Principal Efficacy:

Implications for Rural 'Grow Your Own' Leadership Programs

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Although "grow your own" principal preparation programs have become a popular method for recruiting and selecting administrator candidates for hard to fill positions in both urban and rural schools, "grow your own" prinicpal candidates in rural contexts may be more vulnerable to the phenomenon of loss of self-efficacy. This study suggests that conditions related to candidate recruitment, social isolation, changing relationships with former colleagues, and lack of mentoring support can negatively affect aspiring principals' beliefs and ultimately actions in leading rural schools. This study examines the loss of self-efficacy phenomenon, and suggests how university /school district partnerships might work to develop effective recruitment, support, and mentoring practices for rural 'grow your own'candidates.

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) assert that in addition to research-based curricula and instructional practices, education leadership programs should also look to provide experiences and supportive structures that build aspiring principals' self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) suggests that self-efficacy is vital to school leader success because efficacious leaders set higher goals, are more able to adapt to changing contexts and are more persistent in overcoming obstacles. Luthans and Peterson (2002) determined that leader self-efficacy had a positive effect on employees' engagement with their work. Similarly, Goddard and Salloum (2011) found that leader self-efficacy enhanced schools' collective efficacy and faculty's ability to innovate and promote higher levels of student achievement. As leader self-efficacy development is dependent on personal accomplishment, learning from others and socialization experiences, self-efficacy can either increase or decline based on the processes under which new principals are selected into leadership, the social conditions present in the schools they are assigned to lead, and the degree of mentoring and assistance they receive during their initial training and placement (Tschannen-Morna & Gareis, 2007).

Because leader self-efficacy can have a positive influence on the attitudes and motivations of teachers as well as student achievement (Goddard & Salloum, 2011),, and because leader recruitment and retention has become especially challenging in small rural environments, understanding the conditions that may impact efficacy can assist school districts and universities to more effectively partner to recruit, train and mentor leaders for rural schools.

Because of recruitment challenges, many rural districts develop leadership from within their teaching ranks (Joseph, 2009). Although such initiatives are commonplace in urban areas (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Joseph, 2009), questions arise as to how successful such programs are in developing self-efficacy in prospective school leaders. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the conditions that may impact the sense of efficacy among rural "grow your own" leaders and consider how preparation programs and rural districts might work together in meeting the needs of "grow your own" principals.

Finding efficacious school leaders is difficult. Schools across the country are faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining highly qualified principals who are capable of building human capital and implementing school improvement processes for increased student achievement (Educational Research Services, 2000; Institute of Educational Leadership, 2005; Quinn, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). There is a crisis in both quantity, as noted in the availability of principal candidates across the K-12 spectrum (Educational Research Services, 2000), and quality in regard to training experiences that adequately prepare principals for the complexity of leading contemporary schools (Levine, 2005).

Commentary on effective leader preparation has evolved steadily over the last two decades with numerous published studies detailing new paradigms that suggest the necessity for program change specifically with respect to recruitment and selection, integration of academic work with clinical practice and mentoring (Darling- Hammond, Lapointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Southern Regional Education Board, 2009).

Although issues of recruitment and selection, in particular, impact many schools regardless of size or

location, they may be especially problematic in rural communities where pools of applicants are small, or non-existent (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Lack of mentoring, low salaries, geographic isolation and scarce resources make recruiting quality candidates extremely challenging (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Additionally, the work in rural schools requires principals to hone several different skill sets and assume multiple responsibilities.

Rural school leaders have to be generalists. Typically, school systems in rural America do not have assistant superintendents or a lot of other centrally focused staff such as federal programs directors or department chairs. Rural school leaders must be prepared to do many things, and the training programs must be multi-faceted (IEL, 2005). Because rural leaders frequently lead single administrator schools or districts, the need for purposeful mentoring between districts and universities is vital in ensuring that new leaders are provided the support and encouragement for developing skills in all facets of school leadership.

Based on the complexities and challenges of rural environments, and the need for efficacy building experiences for leader success, it is prudent to examine rural leader selection and mentoring within these contexts.

To frame this study, a review of selected literature focuses on these inter-related topics: the importance of leader self-efficacy to school success, the ways in which rural contexts may affect leadership, leader shortage and principal turnover, the increase in 'grow your own leader' programs, and the potential for loss of efficacy during grow your own programs, and. the conditions under which self-efficacy may decline.

Importance of Leader Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy theory provides a conceptual framework through which to examine the factors of effective leadership and the ways in which these factors enhance school success and student growth. Bandura (1997) presented the construct of self-efficacy as the missing piece for understanding how people's beliefs about their capabilities influence their actions and ultimately their success. "The stronger their beliefs, the more vigorous and persistent are people's efforts" (Bandura, 1997, p. 394). Perceptions of self-efficacy can be either positive and empower people to action, or negative, and cause people doubt, resulting in inaction. Four sources generate self-efficacy development: *mastery experience* - successfully completing a specific task; *vicarious experience* - learning by watching others; *social persuasion* - influential mentors persuading people to believe they can successfully complete a

task; and *psychological arousal* - the degree to which people look forward to, or dread a specific task (Bandura, 1997).

Darling-Hammond, La Pointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) identified the need for principal preparation programs to address self-efficacy. They observed, "Those who are prepared in innovative, high quality programs are more likely to become instructional leaders who are committed to the job and efficacious in their work" (Darling Hammond, et al., 2007, p.6.) Specific kinds of preparation program experiences may be designed to provide aspiring principals with opportunities for self-efficacy development. Mastery experiences may be developed where students learn about specific theories and apply those theories to case studies and problem-based learning assignments. Vicarious learning can be built into experiences where students meet and learn from effective school leaders who discuss, illustrate and model how to accomplish school improvement initiatives. Social persuasion becomes possible as faculty mentors arrange learning experiences that provide new leaders with challenges that also promote success. Finally, as aspiring principals learn to cope with greater levels of stress and conquer feelings of inadequacy, their beliefs about becoming successful school leaders increase.

Wahlstrom, Seashore-Louis, Leithwood and Anderson (2010) suggested that self-efficacy was a necessary component of successful school leadership because it affects choices principals make about what activities in which to engage as well as the coping strategies they employ as challenges emerge. They concluded that principals' sense of efficacy and their ability to influence others was vital to accomplishing instructional leadership practices associated with setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program.

Loss of Leader Self-Efficacy

Just as an emerging sense of efficacy can build leader engagement, the loss of efficacy for aspiring principals can be incapacitating. Since new leaders have had few successful mastery performances to draw inspiration from, their sense of self-efficacy is especially vulnerable and may actually decrease as they confront challenging situations with varying levels of success or failure (Bandura, 2009). Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) found that job burnout is characterized by inefficacy. Loss of self-efficacy inhibits a leader's ability to set higher goals, and can negatively affect the performance of followers and their commitment to organizational goals (McCormick, 2001). Principals who experience this perception of loss regarding their leadership

capabilities have little chance of achieving success with reform strategies (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007).

Leader Shortage and Principal Turnover

In 2000, the National Association of Secondary School Principals surveyed district level superintendents about the availability of candidates for principal positions and found a gap between leadership positions and qualified candidates to fill them. Quinn (2002) stated:

> This shortage occurred among rural schools (52%), suburban schools (45%), and urban schools (47%). These shortages of qualified principal candidates also occurred at all levels: elementary (47%), junior high/middle (55%), and senior high (55%). (Quinn, 2002, p.25.)

Not only are qualified candidates difficult to find, there is also concern about their mobility and the effect that leader transition has on school improvement processes and student achievement.

A 2010 Wallace Foundation report indicated that typically, principal turnover occurs rapidly: once every three to four years. Rapid principal turnover has significant negative effects on school culture and consequently, student achievement, (Wahlstrom, et al., 2010). While leader succession difficulties exist across urban, suburban and rural schools, recruitment of school leaders to work in rural contexts may present even greater challenges. First, rural tax bases have been eroded due to depopulation; fewer taxpayers means less taxes collected which affects districts' abilities to pay competitive salaries, provide current resources and maintain school facilities and technology infrastructures (Ayers, 2011). Second, the workload and expectations of rural leader positions may also negatively influence leader recruitment. In larger districts, school leaders have access to other professionals who typically manage federal and state level programs, organize curricula, and design professional development for staff. Rural administrators are usually the only leaders in schools and may be the only leader in a district; they may have sole responsibility for coordinating all federal and state programs, organizing professional development and curricular revisions, mentoring all teachers and supervising all student extracurricular activities (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Lastly, isolation and lack of socialization opportunities may inhibit recruiting and retaining leaders in rural contexts. Hite, Reynolds and Hite, (2010) examined networks of rural principals and found that principals who had access to networks of more experienced leaders in their own schools or districts experienced greater access to information, collaboration and shared

problem-solving. Principals with limited access to leader networks expressed feelings of social and professional isolation as well as job dissatisfaction. In light of these leader recruitment and retention issues faced by rural schools, researchers identified the need to address recruitment strategies, and rural leader preparation (Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Wood, Finch & Mirecki, 2013 ;).

The Rise of "Grow Your Own" Leadership Programs

As the focus on school quality and leader accountability has increased, education leadership programs have become the focus of increased scrutiny and criticism (Levine, 2005). Alternative training programs such as "grow your own" leader academies have emerged from preparation program critiques as school districts and schools of education have looked to develop new paradigms for principal certification and licensure. Following is a review of program criticisms, features of exemplary programs and the development of "grow your own" leader preparation.

Criticisms of Traditional Preparation Programs

In the last decade, principal preparation programs have been criticized for a variety of reasons including selection and recruitment, disconnect between theory and practice, weak faculty, and sporadic internship/field experience requirements (Creighton & Jones, 2001; Levine, 2005). Few programs were found that exhibited rigor in the selection and recruitment process; fewer yet actively reached out to talented individuals (Creighton & Jones, 2001). Levine's (2005) criticism of preparation programs faulted overreliance on weak, adjunct faculty for failing to promote a theoretical framework that marries the best research with real world practices. Finally, although support for clinical practice (internships) was widely professed, huge variations existed with regards to the scope and design of internships (Gray, Fry, Bottoms & O'Neill, 2007).

Exemplary Preparation Practices

In attempts to identify and describe effective practices in contemporary leader preparation, researchers have detailed research-based program components necessary to insure that principal candidates gain the skills and knowledge needed to lead schools effectively. Two studies by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute (2007) and the Southern Regional Education Board (2006) have illuminated common program features that support

principal candidates though the integration of people and experiences that build leadership. Exemplary programs feature these common attributes:
1. Partnerships with school districts that recruit highly skilled teachers for school leadership, and engage expert practitioners in mentoring aspiring school leaders.
2. Standards based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership throughout coursework and clinical experience.
3. Instructional methods that use the tenets of adult learning theory.
4. Faculty with relevant practitioner experience.

"Grow Your Own" Leadership Preparation

In light of the attention to preparation program redesign, alternative programs have emerged that feature partnerships of local universities with local school districts to develop principal candidates from teachers within local schools (Joseph, 2009). Known as "grow your own" leadership preparation programs, they have enjoyed popularity especially in large urban and suburban school districts. Typically, principal candidates apply for or are chosen to participate in leadership academies that specifically prepare those candidates to work as school leaders in the context of the sponsoring districts. Candidates learn about school leadership in formal programs of study from university faculty while being immersed in the culture and climate of local schools. Expert (principal) mentors supervise them through internship experiences as candidates learn the specific tasks of leadership (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Joseph, 2009). These internship experiences continue for at least a year before candidates are formally evaluated for leadership positions within the district.

Rural school districts have also sought to develop new school leaders through "grow your own" programs (Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005). However, the realities associated with small rural schools make "grow your own" programs more difficult to implement. Distances up to 500 miles between rural schools and universities that have educational leadership programs, make commuting to attend classes difficult for some rural teacher leaders (Townsell, 2007). Challenges with technology in small communities make online programs less than desirable. Remote rural schools may face a shortage of expert practitioners to mentor aspiring principal candidates during the program.

In rural districts, where the pool of qualified and licensed candidates is small or non-existent, local teachers who have not had any training or coursework in education leadership, may be asked to pursue immediate or provisional principal licensure in order to serve a school or become the district's only administrator. Because they do not possess any formal certification or administrator endorsement, these new teacher leaders must enroll in a formal preparation program and take graduate level classes while assuming all the job responsibilities associated with a leadership position. For these new leaders, finding a network of support from other leaders who could act as mentors is especially important. Hite, Reynolds and Hite (2010) found that administrator networks across and between districts allowed principals to be better informed about state and national trends, and participate in greater collaborative and shared problem-solving activities with more experienced leaders. By contrast, in single administrator rural schools or districts, principals must rely on networks and relationships with teachers for support and assistance. When those relationships are strong, collaboration and shared problem solving positively influence school improvement processes. When relationships are weak, promoting school improvement processes becomes much more difficult.

Grow Your Own Programs and Loss of Efficacy

Although "grow your own" programs may be an attractive alternative to traditional education leadership training, rural principals in "grow your own" environments might be more vulnerable to loss of self-efficacy. "Grow your own" rural principals have often been hired with little or no administrative experience, college coursework or leadership training, and consequently, have not mastered basic skills of leadership. They often lack competence in managerial practices as well as knowledge about school leadership. Second, because rural "grow your own" leaders are many times the only leader in the school setting, they have no models to watch and are less likely to learn vicariously from other leaders (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Third, new leaders need encouragement from others and affirmations that they are competent and effective (Wahlstrom, Seashore-Louis, Leithwood &Anderson, 2010). Unfortunately, because new principals may not have yet mastered certain organizational and relational skills, they are likely to make more mistakes, inviting criticism from teachers and others. Rather than experiencing positive social persuasion through encouraging comments from others, rural principals may actually receive more negative feedback and begin to doubt their leadership capabilities with regard to even the smallest matter (Bandura, 2009).

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of loss of efficacy during "grow your own" preparation programs has

not been well researched and is worthy of greater examination. Specifically, this study sought to examine aspiring principals' efficacy beliefs and identify the conditions that surrounded loss of efficacy as well as determine how preparation programs and rural districts might work together in better meeting the needs of rural principals.

Methods and Analysis

This qualitative study on self-efficacy and "grow your own" leadership programs emerged as an unexpected finding from a larger mixed methods study about how elements in principal preparation programs influenced the development of self-efficacy beliefs (Versland, 2009). Data reported here were collected from interviews with three principals who experienced loss of efficacy, three teacher colleagues who worked with the principals and two university faculty members who acted as preparation program supervisors.

Participants

The principal participants for the larger study were initially chosen on the basis of their responses on a 54 item questionnaire that was sent electronically to all 538 practicing principals in Montana. A total of 54% of principals completed and returned the questionnaire which contained questions about principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of their preparation programs as well as their own self-efficacy development. Of the 292 respondents, 64 principals rated their personal leader self-efficacy highly (7 or greater on a 9 point scale); 41 principals rated their preparation programs as highly effective (7 or greater on the 9 point scale); and only 22 principals were identified who rated both their preparation program and their self-efficacy highly. The other participants in the study reported mostly moderate ratings of self-efficacy (4- 6 points on the 9 point scale); and low to moderate ratings of program effectiveness (1- 6 points on the 9 point scale). Of the 22 principals who rated both their personal self-efficacy and their preparation programs highly, ten were chosen who were in a 200 mile proximity to the researcher for personal in-depth interviews.

As interviews progressed, an unexpected finding arose; four of the 10 principals were from "grow your own" programs and three of those four described a loss of self-efficacy in their initial internship experience. Although each principal reported an initial loss of efficacy during the first few years of leadership while completing their preparation program, all reported that over time they regained their sense of efficacy and now enjoyed established careers in school leadership. Interview data suggested that similar conditions existed across varying contexts that may have influenced candidates' loss of efficacy during their internships and in their initial work as new principals. To further understand this loss of self-efficacy phenomenon with "grow your own" principals, a 10 question follow-up protocol clarifying loss of efficacy experiences was developed by the researcher. To triangulate these initial findings, the researcher asked permission to contact teachers and university mentors who had worked with the principals during their "grow your own" experiences. The "grow your own" principals interviewed for this study were two women; one who served in a K-8 school of less than 150 students, and another who led a 230 student elementary school in a community of 7000 people. The third participant was a male high school principal in a school with 605 students in a community of 9000 residents. The man had over 20 years of principal experience and the women possessed six and nine years of principal experience respectively. All had over 10 years of teaching experience.

Procedures

Interviews were tape recorded and typically lasted an hour. Interview questions focused on how "grow your own" program experiences influenced leaders' beliefs. Other open-ended questions asked about working conditions in the schools, relationships between and among school personnel, prior leadership experiences and leader competence. Following the interviews, the data were transcribed and sent to interview participants to be reviewed for accuracy and to establish credibility.

Data Analysis

Data analysis utilized open coding of the interviews using Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy as a framing structure. Inductive analysis of data first employed unitization to examine single pieces (units) of information that stood by themselves and then organized those units into categories with similar characterizations. Once categories were established, the researcher also looked for links and similarities between categories that would establish relationships between program elements and self-efficacy development. The categories were then coded thematically. Following feedback from a second member check, the researcher summarized the data and posited theories about principal loss of

efficacy and the conditions that contributed to the phenomenon.

Findings

In examining the experiences of principals who reported loss of self-efficacy during their preparation programs, several common factors emerged that may have contributed to the loss of efficacy. Analysis of the data revealed that lack of prior leadership experiences, leader selection processes, and relationships with others influenced leaders' loss of efficacy.

Lack of Prior Leadership Experiences

The findings from this study are reported using Bandura's (1997) framework of four sources of self-efficacy. First, in terms of mastery experiences, the "grown your own" principals had teaching experience in only one grade or in one school and did not have any substantial leadership experiences beyond that of a self-contained classroom teacher or school counselor. None of these principals had worked in other school districts and as a result each had a very narrow frame of reference regarding education and education leadership as a whole. Interestingly, this factor paralleled one of Levine's (2005) criticisms of "grow your own" programs; internally "tapped" candidates lacked knowledge and experience beyond their current placement. While each of these principals did possess more than 10 years of teaching experience, they lacked a "big picture" view of what it meant to manage and lead a school.

Selection Process

Social persuasion is another source of efficacy development that is dependent on relationship building skills to gain acceptance and support, and to influence others. In this study, it is possible that the leader selection processes negatively impacted principal efficacy. Unlike most principals who are chosen for leadership positions through open and competitive selection processes, the three "grow your own" principals in this study were more or less appointed into their positions by district level administration. None of them had applied to a leader preparation program or had taken any coursework in leadership theory and practice before they were asked to accept leadership positions in their districts. It is possible that resentment from other teachers about how these candidates were chosen caused jealousy and compromised the leaders' ability to build relationships. Compounding the issue was the fact that all three principals had replaced long time leaders who were very popular with staff and who were considered highly competent in all areas of leadership. It would have been difficult for an experienced administrator to fill those shoes, but for these inexperienced leaders, that task was well beyond their immediate skill set. Their lack of skill and knowledge placed them at a disadvantage for leading their schools.

Relationships with Others

The findings revealed the presence of a few common conditions that appeared to negatively influence principals' relationships with others. During leader transition, all three districts experienced labor issues which spawned turbulent climates. The principals believed they were exposed to greater scrutiny and criticism from teacher colleagues due to negative views of "administration" promoted by some teachers. One principal felt that her former teacher colleagues had abandoned her because she *was suddenly on the opposite side of union politics*. The principals believed that the history of strong unions and unfriendly ties between management and teachers created a negative environment for any administrative change. There was also the belief that former teacher friends felt the new principals could no longer empathize with their positions and concerns and as a result those friendships changed and, in many cases, ended altogether.

The degree of changing relationships with former colleagues and friends and the inability to form relationships with other professionals was reported as the primary factor for loss of efficacy by the principals themselves. Since these principals were the lone administrator in their schools, they had little opportunity to learn from others or be mentored by expert practitioners. The lack of vicarious learning, or learning from the successful modeling of others, meant that these new leaders had no successful role models to emulate and no one to provide encouragement and advice. While one of the principals had other administrator colleagues in the district, she reported feeling that they were slow to accept her as an equal. Describing her situation she recalled, *I was no longer a colleague and friend, but I wasn't an administrator, either*.

As principals began to experience greater job-related stress, their ability to set high goals, develop collaborative relationships and overcome even the smallest of obstacles also declined. Rather than reach out to others, principals turned inward, engaging in mostly top-down decision-making and setting goals that were easy to accomplish but that had little impact

on school improvement. As their inability to cope with stress (the fourth efficacy source) increased, these leaders became more fatalistic about their situations, attributing failures to circumstances outside their locus of control. Rather than try other strategies to strengthen relationships and maintain friendships, "grow your own" principals tended initially to believe instead that no amount of effort on their part would result in more favorable outcomes.

Perceptions of Teacher Colleagues and University Supervisors

Three former teacher colleagues and two university supervisors of these "grow your own" rural principals were interviewed to triangulate and deepen understanding of the loss of efficacy phenomenon for these leaders. The teacher colleagues initially viewed the "grow your own" principals in this study as weak candidates to lead their schools. The teachers cited as concerns regarding the principal appointees' lack of prior leadership experiences and their lack of strong relationships with staff members before their principal appointment. One colleague described her former principal as *having limited influence with teachers even though she had been the most senior teacher on the staff.*" Two teacher colleagues explained that teachers were reluctant to follow the new leaders because they had questions about their intellectual capacity and tendency to embrace fads. One teacher remarked, *If it didn't come with a recipe, we didn't do it, because it was too hard for her to manage. So that meant that nothing of any real value occurred.* It is interesting that although this teacher believed that the principal's intellectual capacity accounted for the inability to set meaningful and challenging goals, given that this principal was later able to succeed in other school improvement endeavors, it is likely that weak self-efficacy rather than competence was the key variable.

University supervisors somewhat concurred with teachers about leaders' intellectual capacity. One supervisor described a principal as lacking in depth of thought and unable to devise creative and collaborative solutions to problems. *Principal X was only able to generate ideas that were tied to very traditional beliefs about education.* Another supervisor described a situation in which staff relations had become strained. The principal withdrew from staff, blaming the communication breakdown solely on teachers.
> *Self-reflection for Principal Y was virtually non-existent. She never asked, 'what else can I do to change the course of things? Or how do I right the ship?' Instead, she blamed the teachers for the problems and remarked, 'I can't believe*

they'd turn on me.' I could give her technical advice, but I couldn't make her look at her own behaviors and beliefs for more permanent solutions.

Questions that emerged about candidates' intellectual prowess further indicate inadequate recruitment processes that failed to insure that candidates possessed the necessary intellectual capacity to successfully lead.

Teacher colleagues and university supervisors agreed that because principals lacked skill and belief in their ability to collaborate and share leadership and decision-making, they routinely set goals that were only superficial in nature rather than those that would build instructional capacity or raise student achievement. For example, principals opted to make changes in lunch schedules, recess activities for students and engage teachers in heightened expectations to document student misbehavior. A 5th grade teacher remarked:
> *At our school, goals were aimed at kids changing; making them more accountable or better behaved. Teachers really weren't challenged to change or move forward at all. Once, we approached Principal Y about our concerns that some teachers were not using their Professional Learning Community time appropriately, or doing anything meaningful. She got upset and told us she was demonstrating trust by allowing grade levels to set their own agendas. That was a joke, she just didn't want to deal with the conflict… so the neediest teachers who needed support and direction disengaged and just put in their time.*

Loss of efficacy had a profound effect on the principals in this study. Interestingly enough, these leaders were able to gain back self-efficacy over time and became effective leaders. Two regained efficacy because they moved to new jobs and were able to start over and develop trust with new faculty. The third regained efficacy with perseverance in the original leadership position. As the principal's technical skills improved, relationships with teachers improved and strengthened the individual's ability to lead. However, the leader's transformation was not without sacrifice; some long held friendships did not recover.

Implications

The implications of this study center on how education leadership programs together with rural school administrators can improve the selection and mentoring of "grow your own" principals. Many of the issues that the rural "grow your own" leaders faced in this study were caused by weak selection processes that did not allow for a competitive

procedure whereby the candidates with the best potential for leadership would surface. To expand the pool of leader candidates, university and district personnel should publicly announce the intent to begin a "grow your own" program for developing and supporting internal candidates for rural leadership. To expand the pool, a partnership among several small rural schools in close proximity to one another may be considered in order to demonstrate a fair and open process, and promote impartiality. Partnerships between rural districts and universities are another method to develop a regional leader candidate pool whereby several schools could recognize and promote local teachers to become specifically trained to lead rural schools. This design may create a potential pipeline of candidates for immediate as well as future openings. Other findings suggest that candidates should demonstrate skill in three areas before being chosen to enter the "grow your own" leader pipeline: prior leadership experience in chairing committees, leading teams, or developing programs; the ability to collaborate and work with others to solve problems, and proven intellectual capacity for self-reflection and critical thinking.

Partnerships for Selection and Mentoring

Once formal internship experience begins, both district and university should adopt purposeful mentoring experiences to support the intern. These mentoring activities should include frequent meetings to share ideas, discuss social processes and reflect on qualitative data collected from teachers, other staff and supervisors. To this end, university supervisors must be ready to monitor and evaluate the success of the principal. By surveying teachers about the leader's focus in setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program - all necessary elements of instructional leadership (Wahlstrom, et al., 2010) - university partners can assist districts by providing meaningful feedback to the principal and district team. In small rural districts, where the intern is likely the only administrator, the local school board should also be encouraged to network and possibly hire expert principals or superintendents from neighboring districts to act as mentors for the intern in order to provide ongoing support and socialization.

Conclusion

Because a link exists between principal self-efficacy and student achievement (Goddard & .

Salloum, 2011), it is useful to also understand the conditions that may lead to loss of self-efficacy in principals. Because leaders who experience a loss of self-efficacy tend to set less challenging goals and often give up when confronted with obstacles or limitations, it can be surmised that principals who suffer a loss of efficacy may experience difficulty achieving four core leadership practices associated with student achievement: setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program (Wahlstrom, et al., 2010). The "grow your own" principals in this study who experienced loss of self-efficacy, recounted that as their long-standing relationships with colleagues changed and ended, the principals lost their belief in their ability to be successful in developing teachers and making educationally relevant decisions. Although they lamented the loss of relationships with former colleagues, the rural "grow your own" principals in this study found mentors in other administrators and university faculty who helped them overcome their relational setbacks with teachers. Initially, principals withdrew rather than stepped forward to lead their schools. However with the help of mentors, principals in this study were able to regain their self-efficacy about leading schools. Using mentors' advice and expertise, they learned to solicit teacher input to redesign organizational outcomes and positively influenced the instructional capacity of their schools.

Besides creating mentoring opportunities through more purposeful university and district partnerships, the implications of this study also suggest the development of broad-based selection and recruitment procedures which encourage several staff members to acquire leadership training and licensure. School districts and university leadership partners should work to develop a regional leader candidate pool whereby several schools can recognize and promote local teacher leaders who would then learn the skills and knowledge to effectively lead rural schools. The intersection of loss of efficacy and "grow your own" programs presents opportunities for extending this research. Surveying rural leaders trained in traditional programs might help better illuminate other conditions that influence loss of efficacy. Additionally, examining the extent to which "grow your own" leaders persist in their jobs or leave them could help districts develop plans to increase retention of effective leaders in rural schools.

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