedness pre and post position. In a time of demand one tenth (11%) of independent school heads had been in their positions for one year or less and overall 55% had been in post for five years or less indicating a recent increase in demand for new independent school principals. However in the UK at the time the increased demand for such principals was not completely attributed to new schools, but to retirements of very experienced and long serving principals.

5.1 Table A4: Participants' Universities and Degree Type

University	Colour Code	# of participant graduates	Master degree participants attained at this university	Location of university and classes
A		3	- Master of Science in Education - Master in Early Childhood Education - Master in Educational Technology	Local 'bricks and mortar' university offering evening masters courses.
B		2	- Master in Religious Education	Local 'bricks and mortar' university offering evening and weekend masters courses.
C		2	- Master in Educational Leadership	This university has a 'bricks and mortar' headquarters in the United States but offers distance learning classes by holding three day seminars monthly to fulfil credit hours. There is no residency required and no thesis route option available.
D		3	- Master in Education leadership - Master in Educational Technology	This university is entirely online and is based in the United States. The university requires yearly week-long residencies and only a thesis route is available. All work is completed in an asynchronous online community.
E		1	- Master in Education leadership	This university has a 'bricks and mortar' headquarters in the United States but offers distance learning classes by holding two day seminars monthly and online asynchronous learning environment to fulfil credit hours. These seminars are run provincially and may require travel, but the degree does require a one semester course to be taken on campus to complete the thesis route degree, and a one week course on campus if following the non-thesis route.

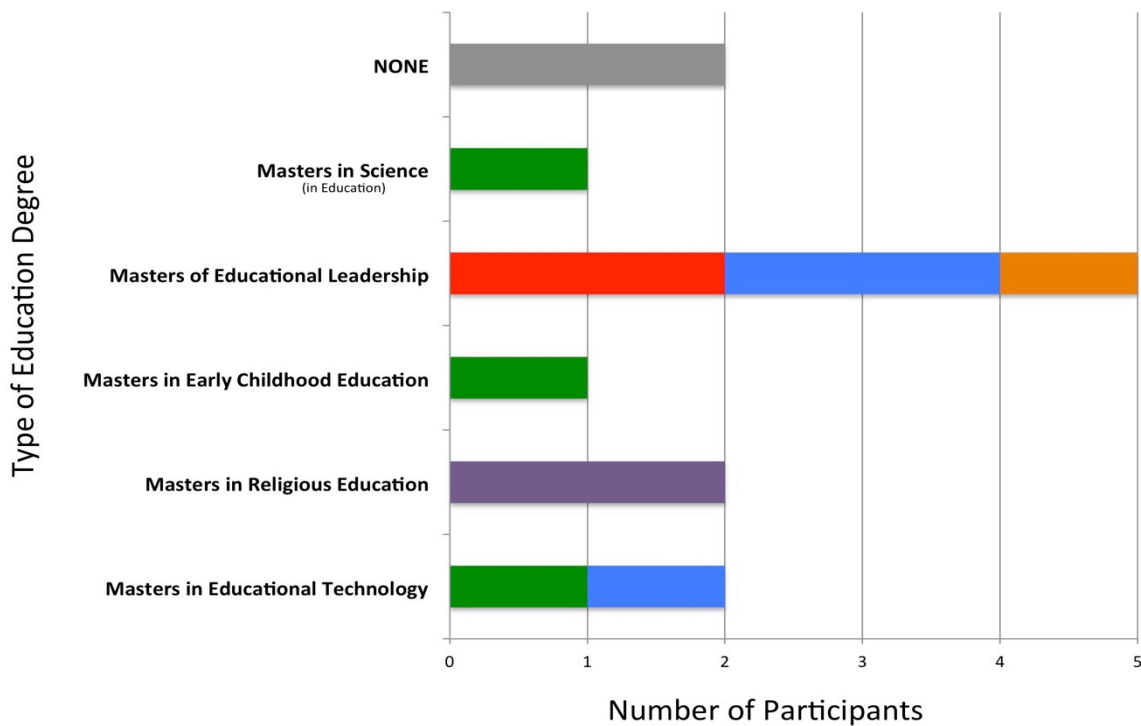
Table A4 indicates the various types of master degree programmes the participants have achieved. The five different universities the participants received masters degrees from are represented by specific colours in Table A4, and these same colours representing these institutions are continued in all subsequent tables in this chapter. Two participants confirmed they did not have a masters-level degree in education, despite it being a stated requirement in Alberta, while a majority (five participants) hold a Masters of Educational Leadership. The use of the colour codes above add an additional layer of data in which one can not only identify where each participant responded, but also from which university programme and the specific degree type these participants have experienced.

Table A4.1: Participants' Key Demographics

Name	Gender	Years as admin	Years as Principal	Master's Degree in
Michael	Male	7 to 10 years	5 to 7 years	Educational Technology
Danielle	Female	7 to 10 years	5 to 7 years	Religious Education
Zoryana	Female	7 to 10 years	5 to 7 years	Early Childhood Education
Shane	Male	10 to 15 years	5 to 7 years	Educational Leadership
Maxim	Male	15 Years or more	7 to 10 years	Educational Technology
Darren	Male	15 Years or more	10 to 15 years	Religious Education
Fred	Male	10 to 15 years	5 to 7 years	Science
Steve	Male	10 to 15 years	7 to 10 years	Educational Leadership
Blaine	Male	7 to 10 years	7 to 10 years	None
Barbara	Female	7 to 10 years	5 to 7 years	None
Sheila	Female	7 to 10 years	7 to 10 years	Educational Leadership
Samantha	Female	7 to 10 years	7 to 10 years	Educational Leadership
Sandra	Female	10 to 15 years	10 to 15 years	Educational Leadership

In reviewing the data from the interviews, I thought it would be prudent to summarise the participants' general demographics along with assigning each individual a fictitious name to bring their stories to life. Each of the participants mentioned that their own practice was made up of effective leadership in terms of ability and a particular style. In deciding a fictitious name, an additional level of coding occurs when identifying the degree focus and the fictitious name. All similar degree focuses begin with a similar letter for the fictitious participant name. For instance, in Table A4.1, all Educational Leadership graduates have a name that begins with 'S'. Blaine and Barbara both begin with 'B' and have not completed master's degrees. This is to allow the reader to associate specific degrees with names. There is purposeful omission of character identifying factors in some lines of discussion within this thesis to protect the identity of the participants such as the history of schools participants served in. Data withheld for this reason does not detract from the themes drawn from the participants.

Chart A5: Degree Types by University and Participant



The colour breaks within each bar graph indicate how different university programmes vary within each degree. For instance, in the Masters of Educational Leadership there were five participants from three different university programmes that make up this degree concentration, two participants from one university, two more from another university and one from a third university. These variances in the university programmes followed will be discussed in detail in further sections.

The five universities that participants had graduated from with a masters-level degree as well as their colour labels are featured in Charts A6-A14. It is useful to consider the universities from which participants in the study gained their degrees.

This next section details participant data in relation to their education in preparation for the role of school principal and the extent to which they met the APQS guidelines. This data was gathered through the questionnaire that participants answered in advance of the Skype interview. Education degree levels are considered as they contributed to development in school teaching, becoming a school principal, as well as how valuable the degree is in terms of working as a principal and in meeting the APQS guidelines. A further comparison of these four areas is made in relation to undergraduate, master and doctoral degrees respectively. A diagram rating scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' to 5 representing 'strongly agree' is used in Charts A6-A14 (See Appendix C).

An undergraduate degree in education is the first step and basic recommendation of all schoolteachers and school principals in Alberta. An M.Ed. degree or equivalent is seen as a natural progression within the field of education and a pre-requisite for school board administrative positions such as school principal. A doctoral level of education is seen as the final level and is recommended as part of the application for higher-level administration positions, school board administration or school superintendent-level positions. From the group of study participants, two out of 13 had attained a principal position without the recommended masters-level degree.

Chart A6: Undergrad Degree Contributed to School Teacher

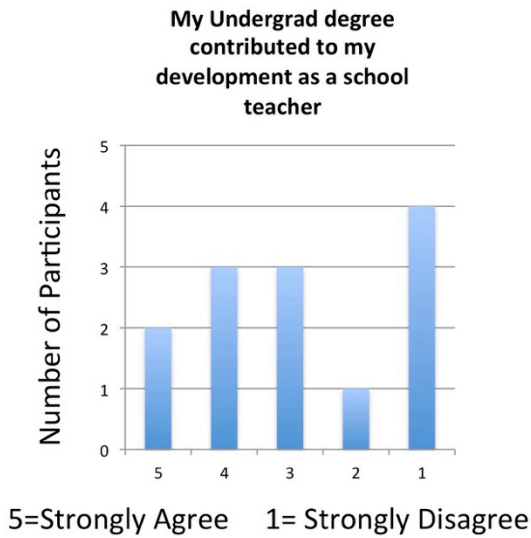
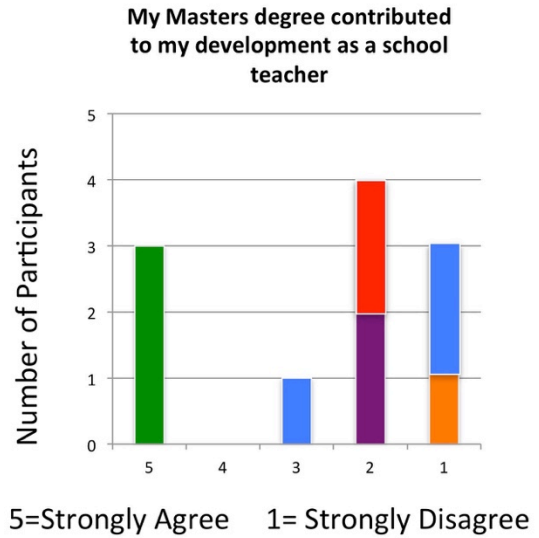


Chart A7: Master Degree Contributed to School Teacher

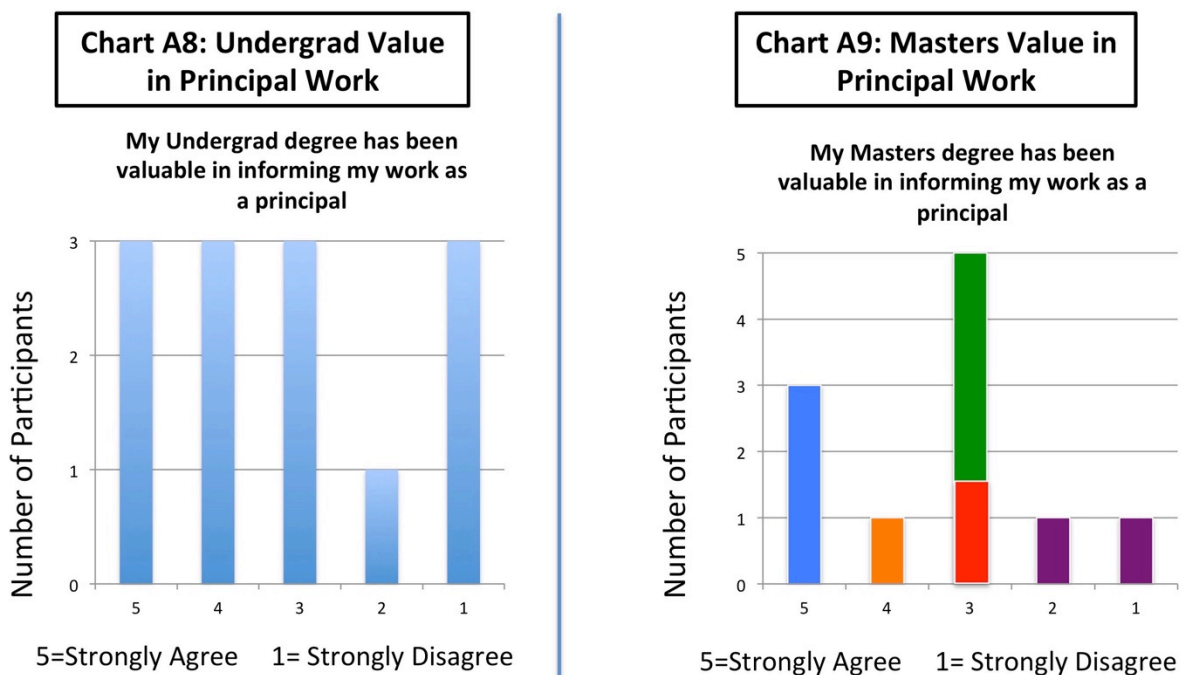


Color Representation	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
University	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
Masters	Sci/ E.Childhood/ Tech	Religious Ed	Ed.Leadership	Ed.Leadership / Tech	Ed.Leadership	None

Charts A6 and A7 explore the educational development of a schoolteacher and the contributions made by an undergraduate and a master’s degree respectively to this position. In terms of an undergraduate degree, the four participant responses indicated that they strongly disagree with this degree contributing to their development as a schoolteacher with even more participants in a master’s programme viewing the latter as not contributing to their development as a school teacher. Both charts show that an undergraduate degree generated varied responses in terms of developing school teachers, while master degree participants mostly disagreed that their programme contributed to their success in developing as a school teacher. Principals had mixed views about the contribution their undergraduate degree made to their development as a teacher. It is also

interesting to note that views were similarly mixed about the contribution a master’s degree made.

It is noteworthy that in Chart A7 that the University A (green) master degree saw all three of its participants respond ‘strongly agree’ in relation to it helping their development as a school teacher, thereby indicating that the programme is centred on teacher development.



Color Representation	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
University	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
Masters	Sci/ E.Childhood/ Tech	Religious Ed	Ed.Leadership	Ed.Leadership / Tech	Ed.Leadership	None

Participants were asked about the value of their undergraduate and master degrees made to their work as a school principal (Charts A8 & A9). They also identified that the work of the principal relates to the differences in roles and responsibilities within a position as well as the various knowledge domains required for these positions. No

definitive patterns can be seen in the data as the responses covered the full range of options in near equal numbers. However, in Chart A9, when participants comment on master degrees as valuable in informing their work as a principal, five participants responded ‘neither agree or disagree’ and three recorded ‘strongly agree’.

When looking at Chart A9, there is a sharp and definite choice by University D graduates strongly agreeing with this statement, suggesting that their programme was focused on a principal’s work. By comparison with Chart A7, University D graduates rated the same programme the lowest regarding teacher work success. A particular focus in educational leadership has been verified by our participants as exhibiting further effectiveness for individuals in principal roles rather than the teacher functions.

Chart A10: Undergrad Contributes to Development of school Principal

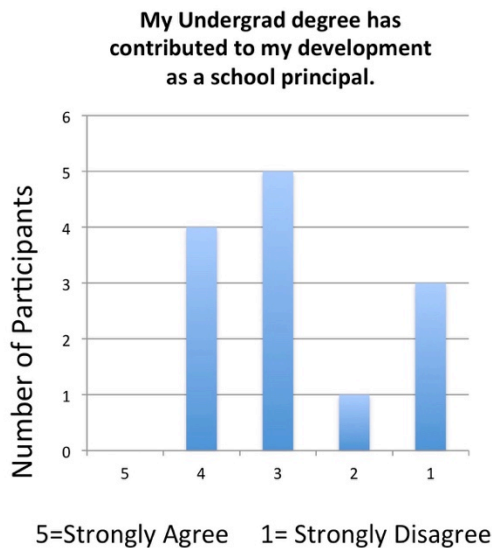
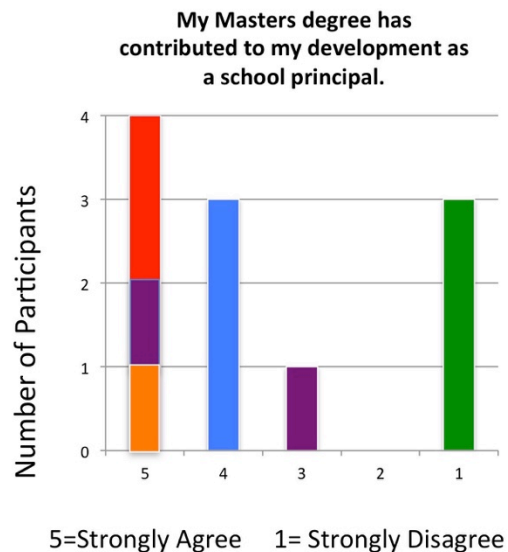


Chart A11: Masters Contributes to Development of school Principal



Color Representation	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
University	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
Masters	Sci/ E.Childhood/ Tech	Religious Ed	Ed.Leadership	Ed.Leadership / Tech	Ed.Leadership	None

In Charts A10 and A11, the question of school principal work and its development offers a comparison of the effectiveness of undergraduate degrees with masters degrees. Two trends emerge regarding the knowledge base and skill sets of principals. Participants responded that their developmental growth in practice as a school principal 'differs from informing my work' (which is knowledge-based) when they learn in a classroom environment on how to be a 'good textbook' principal. Undergraduate and discipline based masters degrees are seen as broadly contributing to development as a teacher, while leadership focused masters degrees are regarded as having contributed to development as an administrator. The assumption made by appointing bodies is that masters degrees provide a foundation on which to build leadership skills, however, it seems that not all masters degrees do this.

In Chart A11 it becomes clear all university groupings have similar responses, with the exception of University B (purple), where a split in neutral and 'strongly agree' responses was recorded. Also, the lowest rating of 'strongly disagree' from the cluster of University A (green) participants is the direct opposite of their group responses in Chart A7 when asked about teacher development, thereby associating their master's programme as worthwhile for teachers but not for principals.

Chart A12: Undergrad Prepares for Alberta Principal Quality Guidelines

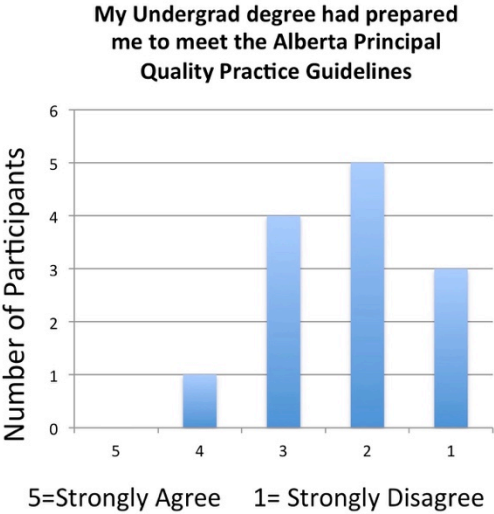
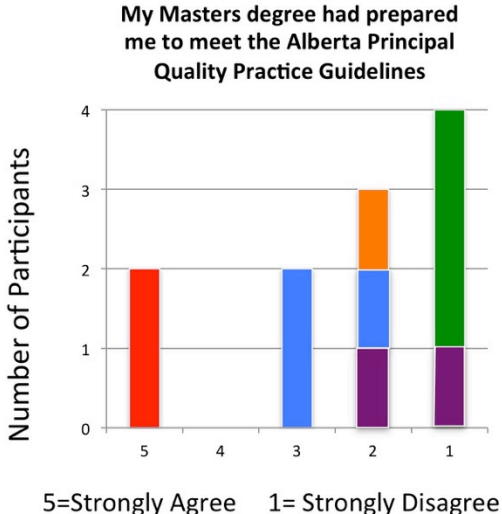


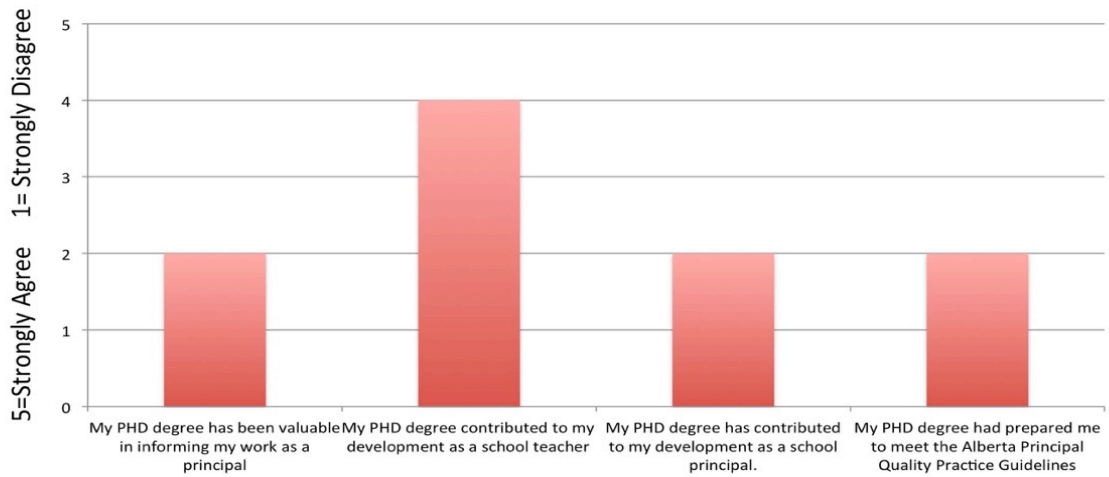
Chart A13: Masters Prepares for Alberta Principal Quality Guidelines



Color Representation	Green	Purple	Red	Blue	Orange	Grey
University	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
Masters	Sci/ E.Childhood/ Tech	Religious Ed	Ed.Leadership	Ed.Leadership / Tech	Ed.Leadership	None

In Charts A12 and A13 we review the two degrees in terms of preparing the participants to meet the APQS. In both undergraduate and master’s degree programmes we see a resounding lack of preparation in relation to meeting the guidelines. Only two respondents from Chart A13’s master degree strongly agreed that their programmes prepared them to meet the guidelines. It is further interesting to note that the two participants who strongly agreed had graduated from the same master degree programme, a degree from a university concentrating on educational leadership. A further review correlates those who attained university degrees which focused on leadership with selecting a stronger positive response in terms of their university preparing them to meet the APQS guidelines.

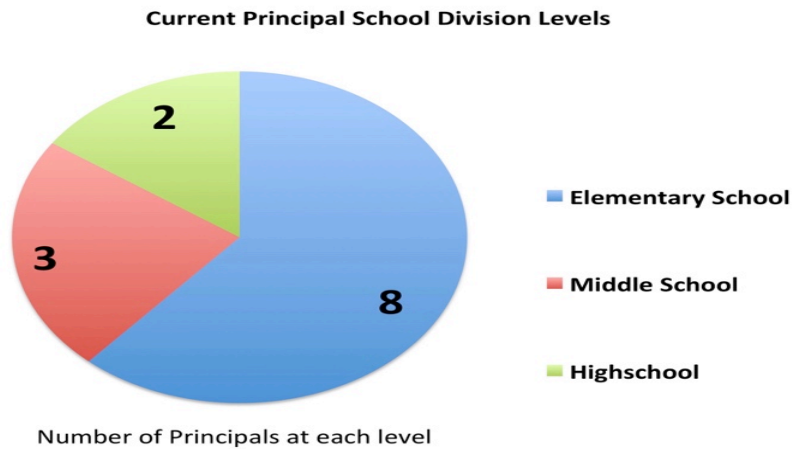
Chart A14: PhD Degree Contributions



Degree Contributions Factors

The doctoral level degree was achieved by one participant and as such Chart A14 illustrates their data for each of the four areas in terms of the doctoral degree. This individual seems to view all their degrees as providing a positive contribution to their development as a teacher and as a principal.

Chart A15: Current Principal School Division Levels



School demographics identified from the small cohort of participants shows a general distribution of school levels. The sizes of the student populations identified are typical of the range of schools found in Alberta.

Two of the eight elementary schools were identified by participants as having significant aboriginal populations, three recording diverse European immigrant-dominated populations. One identified a strong immigrant population from the Philippines and one a small immigrant African population. At the elementary school level, nearly all identified the socio-economic status of their students as being average or slightly below average. The middle and high school levels identified a largely homogeneous student population with no indications of socio-economic levels. All levels identified English Language Learner Programs and programmes of choice (i.e. specialised academies in sports, the arts, science or International Baccalaureate offerings) within their schools.

5.1.0 Principal Perceptions of Success

In the survey and the interview when the participants were asked to describe aspects of their success, all responded by describing the latter in terms of building relationships with students, staff and the community. The survey and the interview data overlap at times, and so I am reporting on the survey findings, but, where it is useful, elaborating with reference to the interviews. Three individuals indicated that a strong relationship with all community stakeholders was the foundation on which they build all other school goals. Meanwhile, four other respondents explained that they work on their relationships with the staff and community in advance of the official start to the school

year, by visiting a school parent advisory meeting, attending a school fundraiser and – as one principal mentioned – even sending a ‘looking forward to working with you next year’ fruit basket. Principals completing this survey mentioned that their indicators of success are based strongly on the feedback and recognition they received from their relationship groups, so much so that one participant stated that ‘parents, teachers and kids love me... this is how I know I’m successful’. Another principal described success as relationships that help build ‘a culture of acceptance within their school community to fail and be successful together, not as individuals’ and their success as a principal is measured when all succeed. The participants provided a variety of perspectives on the indicators of success. An overall agreement was that the relationships the principal builds will bring success. The elementary principals articulated a better description of their perceptions and practice of relationships within their role as school principals and that they worked daily on these relationships. As noted by one experienced elementary principal, ‘Having conversations with my parent groups lets me understand the issues ahead of any parent council meetings and aids me in preparing a successful response to their issues’.

Of all the participants, the middle and high school principals were the only respondents who identified student and parent surveys, provincial school rankings, and standardised examination results as additional success indicators. This cohort of principals clearly articulated the meaning of these scores, their importance and how the standardised examinations are shared with the public and the community stakeholders. One high school principal said that ‘the higher the student exam results are, the more I know my team is doing their jobs, and the parents are happy with their kids’ education’. This empirical data

is both tracked and flagged to the community via newsletters, advertising and their school websites to promote and recruit future students.

Three of the participants had received provincial 'principal of the year' awards and one principal received national recognition. The award on a provincial level is recognition from peers and is a long application process involving your supporters providing ample evidence of an individual going above and beyond their regular roles and responsibilities as a school principal. Provincially, approximately 20 such awards are given yearly. The national recognition for the 'principal of the year' award becomes very involved, including the support of a principal's district administration. At this level only a few are recognised nationally each year. Having four of our 13 participants receive such prestigious awards identifies these participants as understanding the larger meaning of success in their roles. As one principal mentioned 'I knew I really made it when I was at the nation's capital receiving this award... I knew then of my success, I didn't do it for the award, I wanted to change children's lives'. Yet another principal made a statement that 'I never received any rewards in my career because I never applied for them... my rewards were the smiles on the kids' faces when they graduated!'

5.1.1 Professional Development for School Principals

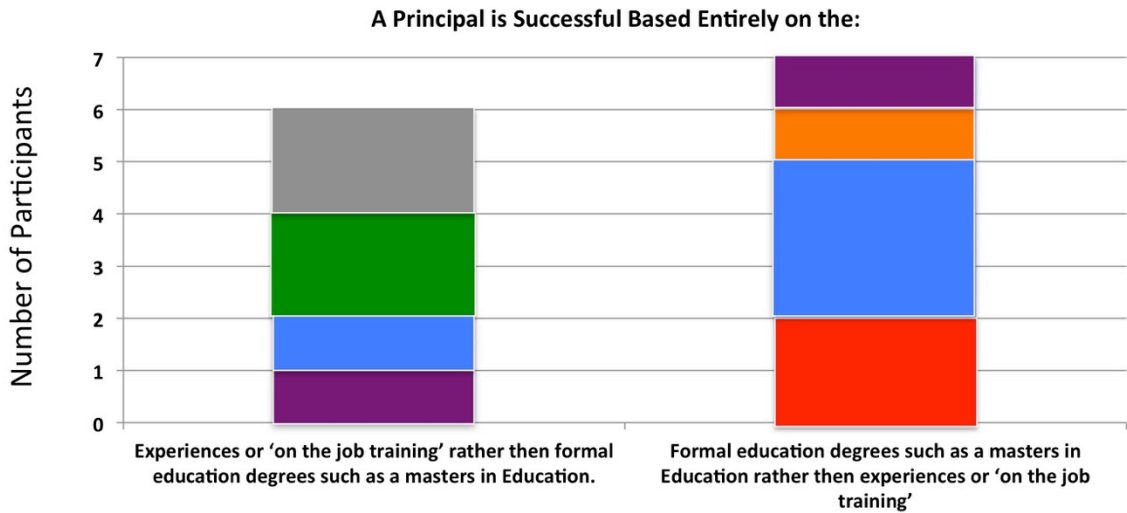
In relation to professional development as a school principal in terms of the APQS, a surprising nine of the 13 individuals identified as not receiving professional development for the APQS. Furthermore, they indicated generally that they have not had any knowledge or invitation to any such professional development in regards to these guidelines. Two of

these individuals also mentioned that they did not believe that participation in such development would have any impact on their success as a school principal. Three other principals responded with a generalised answer that they have 'seen the pendulum swing many times in our profession and simply changing the name or description still holds the same meaning'. There was, among some in both the interview and survey, a view that a successful principal may already know and practice these qualities without knowing their official terms.

Four of the 13 principals said they had participated in such development and all commented that these had positively impacted their practice. The availability of professional development ranged from school district initiatives, conferences with sessions on the APQS as well as the Alberta Teachers' Association Council on School Leadership providing ongoing professional development. It should be mentioned here that this same council played a very large role in establishing the APQS and as such provided support to its members in learning and developing as school principals. All four principals valued professional dialogue with other colleagues, particularly in relation to the qualities and discussions that help them develop their knowledge and understanding and which improved their abilities, with one principal saying 'these sessions boosted my self-efficacy'.

In the survey, all four individuals mentioned their personal desire to receive more professional development to support their growth as a principal and all four identified these experiences as highly impacting their practice.

Chart A16: Principal Success: Experience Vs. Formal Education



Color Representation						
University	University A	University B	University C	University D	University E	No Grad
Masters	Sci/ E.Childhood/ Tech	Religious Ed	Ed.Leadership	Ed.Leadership / Tech	Ed.Leadership	None

Principals were asked which statement in Chart A16 they agreed with most and why. Participants responded very clearly by selecting one of the options. Participants answering that ‘A principal is successful based entirely on the experiences or “on the job training” rather than formal education degrees such as a Master’s in Education degree’ came from a split of university master’s programmes for the most part. The two participants who did not have a master’s degree also answered within this section, citing similar responses, namely that they do not have a master’s degree and the most effective learning they had experienced was in the form of on-the-job training. Further excerpts for these respondents included:

Table A5.1: Participants' Key Demographics on Success

Name / Master's Degree in	Years as Principal	Quote
Michael /Educational Technology	5 to 7 years	'My dedication to my craft had allowed me to focus time on solving problems rather than reading books about how others did it 100 years ago';
Danielle /Religious Education	5 to 7 years	'I researched many of the programmes available and I had a hard time believing that there is something to better use my time in making my school great';
Darren /Religious Education	10 to 15 years	'Degree or not, we are all working to make kids' lives great and making school and education fun'.
Blaine /None	7 to 10 years	'I was able to save money not buying a degree to get the job and saving time not doing all that work for something I don't really believe would help me';
Barbara /None	5 to 7 years	'My formal education might be lacking, but the lessons I have learned from great principals will last me forever in guiding my decision making process';

Another cohort from the green university colour code responded in similar terms. The green cohort comes from a local bricks and mortar university offering many degrees and our participants had received three different master's degrees from them. It is important to note that the majority of teachers received their degrees from the 'local' university.

The following responses demonstrate this cohort’s perspective regarding ‘on-the-job training as a key to success’:

Table A5.2: Participants’ Key Demographics ‘on the job training’

Name / Master’s Degree in	Years as Principal	Quote
Zoryana /Early Childhood Education	5 to 7 years	‘My program was paid by a grant I had applied for, otherwise I never would have taken it. Glad I did as I needed MECE (Masters in Early Childhood Education) to become a principal’;
Shane /Educational Leadership	5 to 7 years	‘I needed a master’s degree in order to apply to administration and this was the fastest program’;
Maxim /Educational Technology	7 to 10 years	‘I had taken my degree many years ago and there was nothing to learn about leadership. Everything had to do with the university and nothing about the school I was working in. My thesis was entirely on teaching’;
Fred /Science	5 to 7 years	‘I received a Master of Science in Education degree, which I really enjoyed back when I was teaching, but it really has nothing to do with leadership’;
Sandra /Educational Leadership	10 to 15 years	‘I see new administration receiving online degrees without the commitment of having to take time off work and I think it’s not as rigorous as what I went through. I learned how to write reports and analyse data which is most of my job now, but I would have been able to do the same with a “dummies” book instead of a degree’.

The last two respondents did not respond in terms similar to their university cohort. Their responses reflected that the content of their degrees focused on teaching more than the role of the principal or school leadership. It was in certain areas of instruction that both respondents to some extent agreed that their degrees helped to increase their teacher instruction efficacy.

Five participants answered that a principal is successful based entirely on a formal education degree such as an M.Ed. rather than the experience of 'on the job training'. Only one other respondent had earned a Masters in Religious Education degree, and the participant also identified that they are in the employ of a publicly-funded Catholic school district. This individual mentioned that the master's programme from which they recently graduated was funded by a grant they had applied for while their district had also supported them with paid days off work to put towards their studies. They also mentioned that their school district advocates this degree as a great way for their leadership group to excel, and for this particular principal the degree ended up being a stepping-stone from teaching into administration. The focus of the programme as identified by this new graduate was based on:

- Catholic school-based leadership;
- Enhancing and evaluating religious instruction;
- Building relationships and evaluating staff;
- Effective presentation skills;
- Holding meetings in a shared leadership style.

Interestingly, with the removal of the religious wording, the points made by this principal would very much be in line with the roles and responsibilities of a school principal as identified by Marzano (2003).

The other six principals who had selected formal education degrees as the basis of their success all came from universities that focused on a master's programme in educational leadership. It is also worth pointing out that all three of these universities have their brick and mortar headquarters in the United States. Common threads of responses from these respondents included the following observations:

Table A5.3: Participants' Key Demographics on Formal Education Success

Name / Master's Degree in	Years as Principal	Quote
Shane /Educational Leadership	5 to 7 years	'My cohort was all principals, assistant principals or people who wanted to be in administration';
Darren /Religious Education	10 to 15 years	'We focused a lot on action research [and] I learned how to use my staff to gather data, organise it and make a new goal, then test again – circles of inquiry. I still use this method'.
Steve /Educational Leadership	7 to 10 years	'Dialogue with other colleagues has made the program very useful. I still email them (<i>cohort members</i>) when I need to bounce something off them';
Sheila /Educational Leadership	7 to 10 years	'From all the programmes available I needed to go with the program that allowed me to work fulltime and still have a meaningful research project without making my family suffer';
Samantha /Educational Leadership	7 to 10 years	'I wanted a fast, hands on/minds on masters of leadership that was relevant to the work I was already doing within my school';
Sandra /Educational Leadership	10 to 15 years	'I choose a master's programme that would directly make me a better principal';

The comments made by the above six principals make a direct link to the APQS in terms of the roles and responsibilities of school-based administrators.

Summarising the results, we understand that those principals who do not see a master's degree as bringing success in their jobs do so as they fail to detect the connection between the master's programme they experienced and principal leadership. The principals identifying master's programmes as bringing success made direct connections with their positions and the programmes they followed.

This line of inquiry and the participants' responses supports the notion that the more experienced principals support more education, regardless of their own current educational résumé. Another opinion is that the principals who selected a masters with a concentration on leadership comment on their master's programmes as being beneficial to their success.

5.1.2 Describing One's Leadership Style

Within the interview the area of 'Principals developed perspectives on leadership style' was a section that all participants enjoyed sharing with me. They relayed stories, experiences and even used current catch phrases regarding current educational trends.

Focusing on the first interview question 'How would you describe your own leadership style?', four themes emerge that align with the APQS:

- fostering effective relationships;
- democratic leadership;
- embodying visionary leadership;
- providing instructional leadership.

Although the themes emerging during the interview were clear and, for the most part, participants were able to describe their style and to use the language familiar in the literature, most mentioned more than one style and touched on all four themes. However, it was clear that all had a preferred style or at least described their style under a recognised heading. This reflects the literature that suggests that leadership style is not 'static', but that good leaders are flexible in their use of different styles when different situations call upon them. Research by Daniel Goleman (2000) in the Harvard Business School says that the best leaders use a blend of leadership themes in their singular job of getting results. He

provides detail into various themes which parallel our study but goes further in identifying that great leaders utilise most of the identified styles in any given week. It is the fluidity of the leader in switching among leadership styles to produce results and thus turning the art of 'leadership into a science'.

5.1.2.0 Fostering Effective Relationships

In relation to the theme 'fostering effective relationships', all participants spoke of this as being their core leadership style, however only four of the participants focused predominantly on this theme whilst 11 spent at least a quarter of their time on it.

Sheila focused most heavily on this one theme. She described her leadership style as 'inclusive of all opinions and people' as she invites 'all stake holders into conversation'. Sheila along with six others spoke about the daily relationship building required in order to be aware of the personal needs of the teachers and staff. Sheila, Steve and Samantha also identified that responding to these needs has a sense of urgency. These same three participants, all holding a Masters in Educational Leadership, identified examples of these relationships such as being informed about staff personal/professional issues, spouse or dependents' names, and celebrating/ acknowledging significant events in their lives.

5.1.2.1 Democratic Leadership

Within this theme or relationship style, the term 'democratic leader' was referenced by six of the participants. Their view of democratic leadership is consistent with Woods (2005) in terms of perceiving decision making as a collective responsibility linked to a

distribution of power within a flattened hierarchy. In the case of schools this involves teachers and support staff sharing in the leadership. Michael mentioned that 'through conversations and dialogue a consensus amongst our peers sets a direction in our combined leadership' and that 'only through our relationships and levels of trust can we be certain that each member is equal'. All participants shared examples where positive approaches, teamwork and communication were used in resolving conflicts and helped scaffold the goals.

It is clear that the 'fostering effective relationships' theme and democratic leadership are the most frequently cited and at times used interchangeably when describing a participant's leadership style and are indicated by the majority of participants as the most important skill set in order to develop as a school leader throughout the K-12 education system in Alberta.

5.1.2.2 Embodying Visionary Leadership

Most participants mentioned this as their core leadership style, however only two focused the majority of the discussion of their leadership style to this theme while six spent at least a quarter of their time on it. Participants with master's degrees based on educational leadership (Shane, Steve, Sheila, Samantha, Sandra) and religious education (Danielle), although not focusing exclusively on this theme, did spend a quarter of their time talking about visionary leadership.

Two participants for whom the majority of their attention was focused on 'visionary leadership' style were also holders of a provincial or national principal award. Using

Fullan's (2011) term 'change agents', they made statements such as 'I consciously challenge the status quo' and 'I'm a systems thinker always looking for increasing efficacy'. They were very familiar with, and practiced in the use of, this leadership discourse. More than any others these two were comfortable with changing mind sets as part of their visionary personas. Both talked about offering a variety of development opportunities to others, hosting visiting delegations to their schools and promoting their schools as places where new practices or advances in teaching were developed.

Meanwhile other participant responses to this theme shared a personal need to stay continually informed about current topics. Some read academic journals and periodicals/magazines to keep up-to-date with current research and theory, others mentioned seeking out information from the world of business leadership which is vastly more prominent within the media compared to school leadership books. Of all participants, five described using non-traditional educational methods and bringing in business cutting-edge ideas in running effective meetings, communicating with stakeholders and measuring school effectiveness. Two participants discussed their visionary leadership in terms of their creating a school vision, mission, and strategic goals to meet the expectations of the community and staff, thus creating a basis, as one participant said, 'from which to see where else we can go'. All participants argued that in order to have a vision, a culture of staff willingness and trust is required to be successful.

5.1.3 Providing Instructional Leadership

Within the theme of 'providing instructional leadership', all participants mentioned this as being part of their roles and responsibilities, however only one of the participants focused heavily on it, and three others clearly saw it as an important part of their style.

Sandra was the participant who spent more than half of her time responding to this question. She also identified herself as being a district consultant in the area of language arts just prior to entering school administration. She notes that 'good instructional leadership is after all what we (principals) should all be doing every day, rather than sitting in our offices'. She provided examples as she promotes school-wide change projects that raise the expectations of both teachers and staff. Sandra, along with Danielle, mentioned the importance of instructional time and that as school leaders 'we should maximize instructional and collaborative time for our students'. It is interesting that this theme is greatly emphasised in Alberta and by the APQS, and not reported by the participants in this group as their primary leading style.

The theme 'providing instructional leadership' is evident in the examples they cite as they model teaching lessons or coach others in a particular method. Sheila and Darren commented on the importance of setting high expectations and standards for all students. Darren continued, stating that 'students need to have time to experience their learning in a meaningful way' and that 'teachers need time to make learning real for these kids'. Their leadership style in this theme is more identified with their practice of what they do as a measure of providing instructional leadership, which is seen by them as the foundation of all their other roles.

Lastly, the comments made by Blaine and Barbara, neither having received a master’s degree to support their application for principalship, were very similar to each other. The comments were, by comparison to the other 11 participants, at a very elementary level. All the other participants were very clear in identifying areas of leadership style utilising the recognised professional language. The language used by both Blaine and Barbara was peppered with acronyms, yet they failed to mention what these stood for. As a researcher insider, Blaine made the comment ‘well, we both know what that stands for’ hoping I would assist in the definition of a CCPLC (Christ-Centered Professional Learning Community). This exchange placed me in a very difficult situation as I maintained a distance from my colleague and remained a researcher.

Figure A1: Leadership Style Participant Summary



The description of leadership styles also generated many side discussions about the qualities these principals see within their own practice. I thought it beneficial to

summarise these narratives. Using NVivo software, I had engaged the word frequency query within this question node and limited the list to the most frequently used 85 words. The word limit was selected after removing common English words and identifying the most frequently used words before repetition in meaning occurred. Then I created a word cloud to create a visual diagram of this question.

All participants were able to articulate their leadership style, and, all seem to have a preferred or dominant leading style. Most discussed more than one style reflecting research findings that suggest that the best leaders are those who can switch style in response to need (Goleman, 2000). However, it also seems to be the case that those who have completed masters degrees and who continue to read the literature in the field focus more heavily on their role as visionary leaders which can be seen as encompassing and enhancing other styles of leadership. On the other hand, those who do not have a masters degree were struggling to use the discourse of leadership and also focused heavily on instructional leadership and relationship building in their responses.

5.1.4 Describing the Main Influences in their Leadership

This next question asked of the participants was: 'What have been the main influences on your approach to leadership?' Utilising the same coding strategies, two themes emerge that align with the APQS: fostering effective relationships; and embodying visionary leadership.

When identifying influences on a principal's approach to leadership, there was one clear response that all participants echoed. Each participant identified positive

relationships with a former principal. Two mentioned that they had a positive relationship with their school principals as children and, as Darren states, 'I always thought I would make a good principal when I was growing up'.

I also coded these responses as the participants identified many examples that exemplified their principal relationships:

- Treating me fairly (3 responses);
- Having mutual respect (5 responses);
- Acted in the best interest of the staff and students (8 responses);
- Modelled openness and inclusivity (12 responses);
- Dealt with conflicts in a respectable manner (8 responses);
- Conveyed a professional code of conduct (13 responses);
- Made me feel important (13 responses);
- Made me feel part of the school team (11 responses).

The participants' responses support the view that positive and supportive principals promote the position of principal and, within this study, all had been influenced by a positive principal in the past. Six of the principals identified that they also see similar positive experiences with current colleagues and eight identified they see their relationships as being the main influence on their approach to leadership, which was a main theme in the previous section. Those participants who had a positive mentor relationship continue to foster good relationships and support others in their leadership development.

The second theme response for this question was regarding the quest for visionary leadership. The principals in this study all responded that in addition to a main influence on their leadership they were in the habit of seeking out new ideas and new ways to enhance their role, for example, looking for the next major pedagogical development. The

responses in this theme varied in terms of the participants identifying what influenced them most, but included:

- New practices from leadership journals (5 responses);
- Professional development opportunities (8 responses);
- New managerial efficiencies (2 responses);
- New ideas learned at conferences (8 responses);
- Colleagues' ideas (13 responses);
- District initiatives (11 responses);
- Staff perceptions (5 responses);
- Parents' influence (4 responses).

Coding themes also drew out the notion that the principal participants experienced visionary leadership in those who had influenced their development. Eight of the 13 participants mentioned their mentors as exhibiting visionary leadership and who had encouraged them to apply for school administration. Five of the participants identify their continued relationship with their mentors as a very strong influence. Samantha shares that she consults her mentor on a regular basis regarding professional matters.

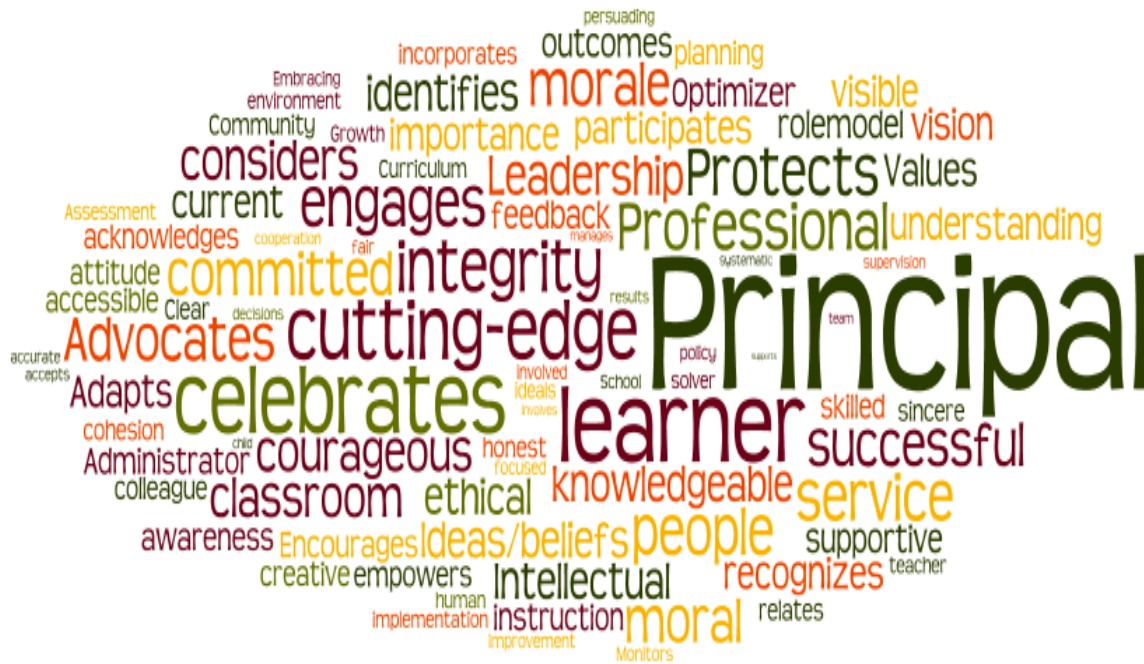
The notion of a 'support system' emerged within this question. The responses mentioned above were made about relationships with their colleagues or the support structures they have in place. The 'influencing' responses informed the human or collegial interactions. Participants made a connection between the relationship and visionary leadership dimensions, at the very least in principals' visionary leadership praxis. Relationships were identified in the literature review and through participants' interviews as foundational for the school administrator from which all other dimensions have the potential for success. As identified by the participants, greater success includes a

'support system' based on relationships with professional colleagues where each empathises with the experience of the other.

The main influence on the leadership practices of all the participants in this study has been school principals who supported and inspired them, and indeed, in some cases continue to provide support and guidance. Most members of this group also tended to seek out ways in which they can develop as leaders through exploring new ideas from a range of sources, including the academic and professional literature, projects encouraged by the school district and the successes or good ideas of others. Further respondents saw value in and draw ideas from their support network and collegial interactions, something some described as helping them towards visionary leadership.

5.1.5 The Key Leadership Characteristics Identified by Potential Principal Candidates

Figure A2: Key Principal Leadership Characteristics



Interviewees were asked the question, ‘If you were interviewing a candidate for principal, what would you say should be the key leadership characteristics that you would look for?’ All the participants gave quite short responses, utilising keywords and the relevant professional language. The coding for this node involved a two-step process. Firstly, as with other nodes that utilised NVivo’s word frequency query, the 85 most frequently used words (the most common removed) produced a word cloud as displayed in Figure A2. The second phase involved categorising these 85 frequent words in relation to the APQS dimensions.

Table A6: Principal Key Characteristics Compared to Alberta Principal Quality Standards

Dimension of APQS	Key Words Used In Interview Context To Describe Dimension	Percentage of Total Key Words Used in Context	Quotes from Participants
<i>Fostering Effective Relationships</i>	Relationship-Leader; Can Do Attitude, Culture, Balance, Members, Listened, Group, Deal, Leaders, Morale, Key Collaboration, Together, Situations, Project, Positive, Praise, Bonding	18.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A principal builds a culture of success</i> • <i>I've learned to listen more and speak less</i> • <i>Being positive each day rubs off on others</i> • <i>I praise others for their support and accomplishments</i>
<i>Embodying Visionary Leadership</i>	Successful, Dreamer, Visionary, Leadership, Wish, Makers, Pace, Focuses, Great, Organization, Objectives, First, Improvements, Decision, Worth, Compelled	17.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I need to focus the school on tangibles</i> • <i>Dreamers change the world</i> • <i>Success is the end product of my vision</i> • <i>School improvements bring success</i>
<i>Leading a Learning Community</i>	Pacesetting, Democratic-Leader, Effective, Leader, Mindful, Goals, Mindset, Teams, Democratic, Decisions, Necessary, Team	16.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Raisings staff efficacy is a continual benchmark</i> • <i>Mindsets need changing before furniture does</i> • <i>We are all in this together</i> • <i>Constantly moving targets and goals as identified by our learning teams</i> • <i>Plan the work, then work the plan</i>
<i>Providing</i>	Coaching, Teamwork,	15.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plan with the end in mind</i>

<i>Instructional Leadership</i>	Instructional-Leadership, Coaching, Model, Closely, Goal, Method, Self-Motivated, Standards, Achieving, Example		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working together means working smarter</i> • <i>Knee to knee, elbow to elbow, leadership and mentorship</i>
<i>Developing and Facilitating Leadership</i>	Leadership Style, Skills, Knowledge, Expected, Mentoring, Personal, Them, Develop, Style, Skilled	11.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have staff that lead without a title in my school, it's expected</i> • <i>I'm not a micro-manager, let's see what they come up with</i> • <i>I'm there for them when they need me – like Nanny McPhee</i>
<i>Managing School Operations and Resources</i>	Decision-Making, Conflict Manager, Counts, Building, Development, Adjust, Employees, Performing, Environment, Workplace	11.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>You need to be able to know your facility to make quick decisions</i> • <i>Knowing everything there is just enough to be able to question and direct others</i>
<i>Understanding and Responding to the Wider Social Context</i>	Communication, Developing, Feels The Community, Good Influence, Feedback, Leader, Performance, Activities, Accountable	10.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Looking outside of the box of the school</i> • <i>People depend on us to raise their children and for us to communicate what they are doing here for 8 hours</i> • <i>Most of my future students come from my past successes being shared in our local newspaper</i>

In the first phase as illustrated in Figure A2, words become a powerful visual representing the given participant's perception of key leadership characteristics. These words occurred 3,069 times in the interview question responses.

The researcher examined where the responses correlated with the APQS dimensions and carefully coded these in order to accurately discern the intended dimension. During the interview, the idea of having the participant directly answer within the dimensional constructs was determined to be too direct and would fail to garner a natural response as well as exposing the dimensions' weighting. This ranking is represented in the third column of Table A6 with keywords attributed in the second column. There is a natural division of these results into two halves. Each half comprises of four dimensions in the top half and three in the bottom, where the top four dimensions used in the response to this question made up a combined eight of the total responses. The participants' organic selection of the important dimensions was extended to the interview or a principal candidate's application process. This would in turn justify the weighting of certain dimensions as more significant when interviewing a candidate for the principal role. For instance, the fostering of effective relationships and embodying visionary leadership categories should be considered as basic skill areas for a potential principal candidate.

Another theme extracted from the interview question was that six of the 13 participants mentioned experience as an important factor. Zoryana said, 'I was lucky enough to work in a rich school and in an inner-city school. Both places were excellent training grounds for me'. A common response was also identified by Michael, Shane,

Darren, Steve, and Sheila, namely that having a varied experience of administrative placements is a strong contributing factor to principal success. This aligns with Diagram 16's responses where six of the 13 participants indicated that on-the-job training is important.

It is interesting that all but one of the participants argued that having a master's degree is important for candidates for the post of principal. Some (3) simply said that a masters' degree is essential (and something best done before taking up a post), while others argue that this is because it demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning, or that a master's is good preparation for the job: 'When I sit on the principal interview board, I can really tell the difference between those with a completed masters and those who don't' (Maxim). Higher education was the parallel argument indicated by 12 of the 13 participants as a key characteristic to look for in hiring a principal. Nearly all the participants indicated this need. Barbara, who does not have a master's degree, included the following observation:

'I wish I had done my masters before. I don't know if I have time now to do it. This job really keeps you busy. But I think new principals need to have a masters before starting'.

These responses indicate that even those who do not have a masters themselves agreed that it is important for new principals, while other factors were more important in their own preparation for principalship (see Diagram 16 above).

The participants also identified a very interesting dimension to the principal interview process which was not examined further due to the limitations of this study, but worth mentioning due to the principal candidate qualifications of a different kind, namely

collegial relationships. Shane, Darren and Sandra had identified that within the interview process for a potential principal candidate, the success of which was heavily weighted on the interview panels' judgement of their interview performance. Shane had disclosed one of the panels he sat on had a candidate who 'totally bombed the interview' and 'we passed them because they are very nice and must have been nervous', but 'we didn't do that for everyone, just the few people we knew personally'. This example, if common on principal interview boards with no oversight, leads me to understand that at the very least in Darren's school board you need to know people in senior admin in order to move up to principal. Shane and Sandra had identified that their scoring of principal applicants had question rubrics for scoring, but they had tended to score an applicant higher if they had 'worked with them on different committees' or had 'respected their work'. Barbara had identified that she had gotten her principal position due to the connections she had with senior district administration and the assistant superintendents.

5.1.6 Understanding of the Alberta Principal Quality Standards

In Question Four, participants were asked: 'Using the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines as starting points (a large printout was made available for the participant to reference), can you provide examples where you can directly link your success to the domains of the Alberta Principal Quality Practice guidelines?' All of the participants responded by providing examples of the dimensions.

Three of the thirteen participants revealed that they use the dimensions to help plan their day. Sandra's dimension lists are placed near her office telephone where she can quickly reference them. Sandra, Samantha and Sheila, who all graduated from the same

master’s degree-awarding university, keep the list as an aide to break up the ‘monotonous office work cycle’ (Samantha) from which they select a dimension and take a few minutes to work on it. An example given by Sheila is building relationships, where she would take five minutes out of her paperwork time to walk down to a teacher’s room or a custodian’s office and observe, compliment them, then return to her paperwork. In doing so Sheila says ‘I’m building my relationships with others by proximity and recognition’.

Confidence in using or working with the APQS as a form of self-assessment was a sub-question asked of all participants. Each participant was asked to reply on a scale of 1 to 3, with 3 indicating the highest confidence for each dimension.

Table A7: Principal Quality Standards Compared to Responses Given

Dimension of Principal Quality Standard	Confidence Levels			Number of Success Examples Given
	1 Least	2 Neutral	3 Highest	
<i>Fostering Effective Relationships</i>	0	3	10	57
<i>Embodying Visionary Leadership</i>	4	3	6	15
<i>Leading a Learning Community</i>	3	4	6	34
<i>Providing Instructional Leadership</i>	2	4	7	44
<i>Developing and Facilitating Leadership</i>	6	4	3	19
<i>Managing School Operations and Resources</i>	6	3	4	22
<i>Understanding and Responding to the Larger Social Context</i>	8	4	1	13
Total:				204
Top 3 Dimensions for success examples				66.2%
Bottom 4 Dimensions for success examples				33.8%

In terms of 'fostering effective relationships' – one of the dimensions favoured by the principals – this also scored the highest in terms of principals' confidence in themselves and their capacity to fulfil this element. Most of the principals felt very confident in their ability to create and develop relationships. Many of the principals saw this as the foundation for all other dimensions:

'Making connections is easy, and I can't do any of the other dimensions without having a good relationship based on trust' (Fred)

Within this study, 'fostering effective relationships' continues to be the most commented on and frequently-cited example, and – as shown here – has the highest confidence and use rating in relation to bringing success to a school-based principal. In total, 57 examples were given by the group, including identifying more projects and initiatives, and weighing how to foster effective relationships for this dimension compared to any other.

Regarding 'embodying visionary leadership' and 'leading a learning community', the participants had mixed views. Six principals felt very confident in both dimensions with nearly identical confidence levels as mentioned for the other categories. Both of these dimensions scored lower than the previous dimension:

'I wish there was a template for what visionary leadership looks like, so I could do it' (Shane)

'What are the measures for leading a learning community... we are a school, is learning not what we do every day?' (Zoryana)

Visionary leadership responses garnered only 15 examples, the second lowest number of examples from all the dimensions. The question can be asked, given the high confidence

levels expressed by participants, are they misleading themselves if they cannot provide many examples of what visionary leadership means to them? Four participants indicated they would increase their use of this dimension with added experience and possibly given extra professional development. The participants clearly struggled with the concept of visionary leadership, with fewer than half expressing confidence in their own capabilities, and altogether fewer examples of success in this dimension being cited. Ball (2012, 2015) states that educational policies focused on outputs and which add so heavily to principal workload create 'biddable' leaders – something which I would argue runs counter to enabling visionary leadership in education.

Participants were most confident about leading learning communities and were able to offer a large number of examples, talking about specific projects with which they were or had been engaged. Almost all mentioned a literacy project, reflecting the importance given to the development of literacy in Albertan schools. Leading a learning community had scored the third highest in terms of examples given (34 in total). This response is contrary to the preferred leadership style which the participants had identified earlier. A possible explanation of this could be that a common school goal across Alberta, and one that identifies with political electorates is to increase results in literacy and numeracy. While other projects may have had similar subject components, literacy was clearly the most commonly cited example for this dimension:

Literacy is the most tested and most identified area parents worry... can my child read?... and so it's natural for our school to focus most of our teacher development time towards literacy learning communities (Zoryana).

Participants (with the exception of two) were confident in 'providing instructional leadership', with much of their efforts focused on this role. This is perhaps not surprising: as instructional leadership is a large part of the assistant principal's obligations and an extension of their teaching role, it is arguable that this is an area where principals should feel confidence. With the second highest number of examples cited (44 in total), this once again demonstrates that this is an area where principals are giving the majority of their efforts and leadership direction. The examples were similar to the previous dimension, however detailed examples also included domains of teacher supervision, mentorship and evaluation.

Developing and facilitating leadership is an area which most principals cited earlier as the reason they had taken up principal roles. In Table A7 we see a clear drop in examples within the 'developing and facilitating leadership' dimension receiving 19 examples cited while confidence levels were also lower:

'There is so much to do in this job that I am not able to help others as much as I would like in taking on more leadership roles at the school'. (Barbara)

Blaine, Fred, Darren, and Danielle also shared a similar sentiment, indicating a lack of time to properly prepare staff for leadership roles. Each of the three highest confidence-level principals spoke about their 'protégées' and how they were supporting them in their application processes for the role of principal. Meanwhile the four neutral responses mentioned examples where they had purposefully prepared situations to allow staff to take leadership roles in the past. Zoryana and Maxim both described their leadership style as more distributed, therefore teachers and staff who wish to take on roles that interest them would be supported by the administrative team. Blaine also stated 'that leadership has so

much to do with relationships and trust, and this year I just don't have anyone I can really trust with my school'. This example, once again ties in the importance of 'effective relationships' as a foundation for other dimensions, thus increasing confidence in a school principal's ability to consistently lead well.

Managing school operations and resources provides fewer examples and participants indicated lower levels of confidence in their own abilities and again we see considerably fewer examples cited and confidence mentioned in relation to this dimension. Some examples indicated that 'in previous roles, there was no need to learn about facility infrastructure' (Barbara). Blaine said that he 'takes care of the learning and teaching, while others can handle [potential situations] if there is heat in the school'. Michael mentioned that 'in my many years of experience, I have learned many things that are needed to be successful in this dimension'. Sheila stated 'If only there was a manual on school operations for our province, I'm sure that every school must go through the same situations as I do'. It was a clear distinction that, even though all participants cited one example for this dimension, only the experienced principals with seven or more years in the role mentioned more than one example. As discussed in the literature review, it is interesting to note that when researching the historical components of the role of a principal in Alberta, the majority of the responsibilities revolved around this dimension, including managing school operations and concentrating less on teaching. From my personal experience, there then exists a great tension between providing proper instructional leadership and all the other aspects of running a school. If schools are not only to survive but thrive, then all aspects including instruction and operations need to be done well.

In understanding and responding to the 'larger societal context' dimension, we see our lowest confidence among the principals with only one principal feeling confident that they are responding to the wider social context. Each person cited an example, but I believe that the participants' understanding of this dimension may not have allowed them to provide more. In earlier parts of the interview and the pre-interview survey, many of these same principals shared how they had large numbers of 'English as a second language' students and families, how the demographics of some of their schools were dominated by low-income families, yet none of these examples were mentioned in terms of this dimension. Many of the principals could have shared that due to the low income student intake, they had created a programme to support these families, or provided English language classes for the parents, to name a few potential responses not cited by the cohort. It is clear from the data that this is by far the least understood dimension compared to the previous data and given the confidence levels and examples cited. The focus on empowering the wider community and looking to enhance social justice is not perhaps how these principals understand their role (Apple, 2013). Some might very well perceive literacy and mathematics in less advantaged schools is about academic performance rather than empowerment.

These participants are experienced and successful principals who can articulate their leadership style and feel confident in their role. When presented with the list of characteristics in the APQS it becomes clear that there are parts of the job where they lack confidence. These tend to be those that are less directly connected with teaching and learning. Thus managing finances and overseeing school building maintenance and

operations are challenges for them. Effectively this is the result of effective teacher and instruction training and a lack of business management training which would include non-educational skillsets. This is perhaps reinforced when participants were asked to give examples of their greatest successes. Over two-thirds of the numerous examples given were encompassed in the following three dimensions:

- fostering effective relationships;
- leading a learning community; and
- providing instructional leadership.

These three have continually been both confidence indicators for principals' feelings of success as well as indicating that the participants are actually working within these dimensions as the latter cite examples and knowledge. Overall, 135 (66.2%) of the total success examples provided covered these three areas, compared with 69 for the other four dimensions (38%). Once again, this is a resounding preference in practice and understanding for the top three dimensions as compared to the whole.

5.1.7 Perceptions on Design and Content of Master's Degrees for Effective School Leadership.

The next four questions from the interview revolve around the masters programmes accepted as entry qualifications for the position of school principal in Alberta. Eleven of the thirteen principals have completed a master's level degree, but all 13 responses are included. Question Five asks: 'Do you believe that current M.Ed. degree programmes are designed to bring leadership successes for principals? Can you provide some examples?'

Table A8: Participant Key Demographics Compared to Master’s Degree-Bringing Success

Name	Gender	Masters’ Degree	Believes Master’s Degrees are Designed to Bring Leadership Success to the Principal
Michael	Male	Educational Technology	Yes
Danielle	Female	Religious Education	No
Zoryana	Female	Early Childhood Education	No
Shane	Male	Educational Leadership	Yes
Maxim	Male	Educational Technology	Yes
Darren	Male	Religious Education	No
Fred	Male	Science	No
Steve	Male	Educational Leadership	Yes
Blaine	Male	NONE	No
Barbara	Female	NONE	No
Sheila	Female	Educational Leadership	Yes
Samantha	Female	Educational Leadership	Yes
Sandra	Female	Educational Leadership	Yes

In Table A8 we see a correlation between the positive responses to ‘master’s degrees are designed to bring leadership success to the principal,’ with seven principals agreeing with this statement. When comparing master’s degrees, these individuals hold two degree types from three universities, namely a Masters in Educational Technology and Educational Leadership respectively.

In terms of principals who agreed with this question, we see responses cited in the following five domains: choice of study, course and workload alignment, ability to utilise/develop concepts meaningfully, and leadership and relationship development respectively.

5.1.7.0 Master's Degree Course Content

The principals' responses to the need for choice of study and concentration are very evident in the responses, with 10 of the 13 indicating either their programmes allowed for choice or they wished they did. The need for choice was identified through examples of interest in particular leadership areas. They were all looking for a course that focused on leadership and not on teaching specific subjects. The two educational technology degree holders also focused their responses on the notion that their degrees taught them how to bring change to a school through increased use of technology. The concepts within these 'yes to success' responses used more of a human resources language than a teachable subject understanding. One of the areas that brings success to a master's programme is the ability for the principal to choose the areas within the domain of leadership they wish to study and develop.

The leadership dimension where seven principals responded positively to the success of their programmes was directly credited to the fact that every course of the module had leadership development elements. Principals identified leadership development as the main area of their master's degrees that brought them success. Two principals identified that they did not know they were learning leadership skills and how to change staff mind sets, as they were already unselfconsciously performing leadership roles in the workplace. One principal said, 'I was learning how to implement a new mind set with my staff and realised the same steps I was learning about, were being used on me in the course. This made the learning very real'. Some of the examples cited here also identified that the principals' learning for success was derived from how to identify

challenges and find solutions, thereby actively leading to a vision and not only responding to problems on a daily basis. One principal shared that their ability to 'bounce ideas' or share thoughts on assignments with each other had a greater impact on their leadership practice than books they read.

5.1.7.1 Master's Degree Workload

The second area of successfully designed master's programmes identified was the need for the university course requirements to match a principal's workload. Two individuals noted that their workload exceeded the time they had available as full time employees and what they considered to be the obligations of a full time university student, hence their master's degree did not offer leadership success. In total, three principals indicated their experiences of summer course work and classes as favourable by comparison to the busy periods of the school semesters. Overall, two responses also mentioned that their course workload was designed in line with their holiday breaks and as such they had spring or Christmas breaks to write longer assignments, with final exams taken following long weekends.

The ideal workload of a master's course was not identified within the responses, but several principals mentioned the question of workload rigour. The amount of work for a given course was always related to the amount of time a principal had available to commit to the course. From the responses, nine participants identified that their programmes were rigorous enough, which made it meaningful to complete their degrees. A total of five principals identified that choice of university had a lot to do with the reputation of the particular university's rigour. One participant even mentioned, 'I didn't want to just buy a

masters, I wanted to earn it,' while another mentioned the names of two other universities which have low expectations and that every student passes as long as they pay their course fees, a common choice for those who wish to receive a master's degree quickly. In the interviews, some participants identified the different qualities of masters programmes and the reputation the individuals receive in attaining degrees from these pay-for-degree institutions. One example of this was when a principal stated, 'I wanted a leadership degree that would help me be successful, not just a piece of paper telling me I qualify for the job, so I avoided the easy and expensive degrees'. Rigour is an expressed quality of need by the participants in relation to a principal's leadership success.

5.1.7.2 Practical Application of the Earned Degree

Another dimension identified by the principals was the ability to utilise or develop concepts meaningfully. These responses derived directly from their desire for meaningful use of their time. Most expressed their enjoyment of a course when they were able to deploy a new concept at work the next day. Theoretical concepts were identified as required by principals, but the participants commented on the importance of exploring them in practice in order to enhance their understanding. Other responses indicated the ability to discuss current challenges affecting principals within the course, seeking opinions of colleagues, and that utilising a concept they were studying had increased their interest in the curriculum they were learning. The majority of principals flagged their enjoyment of conflict resolution and general leadership exercises as very successful additions to their principal toolkit.

5.1.7.3 Learning to be a Professional Colleague

The last domain of learning in relation to building relationships was seen as a key to the success of their master's programme. Many principals identified that leadership is a new form of loneliness for a principal, and discussed how they learned to build relationships with staff, communities and colleagues. The first relationship building that was identified was with staff members as well as professional conduct practices, which principals learned from case studies. One principal stated, 'There is no guide for new principals how to be a friend, colleague and a manager to the staff'. Other principals identified their success in developing community communication plans for some module projects, thereby citing potential supports for the principal. Lastly, many principals shared that when they were in lower levels of leadership, they always had the principal to ask questions of and now, as the principal of the school, they needed to develop a web of support on which they could draw. This was identified by three principals as a natural relationship building between colleagues because many within their cohorts also worked in the same district as them, allowing them to build critical friendship relationships they utilise to this day.

5.1.7.4 Characteristics of a Proper Master's Degree for Principals

Principals were asked 'What characteristics are missing from master's degree programmes that would greatly prepare and benefit principals today?' The responses for this question came directly from an identified lack of school business and leadership concepts within the master's programmes. Principals argued that their knowledge level of

'school business' became evident in the position of principal rather than in lower positions; however, many also note that there are very few learning opportunities to acquire this knowledge beforehand. Elements as identified by the principals that would benefit principals studying for a master's degree included:

- **Instructional Leadership**
 - Literacy development
 - Student assessment
 - Student progress reporting
 - Instructional supervision
 - Improving student success
- **Human Resources Leadership**
 - Needs assessment
 - Staff planning
 - Staff orientation
 - Staff evaluation
 - Staff recognition
 - Professional development
 - Working with employee unions
- **Building school culture and a positive climate for teaching and learning**
- **Organisational Management**
 - How to be a better prepared principal
 - Organising those (individuals or committees) who support the goals of the school, how to manage them and lead them.
- **Effective Communication**
 - How to develop routines for effectiveness
 - How to create effective information flow
- **Community Relationships**
 - Working with community leagues
 - Working with parent councils and school advisory councils
 - Collaborating with other principals and administration
- **Principal Professionalism**
 - How to maintain confidentiality, when to report
 - How to display respect
 - Ethical decision making

- **Operational Management**
 - Budgets/finance
 - Resources management
 - Physical materials
 - Educational learning materials
 - Technology plan and evaluation
 - School security and procedures
 - Threat management
 - Timetable and school-wide scheduling
 - How to run and manage committees
 - Staff meetings
 - School goals, vision and mission

The above list was compiled and coded for similarities based on the answers and categorised in the above organisational groupings. While there were specific mentions of school district-naming protocols, general headings and subheadings were identified. A clear majority of participants indicated their master's programmes could have been more effective in delivering these concepts, thus better preparing them as future principal leaders.

5.1.7.5 Incorporation of the Alberta Principal Quality Standards into the Profession

The question was posed "How do you see the APQS guidelines as being incorporated into the preparation (through master's level training), hiring and evaluating of Alberta principals?" The majority of respondents stated they would not like to see a master's programme which used the APQS guidelines as a framework or blueprint for a master's programme. Participants suggested that the APQS guidelines be worked in each class or course as common threads. As the guidelines may be used in discussions when approaching any area of a principal's leadership day, most participants indicated a re-

visiting of these guidelines in each course would be beneficial. One participant indicated that the programme they experienced had many of these guidelines already in use, implicitly, they simply used different names for the dimensions. The participants clearly see the need for their development to be supported by critical engagement with the literature, with each other, through discussion, and with their own context through applying and exploring their learning through practice. Thus they are wanting to develop those generic critical thinking skills in the context of their master's degree. A master's degree is widely accepted as providing a foundation in higher level skills, but a specific and targeted master's program in educational leadership with real exemplars will benefit the participants more than a teacher/ subject focused program. In essence, this professional group of leaders is asking for a proper master's education, not simply training.

In the principal cohort, three participants indicated that in their master's degree programs they had developed action research projects focused on making improvements within their schools. The APQS standards were identified as similar dimensions that were required components of the projects. Class discussions during the development of these projects involved cohorts discussing the growth potential for each of these dimensions similar to the APQS guidelines. Our three principal respondents made associations between the APQS guidelines and the dimensions asked for by their professor.

5.1.7.6 Nine Mandatory Prerequisites of a Master’s Degree for Principals

The following question was asked next: “If you were to design a Masters of Education program that would be a mandatory prerequisite for all Principals in Alberta, what would be your top five ingredients and why?”. The following answers were identified in order of frequency (1 being ‘most frequent’) and divided into nine categories:

Table A9: Mapping Of Recommendations With Participants Identified Elements And Quotes

Recommendation	# of Participants identifying reference	Elements identified by participants in section 5.1.7.4	Participant Quote Examples when identifying the recommendation
1. Relationship building within the school community and effective feedback systems;	13	Building school culture and a positive climate for teaching and learning	<i>‘I’m a people pleaser and try to get everyone laughing together... it makes for a great place to work’ Barbara</i> <i>‘Our school is a community and we need to grow it like a garden... not everyone is a shiny tomato but even the dirty potato is nourishing’ Darren</i>
2. Societal Diversity Knowledge – working effectively with all types of clients, students and parent communities;	12	Community Relationships Working with community leagues Working with parent councils and school advisory councils	<i>‘The first thing I do when I get to a new school is to find out who works with the school, what groups use the school, who are the people in the neighbourhood... then I make meetings with them and invite them over for coffee to meet with me, or I go there... it’s amazing how much people tell you about their community and want to help the school’ Samantha</i> <i>‘I like to know who is who in the</i>

			<i>zoo, so I get to know everyone and everybody... names are easy for me and makes it easy for people to come back and help out or ask questions' Fred</i>
3. Staff Diversity Training – Working effectively with all staff, unions and abilities;	11	Human Resources Leadership Needs assessment Staff planning Staff orientation Staff evaluation Staff recognition Professional development Working with employee unions	<i>'I've been told I have a very open personality and can have those hard conversations with anyone... but I had to work hard at this and read lots of books... I don't always get it right with all staff' Danielle</i> <i>'In my masters program we played a board game like the game of life, but it was how to work with all the different staff we have... I learned what is important to each group from their point of view' Sheila</i>
4. Legal rights and responsibilities of administrators and those who are in their care and work environments;	11	Principal Professionalism How to maintain confidentiality, when to report How to display respect Ethical decision making	<i>'It would be nice to know what I can and can't say - you know – professionally and so it's not against the law' Brenda</i> <i>'Learning from an educational lawyer what I can do when I'm searching a student for contraband would help' Darren</i>
5. Effective Learning and Teaching management and leadership including special needs education and gifted student's	10	Instructional Leadership Literacy development Student assessment Student progress reporting	<i>'I believe that instructional leadership, and showing teachers how to be incredible teachers is at the heart of principalship and what I try to do every day' Darren</i>

education;		Instructional supervision Improving student success	<i>'It's hard for me to evaluate an English lesson from a teacher... I have always been a technology guy... I have no clue how to teach English but now I'm evaluating an English teacher' Michael</i>
6. Educational research through continual cohort discussions relating to our own contexts and reality;	7	Community Relationships Collaborating with other principals and administration	<i>'A small group of us meet every first and third Monday's for breakfast of the month and talk about work... this is the best PD I could ever ask for as we are all in the same part of the city' Shane</i>
7. Networking with other principal school leaders, learning from each other;	7	Effective Communication How to develop routines for effectiveness How to create effective information flow	<i>'Dialogue with other colleagues has made the program very useful. I still email them (cohort members) when I need to bounce something off them' Steve</i> <i>'In my district our principals meet at least once a month for a general meeting and the best time of these days is break time when I get to talk and ask questions of my colleagues' Maxim</i>
8. Goal setting, planning and evaluating students and staff through data collection;	6	Organisational Management How to be a better prepared principal Organising those (individuals or committees) who support the goals of the school, how to manage them and lead them	<i>'My degree prepared me to look at data when planning the school initiatives including student, staff and what parents think' Sandra</i>

<p>9. Raising the professional practice and effectiveness of principals.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Operational Management Budgets/finance Resources management Physical materials Educational learning materials Technology plan and evaluation School security and procedures Threat management Timetable and school-wide scheduling How to run and manage committees Staff meetings School goals, vision and mission</p>	<p><i>'I wish the school came with a manual like my car did... I still have no clue on the specific roles of who to contact to get things done' Blaine</i></p> <p><i>'It took me a long time to learn how to schedule classes and all the different protocols in the school' Zoryana</i></p> <p><i>'My degree had nothing to do with how to be a principal... I would have liked to learn how to run the school professionally and not feel like such a newbie' Fred</i></p>
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Many of the specific responses from the participants are repeated from the earlier question regarding 'What is missing from a master's program?'. The opportunity to ask a similar question, yet limiting them to their top five ingredients, allowed for the participants to respond in much broader terms. A review of the frequency of words used in responding to this question revealed that the most common word was 'relationships', followed by 'effective', and 'feedback'. Principals used these words in each element they presented.

A side discussion which resulted from this question was 'if there will be a mandatory requirement of a master's program'. Even though this question was not within the original questionnaire design, all of the participants asked this within the interview. In

enquiring what their thoughts were in terms of the possibility of making this a mandatory requirement, 10 of the 13 responded that only mandatory completion of an educational leadership master's, not other types of master's, should be given serious consideration prior to taking the role of a school principal. A subsequent question came from the comments made early in the interview process where participants were asked about their choice of master's programmes. 'Understanding that a master's program would bring you success, would you have taken time to select a particular program?' was positively answered by three of the participants as their main reason for specifically selecting Masters in Educational Leadership.

5.2 Documentary Analysis of Master Prospectuses

A documentary analysis of the M.Ed. degree programmes available to Alberta teachers was conducted. The first measure of inclusion for this analysis was to verify if the master's degree programme offered by a university was also approved by the Teacher Qualification Service (TQS), a joint organisation between the Alberta Teachers' Association and Alberta's Ministry of Education that verifies educational qualifications and provides certification of these qualifications for approval by the Ministry of Education. The second measure was to identify the programmes from which the study participants had obtained their master's degrees. In total, five universities were identified. For the specific degree programmes attained by the participants that have changed considerably since the participants' completion, the updated degree format from the same universities was identified.

Table A10: University Masters Demographics

University	Degree	Study Type	Credit Hours
University of Portland	Educational Leadership M.Ed. Specialty	Off-campus, local instruction in Edmonton, On-campus residency	36
University of Alberta	M.Ed. Specialty in Curriculum and Pedagogy	Part-time online	30
University of Calgary	Master of Education - Specialist Route	Fully online	36
Newman Theological College	Master of Religious Education – Administration	On-campus	42
Walden University	M.Ed. in Leadership	Online	30

Table A11: Master’s Degree Descriptions by University

University	Required core Courses	Specialty Courses
University of Portland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED 550 Professional Growth and Development • ED 551 Social and Cultural Foundations • ED 555 Teacher as Researcher • ED 558 Educational Research for Improved Student Learning • ED 598 M.Ed. Capstone Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED 570 Curriculum Development and Implementation • ED 571 Enhancing Classroom Relationships • ED 573 Quality Teaching and Peer Consultation • ED 574 Models of Leadership • ED 575 Transforming Schools and Systemic Change • ED 578 Improving the Instructional Process • ED 5XX Elective

University of Alberta

- Research Methods Course EDEL 567
 - Curriculum and Instruction Course EDEL 561, EDEL
 - EDEL 505 Theory and Practice in Language Arts
 - EDEL 514 Early Literacy Development
 - EDEL 516 Contemporary Issues in Elementary Mathematics Education
 - EDEL 519 Assessment of the Language Arts
 - EDEL 525 Trends and Issues in Classroom Practice
 - EDEL 535 Socio-Cultural Aspects of Second Language Learning/Teaching
 - EDEL 537 Second Language Curriculum Design, Materials Development and Assessment
 - EDEL 543 Introduction to Contemporary Literacies
 - EDEL 544 Introduction to Emerging Technologies
 - EDEL 545 Information Technologies for Learning
 - EDEL 555 Home/School/Community Relations
 -
- Elective courses need to be 500-level or above.
 - 3 courses with a total of 9 Credits
 - Courses may also be chosen from current offerings in other departments within or outside the Faculty of Education.
 - **Capstone Exercise (EDEL 599)**
 - Students must register in and complete EDEL 599 while taking their final course in the programme.
 - **Graduate Ethics Training Course (GET)**

<p style="text-align: center;">University of Calgary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDER 619.13 Educational Leadership: An Introduction • EDER 613 Change and Innovation • EDER 619.58 Leading Assessment • EDER 619.70 Indigenous History, Leadership & Education • EDER 603.21 Research Methodology in Education • EDER 619.05 Schools as Collaborative Cultures • EDER 603.24 Program and Practice Evaluation • EDER 619.06 Leadership in Learning • EDER 619.33 Professional Development: Trends and Issues • EDER 692.02 Collaboratory Leadership • EDER 619.10 Issues in Educational Management • EDER 603.23 Writing Educational Research • 	<p>N/A</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Newman Theological College</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSA 571 Foundations of Catholic School Administrations • CSA 573 Contemporary Theory and Praxis in Catholic School Administration • REL 491 Faith Formation in Religious Education • REL 420 Old Testament in Religious Education • BST 421 Matthew and Mark • BST 422 Luke Acts • REL 422 New Testament in Religious Education • STD 450 Christology • STD 451 Theology of God • STD 440 Liturgical and Sacramental Theology • REL 442 Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist • REL 460 Moral Values in Religious Education • STP 461 Introduction to Moral Theology • STP 462 Introduction to Spiritual Theology • REL 400 A/B/C/D is graded on a pass/fail basis. Project Based Final 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Electives at graduate level <p>Students who complete this program shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have a familiarity with the major areas of Catholic Theology. This is achieved through required courses in Sacred Scriptures, Systematic Theology, Moral Theology, and Sacramental/Liturgical Theology. -Have a thorough familiarity with the principles of Religious Education and their application in the context of Catholic Schools. This is achieved through mandatory 9 credits of courses in Religious Education for those in the Teaching Concentration. - Become familiar with the issues facing School Administrators in a Catholic context and be equipped to face them in a theologically informed manner. This is achieved through the mandatory courses in Catholic School Administration for students in the Catholic School Administration Concentration. Put into practice the principles learned in their course work. This is achieved through ongoing participation in a relevant supervised field experience (12 credits)
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Walden University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDUC 6002 Foundations: Educational Leadership and Administration • EDUC 6200 Teaching and Learning for School Leaders • EDUC 6201 Communication and Collaboration for Leaders • EDUC 6202 Ensuring Quality Education for Students with Diverse Needs • EDUC 6203 Policy and Law in School Organizations • EDUC 6204 Using Data to Strengthen Schools • EDUC 6205 Budgeting and Allocating Resources • EDUC 6206 Creating Positive, Safe, and Effective Learning Environments • EDUC 6207 Leading Curriculum Initiatives: Literacy and Math • EDUC 6208 Recruiting, Evaluating, and Retaining School Personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ePortfolio as a capping project. • Potential for internship <p>Graduates of this program will be prepared to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design and lead initiatives that evaluate and improve instructional programs. 2. Develop, implement, and manage ongoing evaluation and professional development in teaching and learning. 3. Create strategic plans using a visioning process to be shared and supported by stakeholders. 4. Use data to effectively manage the organization and resources for a safe, secure, and effective learning environment. 5. Communicate and collaborate with external publics to address community interests and diverse needs. 6. Articulate the school's role within the broader political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context and responding effectively to changes that impact the school community. 7. Model democratic value systems, ethics, and moral leadership.
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The limitations of this analysis of university prospectuses as represented in Table A11 were that it was based on a review of the titles of the modules/courses required by each university. An in-depth analysis of each of the courses' learning outcomes might have offered greater insights into the intentions and key foci of these courses. Unfortunately requests for details of university syllabi or details of Intended Learner Outcomes (ILOs) relevant to the times when the programmes were taken by the study participants remained out of reach. One university representative stated that this was proprietary knowledge and what set their program apart from others. Ironically, we cannot identify with certainty what did set them apart due to the politics and ever increasing chase for new students. Some degrees do offer general learning outcomes for the whole programme, but these are very general, particularly where the programme is a general degree with specific concentrations. Others provide detail of current intended learning outcomes, but programmes have changed over time and may not represent that taken by the study participant. It is recommended that a review of the ILOs of leadership programmes seeking approval from Alberta should be undertaken. This may well reveal greater synergy between current programmes and those taken by the study participants. And if not, it might encourage changes to align better with the needs of aspiring principals. The decision was made to look at the general topics covered and to rely on the study participants for insight into their learning from the programmes.

Reviewing the identified university degrees, participants made a clear distinction between those that offer leadership concentrations, and those that focus on curricular concentrations. A degree programme concentrating on curricular aspects of teaching and

learning utilises the majority of the credit hours in order to create a master teacher within this area. This is exemplified by the projects and curriculum specific history that are designed with the intent of facilitating multiple experiences leading from theory into practice. Leadership skills and training might have certain undertones within modules/courses, depending on the particular instructor or professor's ability and knowledge to teach leadership skills within already demanding content designs. The instructors for these programmes are typically those who have achieved recognition within their specific fields of research, a few of whom have recently left 'teaching in the trenches' to take up these positions.

Within the degrees that focus on leadership concentrations, the design is as focused as in the curricular concentration, but lays specific emphasis on school-based leadership. In Table A11, we see parallels in the "ingredients" our participants wish to see in a proper leadership degree programme for principals. Specifically, the top three identified words used by the participants - 'relationships', 'effective', and 'feedback' -are visible in the course names such as: ED 571 Enhancing Classroom Relationships, ED 573 Quality Teaching and Peer Consultation, and can be implied by other course titles. It becomes clear that participants who believed their university degrees provided them with success in preparation for their principal roles took those programmes that emphasise leadership skills over curriculum teaching mastery.

Educational leadership degrees range in rigour and the experience opportunities that are built into them. Some programmes now include a supervised internship programme prior to graduation (Stein and Gewirtzman, 2003). These internships involve

many of the theoretical lessons learned from the course material, which are now adapted to practical 'hands-on' experiences. These internships have not surfaced in Canada at the time of writing of this thesis while they are found in the US, which requires a leadership degree with certification or principal licensure programmes in order to apply for a principal position. Levine (2005) identifies the courses often added to these leadership degrees which include educational law, child and adult psychology, human resources components and business management programmes. Participants Shane, Michael, Darren and Samantha had identified in their interviews that the rigour required in their master's degree work was substantial and bore no comparison with some of their colleagues who they identified respectively to be enrolled in 'easier degrees', with 'little assignment work' and whose 'parchment is worth \$50,000 cash with no sweat equity'. These participants had also indicated that they valued the rigour in their assignments and had recommended their programs to others for this reason.

5.3 Documentary Analysis of the Principal Applications Process in Alberta

Table A12: Application Requirements by School District

Authority Type	School Board	Application Requirements for Principal	
		Started a masters	Completed Masters for continuous designation
Public	Calgary School District No. 19	Yes	Yes
	Edmonton School District No. 7	Yes	Yes
	Black Gold Regional Division No. 18	Yes	Not Listed as Required
	Elk Island Public Schools Regional Division No. 14	Yes	Not Listed as Required
Separate	Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1	Yes	Yes
	Edmonton Catholic Separate School District No. 7	Yes	Not Listed as Required
	Elk Island Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 41	Yes	Not Listed as Required

A review of the seven largest school districts in Alberta shows a consistent approach to application requirements for the position of principal in Alberta. As noted above, school principal applicants must have started a master’s programme prior to application. I had attempted through various information requests for data regarding the education of school principals as employed in the province of Alberta. Unfortunately, even after meeting with several different representatives of the Teacher Qualification Service (TQS) over the years, the answers have remained that for the protection of its members, this information is not available to the public. Hence, there is no documentation to support that all or any Alberta

school principals have completed their master's degrees at the time of application or by the time of receiving a continuous designation as principal.

Mombourquette (2013) conducted a review of Alberta school districts and their policies and procedures as posted on their public websites. Mombourquette found that 14 of the 46 districts reviewed had updated their school administration policies and procedures to reflect the new guidelines established by the Government of Alberta. Those districts who updated their procedures did so by incorporating the standards as competencies within their principal and evaluation policy. All of our participants within this study are currently working within one of the 14 districts that changed their policies to align with the new APQS.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The main questions in this research are: How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta, and how might these programmes be improved?

Fundamental questions to support the main research questions are based on the literature and supported by the data. There are many complexities in addressing the research question, and through the design and subsequent research I identified the following five questions to lead the discussion:

1. What does the Province of Alberta suggest are the features and characteristics of a successful school principal? Are these quality standards understood and used by school principals?
2. What are school districts' requirements for the position of school principal?
3. How does the design and content of master's degrees undertaken by aspiring principals engender qualities of effective school leadership?
4. What do successful school principals see as the key characteristics of effective principals?
5. What characteristics do successful principals see as a necessity in a master's degree programme that would adequately prepare them for the position?

6.0 Features and Characteristics of a Successful School Principal: Alberta Perspective

In practice the participants in this study, all of whom have at least five years' experience in the role in Alberta, reported having little contact with the APQS. Principals did not generally report making use of the standards to help guide their daily practice, as is suggested should be the case in some of the research literature. The findings here reflect those studies undertaken in the US (Levine, 2005), where similarly crafted standards were not found to be used by principals in support of their day-to-day work. The findings show

that the participants in the current study had very little experience with these standards, even though the Government had made them best practice guidelines. In brief examples taken from the participants such as Barbara – who utilised the standards almost as a ‘to do list’ beside her computer, or deploying the language used in the document when writing evaluations on colleagues – have identified the standards as almost a simple reference list. In this study, Barbara is an exception. As evident in the literature, when identifying the success of given characteristics and standards, Marzano (2003) argues that there is a need to put these ‘lists’ into practice in order for them to be meaningful. This dissertation’s findings suggest that the participant population is not exposed enough to the standards to identify closely with them, or to utilise them on an everyday basis as intended by the authors and the Alberta Government.

The potential to use the standards on a more regular basis could come from linking them to principal success. Leithwood (2003) proposed that, based on research, standards of the type developed in Alberta have the potential to support the development of principals when they are used explicitly in training and development and linked directly to principal success. The notion of success, as identified by the participants, varied dramatically. Ideally, use of the standards for Alberta principals and their subsequent success as a direct result of this use might lead to principals’ increased self-consciousness regarding their own unique craft and its professional code. What the participants seemed to be saying regarding their master’s degrees is that the principles that underpin the APQS should inform their leadership masters and that it is the critical engagement with these theories and ideas which matters. The importance lies in knowledge of literature,

discussion and debate with peers and the exploration of concepts in their practice, not simply having a list.

In this study, the link between the standards and success has been evident most frequently when using the APQS document to increase professional language and terminology on the part of the participants. Examples from interviews with principals where use has been made of the APQS document are provided again by Barbara, one of two participants who did not have a master's degree. She deployed it to help her to use appropriate language and thus facilitate discussion with her colleagues and school district superintendent. Again, Barbara's knowledge and specific contextual use is unique in terms of our other participants.

In terms of pre-service success links, two principals identified their master's degree content as focusing on terminology similar to that used in the APQS document. Their understanding of these dimensions assisted them in completing assignments, especially when exploring potential implementation challenges in new programmes as well as within their own practice. Therefore, having a language that crosses the divide between academia and praxis facilitated a key success for these principals. This reflects the suggestions articulated by Whitaker (2012) who has concentrated on school district-based professional development strategies for principal development programmes, where very effective exercises were constructed which helped participants to define given standards and understand their practical purpose. Extending this example would involve the use of the standards within the context of real school scenarios, thereby bridging the gap between the standards and principals' potential success (Whitaker, 2012).

Do Alberta principals value these quality standard guidelines or are they simply respectfully acknowledged? The APQS are a defined set of criteria with a sound basis in the literature that could prove a valuable tool for school principals to use, thereby supporting their development. However, in the interview study the majority of this small sample of experienced school principals did not mention or, when prompted, understand or use the standards for this purpose. Where they had been used, it was by a participant who had not undertaken a master's degree. Where the standards featured in master's degree programmes, participants had found them useful in bridging the gap between the theory and practice of their leadership role.

In understanding the dynamics between principals, being a school principal myself, I know that within our professional conversations different ideas and concepts float about, thus creating circles of influence. In my experience in Alberta, the level of interaction between colleagues, despite the size and dispersed geography of the state, is quite high. Some principals meet and hold professional dialogues both face to face and virtually, on a vast array of issues. These dialogues can include controversial challenges or regular matters of responsibilities, and may be focused at either a local or cross-provincial level. Thereby, a professional web of trusted colleagues is created (Welch and Welch, 2005) as we consult our circles of influence. Although it is perhaps beyond the scope of this research, it does seem that those participants who valued their leadership focused master's degree were keen to carry on learning from others through networks and the sharing of ideas. Indeed, some explicitly mentioned their fellow students as a valued network in this regard.

Admittedly, within the geographically large Province of Alberta, the web of school principals is vast and varied, matching the heterogeneous discussion topics. Relating this back to the value principals place on the quality standards, the APQS might have greater meaning for principals if discussed with colleagues using a local perspective. Utilising these standards in everyday practice will bring about their better understanding and transcend the differences that separate Alberta principals.

As demonstrated in the interview outcomes, using the language of leadership appropriate to the role can support individuals and groups to engage in this vital discourse, potentially taking the interaction to a deeper, more philosophical level. The evidence points to the potential for the APQS to provide a foundation on which such a shared language could be developed. Raising principals' awareness of the standards and, as described by those who used them in their master's programme, using them to facilitate the bridge between theory and practice – for instance through school district training events as advocated by Whitaker (2012) – could be a powerful contribution to raising the standard of school leadership. Moreover, it is clearly not just training in the standards that is relevant, but understanding the principles, however the standards are articulated. And this is where a good master's programme can offer real benefit.

The provincial government set out these principal standards to establish a baseline for all principals in Alberta. The intention was to establish a given direction and ultimately create a basis for further examination and development of the roles and responsibilities of the Alberta school principal. These standards are at too early a stage in terms of permeating the principal communities to be seen as increasing principal success and

effectiveness. The Government and, by extension, the voting citizens, want better principals, hence the creation of a roadmap to start the conversations needed to inculcate a common language and understanding of this unregulated position, particularly as compared to teaching positions, the latter being clearly identified, regulated and evaluated. With no clear and widespread use of the standards, it is clear the school principal profession has work to do.

With no mandated regulations in place to oversee the role of the principal, school districts find themselves as the creators of the hiring requirements, evaluation, and professional development of principals. As discussed below, the notion of inconsistency of practice and expectations between districts has been identified within this study.

6.1 School Districts Requirements for the Position of School Principal

One of the expressed intentions of the APQS is to provide clear guidance on the required characteristics and competencies of Alberta school principals. The requirements for the position vary from school district to school district as described by the study participants. Mombourquette (2013) has identified that in 2013 only 14 of the 46 districts reviewed had updated their school administration policies and procedures to reflect the new government directives. This study's review of participants' accounts of school district application requirements for principals also varies, but there is a perceived minimum requirement of starting a master's degree. The findings from the Skype interviews show that principal candidate requirements vary in many areas, including years of teaching service, levels of teaching, committee-level participation, expected candidate educational

background, and the relationships with senior administration the candidate has, to name but a few. Understandably, these inconsistencies are identified from around the province with my sample of participants, reflecting a general lack of awareness of the standards.

These same principals had identified the APQS as bringing uniformity to the application process, not in terms of the pre-requisites for application, but in the interview process that is part of the application. As suggested by the participants, a common set of rubrics could be the basis for a provincial set of interview questions to support this process and address these variances. Although the principal interview questions in Alberta were not part of the scope of the interview, three of our participants indicated a perceived lack of rubrics for this position. Maxim felt that a rubric would ‘standardize the process and create an even playing field’. Zoryana had mentioned that a rubric ‘would make the selection process more professional’. Sheila had expressed the opinion that those ‘who don’t get a principalship would know why if there is an identified rubric, because they only feel they were not selected because of political reasons’. Study participants talked about their own experiences of being interviewed for posts and mentioned that knowing the standards would have been useful at the interview stage. They identified the use of a common professional language as a validation of their own competency, which was similar to the shared language of a members’ secret society. Blaine, who does not have a master’s degree, indicated that in preparation for the interview stage he ‘worked hard at memorizing the new lingo and catchphrases’ in his school district so he could impress the interview team. He wanted to communicate that his language and terminology matched that of his principal colleagues.

The participant Michael cited two interviews he had with his school district which were very different as they occurred under two different superintendents. Michael mentioned that the first interview went well for him, and he believed he had answered each question in a way that he felt meant he had the position. Eventually, he was unsuccessful in his first attempt and at a post-interview meeting, he asked ‘where could I improve my craft, or interview [skills] or application to do better next time?’ Michael indicated that if he had known the APQS at the time, and if his school district had used them directly in the selection process, he would have known where he could improve.

Michael shared that he had been ‘tapped’ or asked to apply for the school principalship due to the leadership roles he was proving successful at as an assistant principal. This is a common practice in some school districts, as they look to plant seeds of inspiration in potential leaders so they have the time to grow the necessary skill sets for the next level (Young and Levin, 2002). Michael indicates that his proven successes at assigned projects and shouldering certain responsibilities caught the attention of district level leadership, something identified as common in the literature (Leithwood, 2005). In relation to the question of how he might improve that Michael himself raised after the unsuccessful job interview, a rubric for identifying potential candidates for leadership positions would be beneficial to both the school district as an employer and the interested schoolteacher in terms of recommended future steps for career advancement. Anderson (1991), Burger (2000), Carter et al., (2005), Carr (2005), and Davis et al. (2005) all identify recommended requirements for the position of school-based leadership, specifically for the role of school principal. A detailed method or identification system would enable and

inform potential leaders regarding the skill sets they have and which dimensions/standards require improvement in order to be successful in both the school principal application and position.

However, the APQS alone does not introduce common standards at the application stage. Principals in this study had a variety of experiences in teaching and leadership roles prior to assuming a school principal position. The question of candidate education level also varies as some participants identified their school district only requires a few master's level courses, while others ask for a completed M.Ed. prior to applying for a principalship. The literature supports and informs the need for principals to have master's degrees in education (Levine, 2005; Marzano, 2003; Sergiovanni and Green 2015; Stronge et al., 2008, Whitaker, 2012), thereby underlining the latter's need to be lifelong learners, however not one author has stated that a principal must hold a master's degree to be successful. This could be the reason for such discrepancies within this area, especially when there is a wide range of master's programmes accepted by Alberta as qualifying a candidate for the position of principal. Most participants in the study believed that all those appointed to principal positions should already possess a master's degree. Some participants pointed to the difficulty in completing their programmes while in the active position of principal and suggested this degree should be completed prior to application, due to the lack of time available to commit to rigorous degree obligations alongside the requirements and responsibilities of the principal position.

Participants' experience of leadership and teaching also varied extensively. Neither the literature review (Stein and Gewirtzman, 2003; Marzano, 2003; Fullan, 2003, 2008,

2011; Miller et al., 2009; Tucker, 2009), the application requirements as set out by school districts, nor the APQS identify minimum teaching experience to apply for an assistant principal position, or even a bare number of years of experience as an assistant principal to apply for a principal position. As seen in the evidence provided by the study participants, the range varied from 2 to 10 years of experience as assistant principal before they applied for a principalship. There are no references to an ideal number of years of experience in either role prior to applying for a principalship, nevertheless it is interesting to identify the lack of such a requirement. Some participants identified the absence of specific protocols within the district and knowledge in overcoming challenges as examples or symptoms of early advancement into principal roles before they had the opportunity to develop work experience at each level and being promoted to the higher position.

The study participants suggest that there is a clear lack of use of the APQS document. When prompted, the participants showed an understanding of the standards, but few used them as part of their professional development. Similarly, the review of the master's degree programmes demonstrated no reference to the Alberta standards, while few of the participants at a basic level could draw direct connections between the standards and their master's programmes.

The APQS document should be made clear and used as a template by which to make appointment decisions, and as far as possible a master's degree should be held, not just registered for. It is difficult to legislate for levels of experience, especially in a growing population where school principals are in demand. However, this means that good

dissemination of the standards to those hoping to apply for principalship is needed and good professional development training is essential.

The findings show that a rubric design comprised of the APQS would bring a level baseline to the profession and uniformity across the province. These same rubrics could be used in the pre-identification of future leaders or in the preparation of aspiring principals. Extending these rubrics could also enable creating consistent evaluative measures of school principals and assist in leadership professional development. All of the principal participants indicated varying inconsistencies in the selection process and support common competencies.

The study found master's degrees that participants felt had contributed and others that they felt had not contributed to the success of the principal. The master's programmes designed with principal-focussed content in the M.Ed. degree based on leadership did bring success. If the provincial requirements for principalship were tightened up such that the master's programme designs all focused on leadership, then a more common standard might come to realization. This common standard would then support the use of a specifically-designed school leadership master's degree as part of the school districts' requirements for the position of school principal.

6.2 Principals Engender the Qualities of Effective School Leadership by Affirming the Design and Content of Master's Degrees

The Province of Alberta broadly requires school principals to have completed a master's degree or to be registered on one. The study participants supported this

requirement. The range of master's degrees accepted by school districts in the state is wide ranging, and this sample of principals included master's programmes such as Early Childhood Education, Educational Technology, Religious Education, Science and Educational Policy, and Leadership as valid degrees helping to meet principal position requirements. However, the analysis of the degree prospectus and the participants' own experiences establish a wide spectrum of competencies and skills, related neither to the curricular nature of the degree, nor to the leadership competencies as set out by the APQS.

The range of master's degree programme delivery modes available to Alberta teachers and prospective administrators is extensive, ranging from fully on the ground/face to face local courses, to wholly online programmes from universities based in the United States. The range of quality of such courses is, according to the participants in this study, quite dramatic. Based on their experiences, our participants provided the following evaluations. Participants identified that these programmes range from very rigorous requiring over 20 hours a week of additional study and work, to the opposite, including a minimal requirement of watching short video clips and posting comments on a blog-style interface which was identified by some as simply 'buying a degree'. Stein and Gewirtzman (2003) had identified this wide gap in master's degrees as troubling, also suggesting that rigorous programmes brought success to the principal candidates, thereby raising their effectiveness and impact on current school principals. Burger (1998), Hattie (2009), Stronge et al., (2008), and Marzano (2003) and Hallinger (2003) all support the importance of the design and content of master's degrees taken by aspiring principals, and that these graduate degrees require role relevance and a basis in a competency-based

curriculum in order to engender the qualities of effective school leadership. By contrast, Levine's (2005) study has identified the limitations of non-relevant degrees to the profession of school leadership: his findings support the view that teaching oriented discipline focused curricular degrees do not stimulate school administration success.

In this study's cohort, 11 participants had degrees and two did not have master's degrees. From the curriculum degrees we have two educational technology, two religious education, one science, and one early childhood education master's degrees. Of the master's degree-holding participants, the majority had taken them out of interest in increasing their efficacy in teaching. Even though this was not a direct research question, it was noted by five of six participants within the interview that their interest in completing their master's was based on increasing their teaching efficacy. One participant openly stated that they undertook a graduate degree to gain eligibility for principalship when applying before their school board. These curriculum master's programmes were indeed used as professional development in order for these participants to gain a teaching skillset they required. The content had been identified by many of the participants, including Fred, indicating these master's degrees were 'going deeper' into the subject ensuring that he 'could be a better teacher'.

Five of the participants had non-curriculum degrees that focused on educational leadership. These participants identified either their need to build a leadership skillset to be eligible for principalship or to further develop their leadership efficacy as the reasons behind their particular focus on master's degrees. Two participants said that they also choose their particular university which offered partial online study, as this was the fastest

degree available to them at the time. Principal participant Shane identified that he had *'been in administration for a long time and I was promoted to principal due to a shortage of candidates, and to keep my principalship I had to find the fastest degree out there'*. All of these leadership-focused degrees were used for the professional development of a unique skillset required of the school principal. The content was identified by Sheila as *'learning what I'm doing right now and what I need to do this year'* and it was *'very effective as it made complete transition of skills to my own work environment'*.

In this study, a direct link has been made with master's degrees' ability to engender qualities of effective school leadership and the specific type of master's programme. The participants had identified that master's degree programmes which had been designed with content specific to the school principal leadership roles had brought about success for those individuals. The successful master's degree was identified as one with a specific focus on school leadership. The content of these courses closely paralleled concepts from the APQS guidelines utilizing the same literature, but often different names for each of the dimensions that form the basis of these good quality master's programmes. This is supported by the participants' comments in this study as being both effective, successful and directly seeing their master's degree programmes as key to their ability to fulfil the position's roles and responsibilities. Principals were much less positive about master's degrees with a focus on curricular subjects (early childhood, science and religion) which they argued do not promote successful school leadership characteristics. The focus of these curricular degrees is to specifically bring out a person's mastery within the particular curricular field. The content and design of these programmes, as identified by the

participants who completed them, delve deeper into the specialty and not into the area of school-based leadership. It is generally accepted in the requirements for principalship as identified by the Documentary Analysis of Applications process in Alberta that all master's programmes will be adequate as preparation for becoming an effective school leader and, as this study's participants confirm, this is simply not the case. The information emerging from the interview data clearly shows that experienced and successful school principals agree that a master's programme should be:

- Focused on school leadership;
- Designed to meet the study needs of busy educators in terms of structure and timing;
- Be designed to be relevant and applicable to the job; and
- Led by professors or course instructors who have experience of the role.

The master's degrees that most successfully engender the qualities of effective school leadership come from the programmes that are specifically tailored and designed for school administration, namely M.Ed. degrees with a focus on school administration or school leadership. The most effective courses were identified by both Levine (2005) and this study as being instructed by competent and successful principals in-field or recently-retired school principals or superintendents. The Alberta Government and school districts should actively consider questioning master's degree programmes that do not prepare school leaders. Universities in North America view Alberta as a financial resource as they provide quick and expensive degrees in a highly unregulated market: this is evidenced with an ever increasing number of non-local Masters of Education programmes being offered. A campaign to identify degrees that participants see as useful and complementary in terms of successfully fulfilling the role of principal would allow aspiring and current principals

without degrees to judge these degree programmes' merits in terms of their principalship-track utility. In turn, more applicants would come forward with appropriate credentials for this critical post while improved design and content of relevant master's degrees would engender the qualities of effective school leadership, that in turn will help candidates meet the appropriate application requirements.

6.3 Key Characteristics of Effective School Principals: Principal Perspective

The key characteristics of successful school principals as defined by the APQS are seen as useful by this study's participants, and this research suggests that master's programmes should reflect these same quality standards in terms of their prospectuses. The literature (Stein and Gewirtzman, 2003; Marzano, 2003; Fullan, 2003, 2008, 2011; Miller et al., 2009; Tucker, 2009) clearly supports meaningful professional development as it relates directly to the roles and responsibilities of school principals in the contemporary Alberta education system.

The study revealed an alignment between the three main areas of focus, namely the APQS, the national and international literature on the essential characteristics of good principal leadership, and the views expressed by the study participants themselves as to what makes a good principal. Given the lack of awareness of the APQS on the part of some of the participants and the failure to cover school leadership in the literature and practice in some of their master's degrees, this came as a surprise to me.

Interestingly, I gradually realised that these participants had the ability to speak to the APQS at a very basic level when prompted, based on their ability to vocalise and explain

these characteristics. Generally speaking, the participants with master's degrees in leadership were the most confident and able to communicate the key characteristics of effective school principals at a meta-cognitive level, while using the recognised professional language. On the other hand, the two participants who did not have equivalent degrees with the same focus found it challenging to find the professional terminology to identify these characteristics. The language of leadership has emerged as an important aspect of the principal role. The use of words meaningful to the profession brings a professional coherence to the conversations and raises the quality of participants' responses. This has also been identified by a few of the participants as reflecting the same terminology they use in working with their school leadership teams.

The question must be asked if simply a common use of terminology is enough and does it indicate comprehension to the depths that allows for success and self-monitoring? One participant, Steve, supports this by citing that use of a 'common language between all employees solidifies the already great work we are doing'. In other words, after the hurdles of common language are met, then our ability to communicate and discuss challenges and goals is easier. Thereby, the ability to focus on the challenges becomes clearer and easier to pinpoint. The findings show that there is a need for the profession to develop consistent language, and to be able to reflect more profoundly the knowledge and understanding of the concepts of school-based leadership. Even with prompting, some participants had difficulties in explaining the quality standards and the work they had accomplished by using them.

A supporting narrative that Sheila identified is the need for the professional development of our principals to encompass the language and terminology of the key characteristics of effective school principals. Sheila stated that 'it is easier to know what to do, when I can identify what needs to be done'. The APQS praxis recommendations regarding managing school operations is a complex dimension, whose professional language is very different from that used by the former teacher who is now a principal functioning within the framework of instructional leadership. Zoryana adds that she 'came from a kindergarten to grade 3 division school as a teacher, assistant principal and her degree was also in Early Childhood to now managing a whole school facility and deciding if -30°C is too cold to send my custodial staff out to shovel the snow'. She goes on further to add 'professional language sometimes helps understand the needs, but does little to help me make a decision in things I never needed to know about earlier because it was someone else's job'. The former teacher's level of understanding of school operations is very limited and was identified by our participants as being relatively new learning when they had moved on to an administrative level of responsibilities. Current leadership training is simply a continuation of their teacher training. Identifying professional development opportunities that include key characteristics of effective leadership, including the voluminous APQS, would enhance the ability of each participant.

The designation of principal is an extension of the teaching profession in Alberta. It is a requirement that all principals rise from the teacher ranks to a position in which they are given supervisory authority over all other teachers. Eight out of thirteen participants identified through answering other questions that they did notice a change in

responsibilities and more so in the level of authority they had gained in the principal position, with some (3) identifying this being an instantaneous change right after being given their first principal post. The areas that have really transformed the principal's professional duties and responsibilities have involved the complexities of operational management, human resources and all other aspects including budgets and advertising, as has been identified in the literature review. Even if those teachers with the best pedagogical understandings and teaching craft are selected for the position of principal, it is unlikely, given the comments of the participants in this study, that they will have experience of the additional skill sets required by today's principal. This is especially the case, since the transition from teacher to school administrator, and from assistant principal to school principal, may be very quick. There are natural gaps in knowledge and experience, which preclude one from advancing to the next level within any organisation, and these gaps need to be identified and supported properly with evidence of mastery prior to ascending to the next level of roles and responsibilities. This has been shared by all of our participants, who identified the need for a completed master's degree prior to taking up the position of school principal so that one could develop these key characteristics fully.

6.4 Compulsory Characteristics in a Master's Degree Programme: Principal Perspective

It has been identified both in Alberta and across north America that a master's degree is needed for the role of principal. A master's degree should offer learner outcomes such as the ability to deal with complex issues, demonstrate self-direction in tackling and solving problems and develop as lifelong learners (QAA, 2001). But what additional skill set development does it provide above and beyond that of a teacher, whose focus is on the curriculum? Our principal participants clearly stated that their degrees had contributed to their successes as school principals. It was understood that the master's degree focused on curriculum subjects would inculcate a deeper understanding on the given subject, but our participants do not believe they contribute to a principal's success. What did lead to success was a master's degree that along with the generic outcomes also developed leadership skills.

Thus a master's degree may bring success to a principal and could be used as an appropriate tool for the professional development of skills for principals *if* the degree focuses on leadership.

The Anglo Saxon model of master's degrees generally looks to holders of the degree to be able to:

- Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgments in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level.

- Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level and will have the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility,
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations,
 - independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

(Source: QAA, 2001).

Most of the participants in this study held a master's degree, and unfortunately there is no common framework in North America as identified in the Anglo Saxon model above. Nevertheless, it is the more specific outcomes associated with the knowledge, skills and practices of leadership that the study focuses on and which the participants, including those without a master's and those with curriculum-based master's, all believed to be important to the development of effective principals. Thus, master's programmes do and don't support success in principals. They do when they are designed to support the specific roles and responsibilities of the modern principal. They don't when they are only designed to create a master's level teacher in a specific strand of curriculum and develop critical thinking skills in a particular focus– such as an MSc or an MA – but are not designed to develop the leadership and management aspects of the principal's job.

Master's level study – whatever the focus – could and should develop the graduate in terms of a keen understanding and practice of inquiry, and problem solving, in both a general sense as well as in relation to the specific curriculum strand they are focusing on. Ideally this should be enough, particularly as some districts believe it is possible to transpose this skill set to aiding the leadership of a school. What our participants have said is that these skills did not transpose naturally to the work environment and they do not

believe they have learned the appropriate leadership skills within their various master's degree programmes.

The most successful master's programmes as identified by this research were designed around the work patterns of their participants, i.e. individuals applying for positions as principals. The programme must mimic a principal's work demands, not the current university schedule. A course which begins and ends within a time frame where school demands are lower will allow a participant time and study opportunities. Having the demands of a final course exam or project due the week of the Christmas/winter plays and reporting periods adds stress while limiting the ability of the full time participant or principal student to fully engage with the course. Also, looking at certain aspects of the courses, aligning these with the school year timetable would benefit the fulltime principal who is also working on a master's degree in the evenings. Looking at human resources management is not effective if the course is held in September, when staffing has taken place the previous May/June. The ebbs and flows of the principal's position and roles need to coalesce with the professional development and the master's programmes intended to cater for this.

The design and impact of those master's degrees most effective for the principal include specific content, design, structure, rigour, and faculty who have experience in the role, not academics who have no experience of the role of a principal. Within this study, many of the leadership degree participants mentioned that their degree professors were retired principals or superintendents. These participants accepted these professors quickly, because they were their equals and colleagues, and as such they

understood each other on many levels. If the particular time of study was nearing a reporting period, some participants mentioned that they had lighter assignments and the major projects were due at a comfortable time and faculty were cognisant of the demands of a principal's responsibilities.

Most principals in their interview identified direct and indirect notions of compulsory rigour within the master degree programmes. Two principals specifically recognised rigour as being inconsistent in terms of the master's degrees they had experienced. Both of these principal participants understood rigour as the need for consistent and comprehensive study, thereby the master's degree is recognised as difficult to attain, not simply purchased. Darren mentioned that his Masters in Religious Education was very rigorous. He had spent hours a week researching in the library, in addition to working fulltime and having a family. Darren continues, 'the kids these days taking a masters are taking a seminar for two nights a month with no homework or reading', with 'such little work, it's like they are buying their degree and not working for it like I did'. This comparison, Darren mentioned, is between the rigour of the programmes that are available and the discrepancies between the master's programmes accepted by the Alberta Government in the qualification process.

Another understanding and concern regarding the rigorousness of master's programmes relates to the identification of the lowering of standards of the programmes in order to sign up more graduates. This is evidenced by the general lowering of standards, length of programs, class instruction time moving from lecture to discussion based interactions and the removal of thesis papers and residencies. Sandra comments about

how rigorous her Masters in Educational Leadership was many years ago and that she was very proud to graduate from her particular university. She identified her thesis as being ground breaking in Alberta and she took leave from her vice principal position in order to complete the required residency on a campus in the United States. Sandra says that today, 'the degrees are almost being given out as soon as you pay your tuition in full'. They 'took away the residency and replaced the thesis with a 10-page project paper'. She identified other areas in which the course comprehensiveness and content had diminished to the point that she stated, 'I've taken down my master's degree from my wall in my office as three of my teachers had completed theirs *from the same university as I did* in under two years, where mine took five'. She hardly mentions she has a master's degree, as she doesn't want to identify the university where it came from. Sandra's point raises a critical issue, as other principal participants who have graduated from the same university had identified the skillset their Educational Leadership degree had trained in them to be very beneficial in their role as principal.

Sandra identified her lack of respect for this university came when 'they watered the whole thing down to get more people taking their program and removed the residence and thesis requirements'. This is, in fact, a non-curriculum degree and specifically focused on school based-leadership. This raises the question of whether today's principal master's degree students are indeed interested in respecting their granting university; does the degree alone bring the respect; and if this same degree would still be considered as beneficial to a principal? These questions would prove interesting inquiries, but outside of the purview of this study. In light of the data, it makes sense to suggest that Alberta should look at the

degrees it approves more carefully, identifying those that are focused on school leadership, as argued above, but also identifying those that have the rigour to provide an excellent grounding for future and in-service principals.

Revisiting the ‘Nine Mandatory Prerequisites of a Master’s Degree for Principals’ (Section 4.1.11.7) identified by the study participants as critical for the design and content of a proper degree for principals would greatly improve the efficacy of the profession. These nine categories have been identified by the participants as the areas in which they all felt they and other principals would benefit most if they were to design or evaluate a mandatory master’s programme for principal eligibility:

1. Relationship building within the school community and effective feedback systems;
2. Societal Diversity Knowledge – working effectively with all types of clients, students and parent communities;
3. Staff Diversity Training – working effectively with all staff, unions and ability levels;
4. Overseeing the legal rights and responsibilities of administrators and those who are under their care and work environments;
5. Effective Learning and Teaching management and leadership, including special needs education and gifted students’ education;
6. Educational Research through continuous cohort discussions relating to our own contexts and reality;
7. Networking with other school principal leaders, learning from each other;
8. Goal setting, planning and evaluating students and staff through data collection;
9. Improving the professional practice and effectiveness of principals.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research study focused on the questions ‘How far do master’s degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta, and how might these programmes be improved?’

In pursuing these questions, I uncovered considerable differences between the protocols defining qualifications for principals, their training/preparation and the understanding of these factors by successful principals. While there might not be consistency in these qualifications outside of the basic requirement of an M.Ed. degree, there is even less identification of theoretical perspectives in relation to the links between the current variations in master’s degrees and qualifications. This is why the study is significant and it will also provide valuable insights into current principals, employers, and the institutions that offer qualification preparation for this position. With a properly aligned system in the Alberta context we would see these protocols integrated, thereby improving the efficacy of the publicly-funded school-based principal.

This study will benefit employers, future principal candidates as well as higher education institutions offering master’s programmes. An understanding of the most effective aspects derived from a study of the large number of master’s programmes currently available in Alberta would be of benefit to the higher education institutions in terms of the degrees they offer. The broader aim is that the findings will contribute to the improvement of principal efficacy and, ultimately, improve the development of school leadership in providing quality education in our schools. In the United States, there are a few universities that are approved by the state or districts as providing an accredited

program which qualifies for licencing principals. I think this practice has some merit and would increase program quality. If Alberta were to scrutinise the degrees they have approved utilising a comprehensive rubric that maps with the APQS and give a stamp of approval to some, then others would see the writing on their financial wall, and follow suit by seeking approval for their programmes from the province of Alberta.

The findings show that there is a considerable volume of literature and research data available to identify the key characteristics of successful school principals, and with the addition of the APQS guidelines (Alberta Education, 2009) there is an immediate local Alberta context from which to recognise success. The study participants remained confident in their abilities in their roles, however they were not able to successfully relate or identify the APQS guidelines with their success. Further work within the development and integration of the Alberta-specific guidelines into the profession of local principals is needed, as this early stage of integration has not proved to be successful based on the data provided by our participants.

The findings further show that the use of a generic M.Ed. as an application requirement for the role of principal has many limitations. Firstly, there is no blanket obligation in Alberta to follow this guideline and, as identified by our participants, this is now seen as more of a 'gentle' recommendation in the application process. The second limitation is a comparative lack of a shared focus across M.Ed. programmes, in addition to their lack of direct concentration on the APQS guidelines or specific school-based leadership training. There is a noteworthy failure to acknowledge the current demands and responsibilities involved in school administration in recognised master's degrees that

qualify an individual for administrative leadership positions. Lastly, there is an identification among most of the participants and in the literature that these master's degrees have failed to keep up with the changing roles and responsibilities of the school principal over the past half century. The findings show that the majority of programmes investigated had non-relevant material which is being delivered by non-field-experienced faculty and on a time delivery schedule that is counterproductive in terms of the entirely predictable demands on a principal's time at different stages of the school calendar.

The Province of Alberta places a strong focus on the instructional leadership role of the principal as the pinnacle responsibility of the school-based leader, which may have been true half a century ago. However, with the changing roles and responsibilities of the school-based leader, the current complexities of the role require a better tooled and educated principal than currently envisaged. The data suggests a slow realisation of the demands of the contemporary principal position within the APQS guidelines and an even slower change in the content of master's degree programmes.

There has been a massive paradigm shift in educational leadership with the large size of the schools, the added roles and responsibilities of the schools and its leaders (Brundrett, 2001; Whitaker, 2012). These additional and competing demands of the leader means that it has now become more of an executive leadership position. The term of school CEO (Chief Executive Officer) is not a term currently used, but the description of such a position does compare to the new school principal. Thus a basis for a new type of master's program requirement is desperately needed to prepare and validate this new era of the school principal. The research has presented both through the literature and through

the interviews with successful school principals in Alberta that there need to be changes to the 'way we do business' in forming and supporting school principals in Alberta.

7.0 Nine Recommendations and Insights from the Study

Based on the research data provided by the participants, a strong sense of change is required in the seeding development, preparation, certification/ evaluation, and ongoing development of school-based administration in Alberta. The following is a list of general deficiencies found within the current Alberta context of the school administrator which have been identified via this research and voiced through our school principal participants. This study recommends this list be used in the further appraisal of M.Ed. programmes that determine the requirements of school leadership positions. The list identifies the following issues:

1. A need for a potential leader identification system;
2. A lack of consistent and regulated school administration qualifications in Alberta;
3. Inconsistent professional development and requirements for school administrators;
4. A spectrum of acceptable master's degrees allowed as qualifications which do not provide the leadership training required for school administration or consider the roles and responsibilities of the position;
5. A disconcerting variance in master's degree expectations and rigour;
6. A lack of uniformity of evaluative measures for the certification of school administration;
7. A variance in school districts' ongoing development of school administrators;

8. The need to utilise effective and successful principals in the training and development of others;
9. The need for a specifically-designed Masters of Education in School Administration Leadership.

7.0.0 Identifying Future Leaders

The ability to quickly and efficiently identify quality candidates for school administrative positions is highlighted as a clear need by our participants and in the literature (Anderson, 1991; Burger et al., 2007; Carter et al., 2005; Carr, 2005; Davis et al., 2005; Leithwood, 2004, 2005; Young and Levin, 2002). Some of the participants had been recommended for leadership and so pursued a masters, recognising this as a much needed practice in the profession. Based on the Alberta Government's establishment of the APQS as a foundation of successful school administrators, it is recommended that a detailed rubric with a focus on the identification of individuals who convey these sought-after characteristics be made available in order to help identify quality candidates. The rubric should assist in identifying potential principals in a personal behavioural examination that encompasses the APQS in their roles before applying for principal posts. An example of one Alberta Dimension is 'leading a learning community', which can be identified with examples and additional behaviour indicators that would clearly benefit the recruitment process as well as providing a self-assessment tool for individuals contemplating leadership roles. Exemplary behaviour in this dimension as identified by the participants includes: the need to stay late after school hours; to read professional literature; to take on

leadership roles (even without title) improving school culture/practice/student academics; to achieve respect from all stakeholders within the school environment and reflect a calm and positive force in the school; to utilise current and specific language within the professional field; and to analyse trends within the school through the use of data gathering and targeting for the purpose of school improvement and professional efficacy. It should also be noted that if an individual is not ready or able to commit themselves to the demands of each of the dimensions ahead of the application process, what guarantee is made that praxis will take hold on the part of the applicant should they gain a principal position?

An old psychological adage is that ‘past behaviours predict future success’. This is most certainly true in any environment and, as Robin Sharma (2010) identifies, an individual who is committed to the cause and is highly effective within an organisation does not require a leadership title to take ownership of the shared vision. The members of a community who assume leadership roles every day – without the need for a given title – are the individuals that a leader would want to mentor, because they are motivated intrinsically by the success of the whole and are potential future principals. Those who do not take up small leadership roles and expect grand titles are often motivated for other reasons (Marzano, 2003; Sharma, 2010), and typically, in my own experience, generate more work than success. Knowing the work ahead and still journeying towards the success of the school is, as Whitaker (2012) puts it, what great principals do differently.

7.0.1 Consistent School Administration Qualifications in Alberta

I have identified a problem from a provincial regulatory perspective, namely the inconsistent qualifications of school administration principals. Not all our participants had a master's degree when they began their principalship, and some participants only attained one after a few years in post. A consistent province-wide approach to qualification requirements would be beneficial. Currently in Alberta, there is an identified standard, which is not being adhered to on a province-wide basis as identified by our participants and by Mombourquette (2013). It is recommended that the current Teacher Qualification Standards Committee – a joint body of Alberta's Ministry of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association – develop a new area of denoting administration qualifications. Presently, the committee verifies education levels for salary purposes only. In future, this body could identify these same members and their educational qualifications in relation to principal leadership. This would take the responsibility away from individual districts and provide a consistent validation system from the body that already validates the same individuals' ability to teach students in Alberta. Similar to the teaching process, two tiers would be available for all current and prospective school administrators: an interim administrator certification (granted upon application and basic requirements being met) and a permanent administrator certification (granted upon all requirements being met). There will naturally be varying needs across the province given the numbers of newly-qualified principals the education system requires, and potential shortages might occur in the transitional stages, however the quality standards as recommended by provincial government would be met.

7.0.2 Administrator Professional Development and Requirements

The professional development of teachers is – and has been for many years – clearly organized and required by the Alberta Government. This is exemplified by the mandatory professional development two days a year for the Alberta Teachers’ Association conferences called ‘Teacher Conventions’. These two days are also mandatory for school administrator groups, yet there is a very limited number of school leadership sessions provided. The recommendation here is that gathering school administrators for two days of conferences – as a provincial requirement similar to that of the teachers’ group – needs to include content on strong leadership as well as administrative roles and responsibilities, all of which would add legitimacy to the claim that professional development is being provided to Alberta’s school administrators. Our participants identified the challenges with principal professional development access and this was exemplified by the scant knowledge of the APQS guidelines identified in the interview stage. Levine’s (2005) findings also show the US need for professional development programmes for school principals. Currently, our participating principals underlined that there are many avenues administrators can access for development, including the Alberta Teachers’ Association and their Council on School Administration but at this point participation in the council’s excellent programmes is voluntary and the participants themselves had little opportunity to access these. There is a suggestion for further research and the potential for further investigations into early career principals’ needs and the creation of province-wide programmes to address these development skill-set requirements.

7.0.3 Focusing on Master of Educational Leadership or Educational Policy Studies

Within my research, a very strong identification was made that the participants did not feel prepared or successful based on the master's degrees they attained outside of specific educational leadership-focused degrees. The Master of Religious Education and the Master in Educational Technologies degrees were both designed with leading a school in mind and as such the participants identified success from these programmes as they related directly to their professional leadership. All graduates from specified educational leadership-focused degrees testified that their programmes helped to prepare and assist them in their success as school administrators. The recommendation is that only master's degrees focusing on leadership programmes be recognised as relevant when applying for school administration positions (Levine, 2005; Marcos and Loose, 2014, 2015). The value of the subject-specific master's degrees should be regulated to the school subject department head applications and qualifications, and not seen as applying to school leadership where clearly a very different set of tools, skills and knowledge base are required.

7.0.4 Rigour in Master's Degree Programmes

Within the data from the principal participants a clear distinction in quality and professional rigour was made between masters degree-granting programmes that are available in Alberta, with some programmes identified by participants as being both quick and non-beneficial in terms of their day-to-day responsibilities. Some of these programmes

were identified by participants who had themselves completed the programmes, and some information was shared by the participants relaying perceptions based on communication with other course participants from different universities. This is identified by Levine (2005) as connected to the lowering of admission standards to master's programmes by higher education institutions and the perceived diluting of the programme content. Identifying some degree programmes as being rigorous and some as based on 'buy your degree with minimal effort', means that some oversight needs to be brought to bear so that all programmes are identified as meeting a minimum standard. The latter, as mentioned by most participants, needs to be raised (Labaree, 2004).

The recommendation, albeit a costly proposition, is to have the Teacher Qualifications Service evaluate the programmes on a frequent basis to identify which of them are acceptable. A direct approach with minimal costs would be if Alberta established comprehensive criteria whereby the universities who wanted to sell their degrees were required to submit their program for accreditation and receive a designation as a verified position qualification program. The level of programme rigour will need to be evaluated by a committee and agreed upon by many vested agencies, including the universities themselves. There will always be natural tiers between 'Ivy League' programmes and the rest, but raising the minimum standards will ensure graduates of these programmes will be qualified in all aspects and that school administrative positions cannot be bought. Some of the best programmes as identified by our participants and Levine (2005) included faculty who had served the majority of their careers in school principal positions or higher school district positions such as District Superintendent.

It is recommended that the current Teacher Qualification Standards Committee –a joint body of Alberta’s Ministry of Education and the Alberta Teachers’ Association – develop a new area denoted as ‘Administration Qualifications’. A future recommendation is that this same body could judge the quality of the university degrees being granted in terms of their contribution to furthering principal leadership.

7.0.5 Uniform Evaluative Measures for School Administrators

School administrator evaluations have been identified as lacking uniformity by our participants and by extension not uniform across the province. The recommendation is that the Alberta Government Ministry of Education along with the Alberta Teachers’ Association develops an extensive evaluative process with reference to the framework established by the APQS guidelines. Currently, these guidelines are being left open to interpretation by school districts. Our participants’ self-identified lack of knowledge and use of these is also evidence of a political framework whose foundation has not been built upon.

7.0.6 Ongoing Professional Development

As professionals our school-based administration teams and leaders in Alberta experience very busy and hectic days. Contributing or participating in professional development is often not considered a priority (Burger, 2000). Yet, as professionals it is a duty to keep informed and up to date on the most recent trends in education, informing oneself regarding new research and to the opportunity to engage in dialogue with our

administrative colleagues. A recommendation is that each school district, either on its own or with a smaller/larger school district within Alberta, create professional learning communities for school administration (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Davis et al., 2005). Our participants identified the many different methods used and how frequently their respective school districts gathered for professional development meetings for principals. The frequency average identified a total of two days a month for gatherings (or combination of half days). The topics or agenda items are often related to local issues or challenges within particular school districts, while almost none of the identified areas engaged in general leadership training. Participants identified from their experiences areas for improvement and from these, the following recommendations are drawn and recommended when planning administrative gatherings.

- At these administrator gatherings, a minimal amount of time allocation is recommended in order to meet the professional development goals of the Alberta Principal Quality Standards (Marzano, 2003);
- Bridges et al., (1995) suggests raising effectiveness by utilising examples of problem-based learning scenarios at each meeting, and that this would help develop appropriate courses of action as identified from each school district's policies;
- There is a need to allow action research to play a role when collecting data and developing goal-setting strategies for each school (Anderson, 1991). Some of the participants discussed using action research in their own master degree programmes, and that they had found it very meaningful and at times transformative in terms of their school community. Utilising action research as

suggested by Elliott (1991) for educational change may become a great motivator if deployed effectively and if given time for presentations at administrative meetings;

- It is recommended that a mentorship programme for principals is developed to engage with more seasoned principals (DuFour and Eaker, 1998). This would allow for the sharing of existing knowledge, especially in terms of school demographic differences alongside the establishment of an internship programme (Young and Levin, 2002; Stronge et al., 2008) directed at those aspiring to the position of school administrator or principal. Hosting administrative gatherings (Burger and Krueger, 2001) and utilising the power of a colleague's communication (Hattie, 2009) becomes a very powerful training basis for all involved, including those interested in applying for the position. Whitaker (2012) identifies these moments as having the potential to be both encouraging and informative for the new principal while also rekindling excitement in seasoned principals.

7.0.7 Effective and successful principals involved in the training and development of others

Levine's (2005) report has identified that only 6% of higher education faculty in education have had school principal experience and only 8% of faculty deans had superintendent experience, which has led to an outdated curriculum being served up to a hungry group of professionals. It is recommended that higher education institutions take serious measures to position themselves as competitive and relevant in this age of online and distance-learning options available to school administrators. The research data I

collected from our participants identified two very effective master's programmes, both either online or distance-learning styles. The use of retired school principals or superintendents as faculty in these programmes has been identified by Levine and our participants as very effective in terms of programme delivery. This would provide direct links to the specific needs of today's schools, a focus on leadership when being taught by faculty that have 'walked in the students' shoes' (Marzano, 2003, p. 124), thus providing a link to the APQS and its application across the province, and the design of training and development programmes to complement the demands of the annual school calendar rather than university semester patterns (Young and Levin, 2002).

7.0.8 Masters of Education in School Administration Leadership – a new era

Table 4 (p. 77) identifies the top courses as rated in the Levine (2005) report. Masters of Education degrees should be redesigned not only to stay competitive, but also to stay current. It is recommended that the identified themes are used as a content base for developing the skills of current and future school administrators. These programmes could be in part initiated within a school district–university partnership, as Browne-Ferrigno and Knoepfel (2005) identify. This would tailor the professional development programmes of school principals to the current challenges each district faces, while still operating within a data-driven, academic environment leading to a master's degree.

7.1 Explanations of Unanticipated Findings

On the basis of this study, it is difficult to be certain about the factors behind the APQS guidelines' missing influence on the Alberta school principal's role and daily routines. As noted above, the participants reflected a limited knowledge of these guidelines as well as the latter's rather slight impact on their profession. A contributing factor to our participants' lack of experience with the APQS guidelines may be because professional development choices are made locally by the school districts or by universities' master's degree programmes in education, and neither identify the APQS guidelines as valuable. Another contributing factor that was not identified or explored in this study was the extent to which the Alberta Government had advertised, communicated or released these guidelines to the education system. The unexpectedness of this finding is, however, a reflection of the study's participants, who are representative of the various school districts in Alberta.

7.2 Theoretical Implications of the Study

This study has illustrated that the literature delineates the characteristics of accomplished principals while our participants also made recommendations in terms of increasing the efficacy of school principals within the professional development framework of a university-awarded M.Ed. degree, specifically limiting the choice for school administrators to a degree in school leadership. A general theory of what constitutes good school leadership or what master's degree programmes engender in individuals in relation to good leadership skillsets is yet to be formulated. A potential explanation for the lack of a

unified framework for master's degrees in education leadership bringing success to school principals might be due to the latter's role being too varied and complex to generate a universal model.

7.3 Implications for Practice

The findings of this study continue to develop the basic theme and underlying goal of increasing the efficacy of the school principal in Alberta. The literature reviewed here supports the argument that increasing the principal's efficacy is the most effective way of generating change and ensuring success in our public schools. The development of appropriate skill sets and the characteristics of success in our school principals will affect the future of the Province of Alberta. Increasing the efficacy of school principals offers the prospect of realisable benefits including reducing staff: leave due to stress and illness; improving ethical and prudent financial management and savings; increasing teacher effectiveness; developing student success and achievement; ensuring the effectiveness of physical plant operations; aiding the instruction of special needs and learning-challenged students; and elevating educators' professional status. In short, a ripple effect could become visible, effectively changing practice and increasing the efficacy of the school principal and his or her professional designation. A recommendation to Alberta Education Department and the Minister of Education would be that the time for change is now when Alberta is prospering, and its education system is doing well against comparator countries, and when, due to immigration and birth rate, the province has a growing population. The

need for more schools and more principals in this province demands more effective principal development for Alberta to maintain its enviable position.

7.4 Reflection on Learning

Throughout this journey, my personal perception of my profession has changed in many ways. Originally, my inquiry interest was in part to debunk the myths around master's degrees and in other ways to increase self-efficacy. The inquiry itself was not easy to formulate into a manageable and researchable line of questioning. The benefit of this doctoral program with global students allowed me instant access to an international set of critical colleagues, many of whom understood the need for care, ethical and procedural rigour and political sensitivity, required when researching and working within the same field with colleagues. The opportunities to hear and compare professional issues cross-globe and cross-culturally inspired networking opportunities with colleagues both academically and professionally. An example of this could be seen in the many methodology discourses I had in the planning stages. At many points within my writing, these political tensions had challenged me to find ways to express clearly my participants' voices without compromising their identities and jeopardising their positions. These comments might have been every bit as true from the participants regarding their personal views on certain Higher Education Programs, but if publicly attributed to them, due to their positions of influence, could sway professional opinion. Understandably, positive public support for any master's program would increase revenue for that particular institution and could be seen as a conflict of interest. Our field of school principals holds our opinions,

reputations, successes and failures in the virtual fishbowl view of the public. Within this research, the participants felt relief that their identities were secure and so their comments came through as genuine. My representation of the data, careful not to misrepresent my colleagues, also demonstrated that political tensions need careful handling if they are not to affect our professional direction.

I have learned that, without question, the nature of our position as school principals is complex in every part of the world and no one system for job preparedness could be used as a general theory, something that is supported by the literature. The interactions and interviews with my participants showed that my concerns regarding my profession and the success of principals were also echoed by them. I see a great potential for further research within the narrow Alberta specific research field on school principal success and master's degree programs. I support the summary recommendations within this thesis and would like to acknowledge that at the beginning of this journey I would not have had the knowledge to have even identified the importance of half of them. This level of deep research has developed deep knowledge within my practice. In my discussions over the past years with Alberta colleagues, the questions and reflections that have resulted have indeed at the very least started these challenging conversations in various circles of influence around the province. I do not believe that change is imminent, but I do believe the importance of increasing school principal efficacy is on the event horizon within our professional field, and I hope that my small contribution will contribute to positive change.

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Appendix A

Study Number: H00018555
Date: May 1st, 2014



FAQ - Participant Information Sheet – Principal Interviews

How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta? And how might these programs be improved?

Researcher: Walter Kowalchyk, University of Liverpool

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what this involves. Please talk to others about the study if you wish to.

This sheet tells you why the study is taking place and what will happen if you take part and gives you more detailed information about the conduct of the study.

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

The Phases of the Study:

1. Expression of Interest Phase:
 - a. Online consent form for individuals who are interested in participating in the study. This phase is called the Expression of Interest Phase. The Data collected here will determine the Cohort of participants will be a broad representation of Alberta School Principals.
 - b. Five Questions comprise this section.
2. Interview and Survey Phase:
 - a. A subsequent paper consent form will be asked of the cohort selected for the interview and survey stage of this study.
 - b. A 20 min pre-interview questionnaire on basic questions that mainly establish demographics and experience of participants.
 - c. A 60 minute face-to-face (Skype) interview.

What is the purpose of this study?

The aim of the study is to determine what the contribution of M.Ed. degree study is to school principal success. The objective is to identify ways in which M.Ed.'s can be changed to improve their effectiveness in developing good leaders.

The fundamental questions of this research study are:

1. What does the province of Alberta suggest are the features and characteristics of a successful school principal?
2. What are school districts requirements for the position of school principal?
3. How does the design and content of masters degrees taken by aspiring principals aim to engender qualities of effective school leadership?
4. What do successful school principals see as the key characteristics of effective school principals?
5. What characteristics do successful principals see as a necessity in a Master's degree program that would adequately prepare them for the position?

This study will benefit employers, future principal candidates as well as the Master's program granting Higher Education institutions. An Understanding of the most effective aspects from the large number of Master's programs currently available in Alberta will inform higher education institutions in the design of the degrees they offer. The broader aim is that the findings will contribute in the improvement of principal efficacy and ultimately, improve the development of school leadership in providing quality education in our schools.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been selected based on your membership with the ATA School Council on Leadership, your current role as Principal of an Alberta school and the your expressed interest in participating in this research. The research will focus on a cohort of 10 participants who feel they are successful and broadly represent Alberta principals. I determine broad representation through the expression of interest questions then randomly select participants from this list of broadly representing Alberta Principals.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and be asked to sign a consent form at the start of the research study. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to take part, or withdraw, or not take part will not have any effect on you. Your details will be confidential and not communicated with anyone.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part of this research you will be asked to partake in a pre-interview survey which will be completed online and have a duration of approximately 20 minutes. Following the online survey, a face to face (via skype) interview that should last approximately 1 hour not including setup will be scheduled. This interview will include

additional questions in regard to your role and position as school principal but will focus on your reflections on your reflections on the nature of effective principalship and the experiences, training and any other factors that have contributed to your success in the role.

Interview audio/video recording.

I, (Walter Kowalchuk) as the researcher on the project, will be interviewing you in the face to face interview. During the face-to-face (Skype) interview I will be taking brief notes, but for the clarity of your responses as well as the priority of keeping these interviews focused on the discussions, with your permission, I would like to record the interview. The recordings are confidential to the project, and will only be listened to by the researcher and transcriber working for the researcher. Your name will not appear in the written transcription or in any reports or articles. I may include verbatim quotations from the sessions in reports, the research summary and articles, but your name will not be mentioned in any part of the written material and your identity and that of your school and area anonymized. I assure the participants that confidentiality will be of the utmost importance. I myself am a school principal and a member of the Council on School Leadership. As such I understand the importance of this data to be anonymized so the recorded interviews will be destroyed no later than 5 years following the research completion.

Are there any disadvantages or risks if I take part?

There are no risks or harms associated with taking part in this research. However if you have said something that has been recorded, and you wish that you had not said it, or you do not wish it to be repeated in any way, then you can ask that it is not included as part of the research data. You will be sent a transcript of the conversation interview to confirm the data collected is truly representative of the conversation, your views and your opinions.

Are there any benefits of taking part?

There are no direct personal benefits to taking part in this study as the information is anonymous. I hope that the conclusions from this study will support the development of highly effective school principals in Alberta. As such this study will have a professional benefit to you and your colleagues as the efficacy and success of all Alberta principals may increase. You will be sent a copy of any reports arising from the study.

What happens when the research study stops?

After the researcher has collected the data for the study, I will spend some time analyzing it, which will contribute to the thesis. A written summary of the findings in the thesis will be provided to all participants.

What if there is a problem?

Any complaint about the study will be addressed, and more detailed information is below.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, all the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The details are included below.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide that you want to withdraw from the study, then depending on what you wish to happen, your data can be withdrawn from our analysis, or you can have your contribution so far included.

What if there is a problem?

Should you have a concern about any aspect of your involvement with this research project, you should ask to speak with the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions and address any concerns in the first instance, Walter Kowalchuk, (780)970-3752. If you remain unhappy, and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University of Liverpool Complaints Procedure. Details can be obtained from the researcher or from the University of Liverpool (0151) 794 8290.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, your taking part in the study will be kept confidential to the project. All data will be anonymized, and stored securely for a maximum of 5 years, and then destroyed. The anonymized data will be seen only by members of the research team (Researcher and Supervisor), and will not be used for a further study. Your name will not be used in any published material resulting from the study, including reports. These procedures are compliant with the Data Protection Act (UK-1998).

Will I be paid for participating, or will I need to pay anything?

No, you will not be paid nor will you need to pay for anything by participating.

Who is organizing and funding this research?

This research is not being funded by any organization and will contribute to my doctoral-level thesis, and I am a member of the Council on School Leadership as a school principal

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Liverpool ethics committee.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Walter Kowalchuk, (780)970-3752, or at 104 Clarkdale Drive, Sherwood Park, AB. T8H 2J7

**You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet and a
signed consent form to keep.
Thank you for considering taking part in this research project**

Consent Form – ONLINE Expression of Interest Form

How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta? And how might these programs be improved?

Researcher: Walter Kowalchyk, University of Liverpool

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and to ask questions, and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I understand that the researcher (Walter Kowalchyk) will be using the information given in the Online Expression of interest form as the only basis to form a cohort of 10 participants for the formal study. My name and contact email will not be used in this selection process; only the answers I have given will be used to form the interview and survey cohort. The questions asked are demographic in nature and will assist the researcher in selecting a random, but broadly representative group of Alberta school based principals.

4. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.

5. I agree to submit my online Expression of interest and take part in this form survey.

Yes - Continue

BY SELECTING YES to the above questions please continue to the next set of questions, which contain the 'online expression of interest to participate' questions.

Online Expression of Interest to Participate in Study Questions:

Please note:

These Questions, not your contact name or email will used to select a broad representative sample of participants from Alberta School Principals.

Today's Date: _____

Name: _____

Contact preferred email: _____

Please indicate the appropriate answer for the corresponding question:

	Question		
1.	Are you currently employed as a public school principal in Alberta?	Yes	No
2.	Is the school you are Principal of classified as a rural or urban school?	Rural	Urban
3.	Do you identify yourself to be a successful* school principal? *Definition of 'Successful' varies from person to person, the important meaning here is that you self-identify that you are successful.	Yes	No
4.	Have you been a principal in more than one school?	Yes	No
5.	Gender	Male	Female
6.	Have you been a principal for more then 5 school years, only the current year is required to be in Alberta.	Yes	No
7.	Are you willing to participate in both a 60min face to face (skype is an option) interview and a 20 min survey surrounding questions about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • characteristics that make principals successful • What constitutes a successful school leader? • What should make up the components in Principal Leadership training and in Masters of Education Degree Programs? 	Yes	No

When you have completed the above 5 questions and are ready to submit your Expression of interest, please press the submit the button:

Thank you for submitting your name as an interested participant for this research project.
You will be contacted shortly by the researcher.

Submit

Study Number: H00018555
Participant Identifier:
Date: May 1st, 2014



**How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the
success of school principals in Alberta?
And how might these programs be improved?**

Researcher: Walter Kowalchuk, University of Liverpool

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your expressed interest in participating in the research study *'How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the success of school principals in Alberta? And how might these programs be improved?'*.

Based on your initial demographic information submitted and a randomized selection process that has created a broadly represented cohort of Alberta school principals, your participation will not be asked for.

I thank you for taking the time to answer the questions asked. Your interest in participating in this study identifies you as a committed Alberta School Principal living the professional practice asked not only by our Alberta Teachers Association but also by all Albertan's in pushing our profession forward!

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the reports generated by this study, please contact me at any time and copies will be forwarded when ready.

Once again, thank you for participating to this point in the study, your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Walter Kowalchuk
Ed.D. Student
University of Liverpool

Walter.kowalchuk@ecsd.net
Office Phone: 780-435-4949

Consent Form – Participant Pre-Interview Survey and Interview
How far do master’s degrees in education contribute to the
success of school principals in Alberta?
And how might these programs be improved?

Researcher: Walter Kowalchyk, University of Liverpool

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and to ask questions, and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline

3. I understand that the researcher (Walter Kowalchyk) will be conducting the following interview, taking notes, and also audio/video recording of the interview.

4. I understand that the recording of the interview discussion will be transcribed, and quotes from the discussion may be reproduced verbatim in a written summary, and/or a report, and/or a published journal article, but my name will not be included. I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications.

5. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.

6. I agree to take part in the above study

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Study Number: H00018555
Participant Identifier:
Date: May 1st, 2014



Participant Pre- Interview Survey
~20 min for response time

**How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the
success of school principals in Alberta?
And how might these programs be improved?**

Researcher: Walter Kowalchyk, University of Liverpool

- 1. What is your gender?**
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
- 2. What are your total years of experience as principal?**
 - a. 5 to 7 years
 - b. 7 to 10 years
 - c. 10 to 15 years
 - d. 15 or more years
3. Do you prefer a face-to-face interview over a skype style interview?
4. Based on your availability please provide three potential dates and times that would work best to schedule an interview, based on your preference in Question 3.
- 5. What level of university degrees you have obtained and please indicate level of agreement?** (Multiple answers accepted, please Indicate concentrations where appropriate)

Please indicate all higher education qualifications. (Concentrations where appropriate)	Have you Completed this Degree or training?	Has been valuable in informing my work as a principal 1 being "Strongly Disagree" to 5 being "Strongly Agree"	This has contributed to my development as a school teacher	This has contributed to my development as a school principal.	This degree had prepared me to meet the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines
a. Undergraduate Teaching degree					
b. Masters level degree in Education					
i. _____					
c. Undergraduate degree(s) outside of Education					
i. _____					
ii. _____					
d. Masters Level degree outside of education					
i. _____					
ii. _____					
e. Post graduate level Degree (Ed.D or Ph.D)					
i. _____					
ii. _____					

6. List any other additional training you considered valuable to add in this conversation from the last two years. What was the name of the training and please provide a brief summary about the content that you found valuable from them.
i. _____

About your role

7. Briefly describe what is your current leadership role:
8. School Name:
9. How many years were you/have you been a School Principal
1, 2 ,3, 4, 5-10, 11+
10. How many schools have you been principal of
1, 2 ,3, 4, 5-10, 11+
11. How many years were you/have you been an Assistant principal
1, 2 ,3, 4, 5-10, 11+
12. How many schools were you assistant principal of
1, 2 ,3, 4, 5-10, 11+
13. How many years were you/have you been only school teacher and not an administrator?
1, 2 ,3, 4, 5-10, 11+

About your current school

14. Please indicate a general demographic description about your current school

About your success as a school principal

15. Please describe aspects of your success, and what you consider to be success for a principal.

Professional development as a school principal

16. Have you received professional development related to Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Guideline? If so, how has it impacted your practice?
17. Which statement do you agree with most and why:
 - a. A principal is successful based entirely on the experiences or 'on the job training' rather than formal education degrees such as a Master's in Education.
 - b. A principal is successful based entirely on formal education degrees such as a Master's in Education rather than experiences or 'on the job training'.

Study Number: H00018555
Participant Identifier:
Date: May 1st, 2014



**Participant Face to Face (Skype potential) Interview
~60 Min Interview**

**How far do master's degrees in education contribute to the
success of school principals in Alberta?
And how might these programs be improved?**

Researcher: Walter Kowalchyk, University of Liverpool

Questions:

Introduction Section:

1. How would you describe your own leadership style?
2. What have been the main influences on your approach to leadership?
3. If you were interviewing a candidate for principal what would you say should be the key leadership characteristics that you would look for?

Understanding of Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines:

4. Using the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines as starting points (large printout will be made available for participant to reference), Can you provide examples where you can directly link your success to the domains of the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines?

Design and content of masters degrees taken by aspiring principals aim to engender qualities of effective school leadership:

5. Do you believe that current Education Masters Degree Programs are designed to bring leadership successes for principals? Can you provide some examples?
6. What characteristics are missing from Masters Degree programs that would greatly prepare and benefit principals today?
7. How do you see the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines as being incorporated into the preparation (through masters level training), hiring and evaluating of Alberta Principals?
8. If you were to design a Masters of Education program that would be a mandatory prerequisite for all Principals in Alberta, what would be your top five ingredients and why?

Study Number: H00018555
Participant Identifier:
Date: April 1st, 2014

Consent Form – Participant Survey and Interview
How far do master’s degrees in education contribute to the
success of school principals in Alberta?
And how might these programs be improved?

Researcher: Walter Kowalchyk, University of Liverpool

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and to ask questions, and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that the researcher (Walter Kowalchyk) will be conducting the following interview, taking notes, and also audio/video recording the of the interview.

4. I understand that the recording of the interview discussion will be transcribed, and quotes from the discussion may be reproduced verbatim in a written summary, and/or a report, and/or a published journal article, but my name will not be included.

5. I agree to take part in the above study

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix B

Alberta Education. (2009). *Principal quality practice guideline: Promoting successful school leadership in Alberta*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

The Principal Quality Practice Guideline: Promoting Successful School Leadership in Alberta



Alberta
Education

ALBERTA EDUCATION CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Alberta. Alberta Education.

Principal quality practice guideline : promoting successful school leadership in Alberta.

French version: Guide pour une pratique de qualité à l'intention de la direction d'école : pour encourager le leadership scolaire en Alberta

This document is available online at:

<http://education.alberta.ca/admin/resources.aspx>

ISBN 978-0-7785-7534-4

1. School principals – Alberta. 2. Educational leadership – Alberta. 3. School management and organization – Alberta. I. Title.

LB2831.926.C2 A333 2009 371.201 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alberta has earned an international reputation for excellence in education. The contributions of principals in fostering commitment, collaboration and cooperation among community members are key factors in this achievement. In recent years, the duties and expectations of the principal have expanded and become increasingly complex. As a consequence, all school leaders need to acquire sophisticated knowledge and develop the skills that research and experience have concluded are necessary for effective practice. The Principal Quality Practice Guideline (PQPG) takes into account the leadership responsibilities and expectations that principals face today and will face for the foreseeable future.

The Ministry of Education (Education) acknowledges with sincere appreciation the contributions that the following educational partners have made, through their representation on the Alberta Commission on Learning Recommendation 76 Stakeholder Advisory Committee and their commitment to use the PQPG as a means of ensuring that Alberta schools are led by qualified, dedicated and effective leaders.

- Ms. Elizabeth Dobrovolsky, Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA)
- Mr. Sig Schmold, Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
- Ms. Jacqueline Skytt, Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Dr. Brian Boese, Alberta Teachers' Association-Council of School Administration (CSA)
- Dr. Mark Yurick, Alberta Teachers' Association-Council of School Administration (CSA)
- Dr. Alyce Oosterhuis, Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta
- Ms. Diane Gibson, Alberta Association of Public Charter Schools
- Dr. James Brandon, College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
- Mr. James Gibbons, Council on Alberta Teaching Standards (COATS)
- Mr. Gérard Bissonnette, La Fédération des conseil scolaires francophone de l'Alberta
- Mr. Dick Baker, Concordia University College
- Dr. Florence Gobeil-Dwyer, Campus St. Jean
- Dr. Glenn Rideout, The King's University College
- Dr. Janice Wallace, University of Alberta
- Dr. Jacqueline Ottmann, University of Calgary
- Dr. George Bedard, University of Lethbridge
- Dr. Garry McKinnon, Committee Facilitator
- Dr. Mark Swanson, Alberta Education
- Ms. Gail Sarkany-Coles, Alberta Education
- Mr. Marc Prefontaine, Alberta Education
- Dr. Bob Garneau, Alberta Education Alternate representatives:

- Mr. Henri Lemire, Le Fédération des conseil scolaires francophone de l'Alberta

- Ms. Caroline Parker, Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools (AAPCS)

- Mr. Duane Plantinga, Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta (AISCA)

FOREWARD

Alberta's Commission on Learning (ACOL) made 95 recommendations to government in its report, *Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds*, released in October 2003. Recommendation 76 identified the need to develop a principal quality practice standard and to identify the knowledge, skills and attributes required of principals.

The Commission noted that a principal quality practice standard with clearly stated knowledge, skills and attributes should form the basis for:

- recruiting principals,
- preparing school principals and
- assessing each principal's performance.

Education reviewed the Commission's recommendation, current provincial legislation and policies related to the role of the school principal, Canadian and international school leadership research literature regarding the competencies required of principals, as well as the standards of practice or performance expected of school principals in their complex and multi-faceted roles as school-based instructional and education leaders.

Based on this review, Education believes that the opportunities for all students to learn and achieve expected learning outcomes would be further enhanced if a document were created that outlines the competencies for the quality practice of Alberta principals.

Presently, provincial legislation does not specify the competencies required of a school principal in Alberta; it only requires that a principal be a certificated teacher. Section 19 of the *School Act (Act)* states that a school board shall designate a number of teachers as principals and assign a principal to each school. Section 20 of the *Act* outlines current legislated duties and obligations of the principal of a school. Section 95 of the *Act* allows a board to designate a teacher to be an acting principal for a period of not more than one year.

DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT

In June 2005, a stakeholder advisory committee was formed and, through a process of roundtable discussion and consensus building, developed a draft Principal Quality Practice document outlining the dimensions and relevant descriptors of a principal's role.

The Alberta Commission on Learning Recommendation 76 Stakeholder Advisory Committee (Committee) referred to the work of the ASBA, ATA, CASS, AHSCA and the United States Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and concluded that the research literature and Education stakeholders appear to agree that individuals designated as principals require a broad repertoire of competencies to successfully fulfill their complex and critical roles within the education system.

In May 2006, a draft of the Principal Quality Practice document was sent to all school principals, superintendents of schools, school boards, school council chairpersons and stakeholder groups for their review and comments. A field review response draft of the document was made available on Education's website for public comment.

Regional focus groups were held throughout the province in fall 2006. Principals employed in public and private schools, teachers, school council members, school superintendents, and school trustees and key stakeholder groups were invited to attend. The Committee reviewed and revised the draft Principal Quality Practice document on the basis of the feedback collected. In December 2008, the Committee supported Education's issue of the document as the *Principal Quality Practice Guideline*; Education will issue the document in Spring 2009. Education, in cooperation with its stakeholders, is developing a School Leadership Framework to establish supports for the *Principal Quality Practice Guideline* that will serve to promote its future use as a provincial requirement.

INTRODUCTION

THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The role of school principal has evolved over the past half-century. As schools became larger, the traditional role of the school principal as head-or principal-teacher responsible for teaching and learning within a school was expanded with the addition of greater administrative responsibilities. The principal's role has become more focused on the management of teaching and learning within the school, consistent with local school board and provincial policies and directions.

Policymakers assumed that significant, positive teaching experience generally provided individuals with sufficient preparation to assume the office of school principal. Therefore, Alberta, like most other Canadian provinces, required only that an individual designated as a school principal be a certificated teacher. However, some Alberta school authorities increasingly recognized that teaching qualifications and successful teaching experience alone were insufficient to prepare individuals to serve as school principals. Over time, school boards have increasingly required that individuals interested in being considered for the principalship hold post-graduate diplomas or degrees in education administration or leadership.

To ensure that all students across Alberta have the best possible opportunities to learn, Education maintains responsibility for key provincial standards and policies, such as approved programs of study, provincial achievement and diploma testing programs and the development of the *Teaching Quality Standard Ministerial Order*. In the interest of ensuring the best possible quality of basic education for all Alberta students, Education also strengthened the accountability of school authorities, schools and teachers.

In this context, the responsibilities of principals and key competencies they require have significantly increased. School mission and goal development, issue identification, priority-setting, school improvement planning, financial and human resource management and development, information gathering and data-based decision-making, public and community relations and educational accountability and reporting system requirements are now key expectations of the Alberta school principal.

Moreover, as part of an accountable and open education system, the school principal is required to focus more than ever on the core purpose of the school – providing all students with the best possible opportunities to learn. Consequently, school principals must have a deep and thorough knowledge of teaching and learning so that they are able to serve as instructional, educational and organizational leaders focused on the school's core purpose.

This PQPG represents a first step in a process to develop a framework for quality school leadership in Alberta. It includes a statement on Principal Quality Practice and seven leadership dimensions, with supporting descriptors, reflecting the Alberta context. The PQPG is to be used as a basis for many activities including: principal preparation and recruitment, principals' self-reflection and daily practice, principals' initial and ongoing professional growth and principal supervision, evaluation and practice review. It also provides a reference for faculties of education in developing and delivering principal preparation programs, for teachers and vice-principals who are preparing for school leadership roles, for beginning principals in their efforts to meet stakeholder expectations and for superintendents in their supervision and evaluation of principals.

PRINCIPAL QUALITY PRACTICE AND LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS

Principal Quality Practice

The principal is an accomplished teacher who practices quality leadership in the provision of opportunities for optimum learning and development of all students in the school.

Principal Quality Practice applies to all formal school leaders, including assistant and vice principals. In accepting the legislated and school authority mandated leadership responsibilities, all school leaders are expected to commit to fulfilling the leadership dimensions contained in the PQPG throughout their careers. The leadership dimensions and their descriptors are interrelated and link to school leaders' daily practice; however, they are not presented in rank order. Reasoned, evidence-based, professional judgment must be used to determine whether these leadership dimensions are demonstrated by a school leader in a given context.

1. Leadership Dimension - Fostering Effective Relationships

The principal builds trust and fosters positive working relationships, on the basis of appropriate values and ethical foundations, within the school community -- students, teachers and other staff, parents, school council and others who have an interest in the school.

Descriptors The principal:

- a) acts with fairness, dignity and integrity
- b) demonstrates a sensitivity to and genuine caring for others and cultivates a climate of mutual respect
- c) promotes an inclusive school culture respecting and honouring diversity
- d) demonstrates responsibility for all students and acts in their best interests
- e) models and promotes open, inclusive dialogue
- f) uses effective communication, facilitation, and problem-solving skills
- g) supports processes for improving relationships and dealing with conflict within the school community
- h) adheres to professional standards of conduct.

2. Leadership Dimension -Embodying Visionary Leadership

The principal collaboratively involves the school community in creating and sustaining shared school values, vision, mission and goals.

Descriptors The principal:

- a) communicates and is guided by an educational philosophy based upon sound research, personal experience and reflection
- b) provides leadership in keeping with the school authority's vision and mission
- c) meaningfully engages the school community in identifying and addressing areas for school improvement
- d) ensures that planning, decision-making, and implementation strategies are based on a shared vision and an understanding of the school culture
- e) facilitates change and promotes innovation consistent with current and future school community needs
- f) analyzes a wide range of data to determine progress towards achieving school goals

- g) communicates and celebrates school accomplishments to inspire continuous growth.

3. Leadership Dimension - Leading a Learning Community

The principal nurtures and sustains a school culture that values and supports learning.

Descriptors

The principal: a) promotes and models life-long learning for students, teachers and other staff b) fosters a culture of high expectations for students, teachers and other staff c) promotes and facilitates meaningful professional development for teachers and other staff d) facilitates meaningful parental involvement and ensures they are informed about their child's learning and development.

4. Leadership Dimension - Providing Instructional Leadership

The principal ensures that all students have ongoing access to quality teaching and learning opportunities to meet the provincial goals of education.

Descriptors

The principal: a) demonstrates a sound understanding of current pedagogy and curriculum b) implements strategies for addressing standards of student achievement c) ensures that student assessment and evaluation practices throughout the school are fair, appropriate and balanced d) implements effective supervision and evaluation to ensure that all teachers consistently meet the Alberta Teaching Quality Standard e) ensures that appropriate pedagogy is utilized in response to various dimensions of student diversity f) ensures that students have access to appropriate programming based on their individual learning needs g) recognizes the potential of new and emerging technologies, and enables their meaningful integration in support of teaching and learning h) ensures that teachers and other staff communicate and collaborate with parents and community agencies, where appropriate, to support student learning i) supports the use of community resources to enhance student learning.

5. Leadership Dimension - Developing and Facilitating Leadership

The principal promotes the development of leadership capacity within the school community — students, teachers and other staff, parents, school council for the overall benefit of the school community and education system.

Descriptors

The principal: a) demonstrates informed decision making through open dialogue and consideration of multiple perspectives b) promotes team building and shared leadership among members of the school community

- c) facilitates meaningful involvement of the school community, where appropriate, in the school's operation using collaborative and consultative decision-making strategies d) identifies and mentors teachers for future educational leadership roles.

6. Leadership Dimension - Managing School Operations and Resources

The principal manages school operations and resources to ensure a safe and caring, and effective learning environment.

Descriptors

The principal: a) effectively plans, organizes and manages the human, physical and financial resources of the school and identifies the areas of need; b) ensures that school operations align with legal frameworks such as: provincial legislation, regulation and policy; as well as school authority policy, directives and initiatives; c) utilizes principles of teaching, learning and student development to guide management decisions and the organization of learning.

7. Leadership Dimension - Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context

The principal understands and responds appropriately to the political, social, economic, legal and cultural contexts impacting the school.

Descriptors

The principal: a) advocates for the needs and interests of children and youth b) demonstrates a knowledge of local, national, and global issues and trends related to education c) assesses and responds to the unique and diverse community needs in the context of the school's vision and mission d) advocates for the community's support of the school and the larger education system.

Appendix C

Participant Pre-Interview Survey

18. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
19. What are your total years of experience as a school administrator?
 - a. 5 to 7 years
 - b. 7 to 10 years
 - c. 10 to 15 years
 - d. 15 or more years
20. What are your total years of experience as a principal?
 - a. 5 to 7 years
 - b. 7 to 10 years
 - c. 10 to 15 years
 - d. 15 or more years
21. What level of university degrees you have obtained and please indicate level of agreement? (Multiple answers accepted, please indicate concentrations where appropriate)

Pre-Interview Question: Education of participant

Please indicate all higher education qualifications. (Concentrations where appropriate)	Have you Completed this Degree or training?	Has been valuable in informing my work as a principal 1 being "Strongly Disagree" to 5 being "Strongly Agree"	This has contributed to my development as a school teacher	This has contributed to my development as a school principal.	This degree had prepared me to meet the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Guidelines
a. Undergraduate teaching degree					
b. Master's level degree in Education					
i. _____					
c. Undergraduate degree(s) outside of education					
i. _____					
ii. _____					
d. Master's level degree outside of education					
i. _____					
ii. _____					
e. Postgraduate-level degree (EdD or PhD)					
i. _____					
ii. _____					

22. List any other additional training you considered valuable to add in this conversation from the last two years. What was the name of the training and please provide a brief summary about the content that you found valuable from them.
i.
ii.

About your role

- 23. Briefly describe what is your current leadership role:
- 24. School name:

25. How many years were you/have you been a school principal
1, 2, 3, 4, 5-10, 11+
26. How many schools have you been principal of
1, 2, 3, 4, 5-10, 11+
27. How many years were you/have you been an assistant principal
1, 2, 3, 4, 5-10, 11+
28. How many schools were you assistant principal of
1, 2, 3, 4, 5-10, 11+
29. How many years were you/have you been 'only' school teacher and not an administrator?
1, 2, 3, 4, 5-10, 11+

About your current school

30. Please indicate a general demographic description about your current school

About your success as a school principal

31. Please describe aspects of your success, and what you consider to be success for a principal.

Professional development as a school principal

32. Have you received professional development related to Alberta's Principal Quality Practice Guideline? If so, how has it impacted your practice?
33. Which statement do you agree with most and why:
- a. A principal is successful based entirely on the experiences or 'on the job training' rather than formal education degrees such as a master's in Education.
 - b. A principal is successful based entirely on formal education degrees such as a Master's in Education rather than experiences or 'on the job training'.