Divergent Angry Voices[*]

Paula Brown

Kim Finch

Cynthia MacGregor

Robert Watson

1 NCPEA Publications

2 Introduction

In 2004, The U.S. Department of Education stated, "Great schools have great leaders" (p.1). Research supported their declaration as our nation actively pursued educational reform. School systems across the country searched for good school principals to lead, believing they were the "cornerstones of good schools" (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 43). In 2004, the U. S. Department of Education published national statistics, which summarized that there was a shortage of top-notch principals to meet the demands of *No*

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[*]Version 1.2: Sep 27, 2012 6:56 am -0500
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[1]http://www.ncpeapublications.org/latest-issue-ijelp.html

Child Left Behind. As schools struggled, they realized the problem did not lie in the quantity of school principals but in the quality of the principal and learning environments (2004). However, the real challenge became finding effective leaders to facilitate successful learning environments for teachers and students to learn. In the meantime, teachers became frustrated and angry with weak leadership and promised changes with no results. Schools experienced declining assessment scores, an increasing number of students who were experiencing school failure, dropping out, and in trouble with the law because of involvement in crime and violence. Therefore, research continues to be necessary to find what makes an effective leader and successful learning environment in high schools to quiet the "Angry Voices" (Brown, 2009).

Research established that effective administrative leadership is only one factor that leads to effective schools; another effective method was to create small learning communities. The government had been funding educational reform through Small Learning Communities (SLC) since the year 2000. Recent research and statistical data are found that support the hypothesis that smaller schools can have a positive influence on achievement, school climate, and student connectedness, reducing the negative and destructive behaviors of students such as fewer discipline problems, fewer incidents of vandalism, reduced truancy and drug use, and a reduced drop-out rate (Fowler, 1995; Howley, 1994; Oxley, 1994).

After further research, this study contends the leadership required in schools of all sizes, types, and professional learning communities require effective shared and supportive leadership, collaborative cultures, collective learning and application, and shared values and vision. These characteristics are important factors for leaders to understand and recognize for success in all schools. When these factors were missing from school organizations, "angry voices" (Brown, 2009) were prominent in the school environment. The topics of effective, participatory leadership, collective learning, collaborative culture, and shared values and vision in reference to school size, school types, and professional learning communities are explored in this article.

3 Effective Leadership

Chiaramonte (1993) stated it is essential that leaders lead effectively. Therefore, it is important to research the concept of effective leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2007) found four main characteristics present in effective leaders: honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. The need for this type of leadership is necessary in schools across the nation. According to Pasi (2003), effective leadership is the single most important factor in a successful school. High schools need visionary leaders who can create dynamic learning environments. Pasi (2003) stated, "Visionary leaders within the academic setting attempt to create cultures that will propel their schools into the future, guided by a spirit of optimism and hope" (p. 1).

4 Participatory Leadership

A participatory leadership style incorporates the expertise of staff members. Shared leadership with their tacit knowledge enhances the knowledge base and expertise in schools. Schon (1987) discussed the power of tacit knowledge when it is made explicit and shared between other members of an organization. He expressed importance of practitioners holding reflective conversations using the expertise of their experiences and how that knowledge assists in "remaking a part of their practice world" (p. 6). School effectiveness research suggests staff members and teachers in effective schools can provide instructional leadership as well as principals (Bacharach & Shedd, 1988). With this in mind, empowering teachers to have more voice in decision-making and to exercise leadership more often in the school setting may be fundamental to improving student performance. Blanchard and Muchnick (2003) may have best described this type of leadership as "not something you do to people; it's something you do with them" (p. 52). Collaboration with all stakeholders involves a wide range of competing viewpoints (Brunner, 1998); however, the importance of understanding and listening to staff and their concerns is invaluable. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) agreed leadership is dependent on relationships, and those relationships help shape organizations and "produce patterns of interaction and meanings that other participants attach to organizational events" (p. 224). These authors described leadership as a medium that flows through the networks of roles that compromise organizations and that "lie in the personal resources of people" (p. 224).

According to Hord (1997), supportive and shared leadership is the phenomenon when "school administrators participate democratically with teachers sharing power, authority, and decision making" (p. 6). Research supporting effective schools has invariably ascertained that shared leadership is an important component (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Eaker, DuFour, & Burnette, 2002; Lezotte & McKee, 2002; Marzano, et al., 2005; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Oliver, et al., 2003; Sergiovanni, 1984; Thomas, et al., 2005). These authors defined school leadership as supportive and shared leadership in which school administrators participate democratically with teachers by sharing power, authority, decision making, and by promoting and nurturing leadership among staff. Johnson (2005) suggested, "Today's school leaders understand both the limits and the potential of their positions, carefully balancing their use of positional authority with their reliance on others, gradually building both a capacity and widespread support for shared leadership and collaborative change" (p. 11). Fullan (2002) agreed the role of leadership is to create a greater capacity of leadership in the organization which will gain better results.

5 Collective Learning

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) considered an organization such as a school "as a system of shared meanings and beliefs" (p. 42). Their perspective spotlights a conceptual underpinning of this research study focusing on the fact that school organization's knowledge base is dependent on administrators, teachers, and staff. Bolman and Deal (2008) suggested "long term success centers on investing in employees and responding to their needs" (p. 122).

When leaders consider employee needs, the research by Sergiovanni (2000) paralleled effective school research by expressing the importance of employee's sense of pride in their work, commitment to quality, ownership in the school district, and intrinsic satisfaction received from belonging to an educational system. Davis (2003) described developing a mutual purpose between leaders and followers as a positive beginning for organizations and stating that organizational members must "not be passive, but must rather be active agents of innovation" (p. 50). Therefore, valuable shared tacit knowledge from members of the organization becomes explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) described tacit knowledge as "knowledge of experience, physical and subjective" (p. 60). The authors explained knowledge can be acquired by socializing or by observing someone on the job. They also noted experience is the key to acquiring tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is acquired through past events and is objective in nature. For the sake of organizational learning, the key is to internalize explicit knowledge to the point where it becomes tacit knowledge, "unless shared knowledge becomes explicit, it cannot be easily leveraged by the organization as a whole" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, p. 70). To internalize explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, organizational members will learn by doing. When administrators', teachers', and staffs' tacit and explicit knowledge interact, they will create organizational knowledge. The development of knowledge creation will create a growth in organizational learning, which is "continuous and dynamic interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, p. 70).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) suggested organizations that wish to cope dynamically with the changing environment need to be able to create information and knowledge and not merely process data. According to Yukl (2002), there are guidelines that create conditions favorable to generating information and knowledge, learning, and innovation. He listed ten conditions that support the theory that organizations can only learn when individual members of the organization are given the opportunity to learn: "encourage appreciation for flexibility, learning as individuals and teams, systems thinking, experimentation, innovation and entrepreneurial activity; help people improve their mental models; leverage learning from experiences; acquire knowledge from outsiders; facilitate diffusion of learning; and reward learning and innovations" (p. 296).

Collective learning and application were defined by Hord (1997) as a staff's ability to take what they have learned as an organization and create high intellectual tasks and solutions to address student needs. Eaker, et al. (2002) defined collective learning and application as the staff's ability, at all levels, to share information and work collaboratively to plan, solve problems, and improve learning opportunities. Together they seek knowledge, skills, and strategies and apply this new learning to their work. Learning while on the

job requires staff members to learn by doing, to reflect on their experiences, and then to generate and share new insights and "learn with oneself and others" (Wood & McQuarrie, 1999, p. 10). According to Huffman and Hipp (2003), teachers who work in schools with professional learning communities share their practices, study together, focus instructional strategies on student needs, and use data to make decisions about their teaching.

Foster and Suddards (1999) suggested teacher leadership is an outcome of collective learning within a professional learning community. They reported "once teachers witness the benefits of learning with others in the school, they recognize the need to share in the leadership to develop a shared vision focused on student learning" (Huffman & Hipp, 2003, p. 10). Teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, contribute to a community of leaders and learners, and influence others toward improved educational practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

6 Collaborative Culture

School systems value individual skills, attitudes, energy, and commitment as vital resources. A "good fit" (Bolman & Deal, 2008) described the way school systems need good teachers, and teachers need the career opportunity. The school system also has its own culture. Each school has its own mascot, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths. Therefore, creating a collaborative culture where all members of the organization have the same beliefs, rules, policies, mission, and goals is vital.

Yukl (2002) defined organizational culture as shared assumptions, beliefs, and values by members of a group or organization. Therefore, methods for shaping organizational cultures include the "design of organization structure, management systems, facilities, formal statements of ideology, and informal stories, myths, and legends" (p. 300).

Organizations can be thought of as cultures. Morgan (1997) stated "important dimensions of modern culture are rooted in the structure of industrial society" (p. 122). Theorists today have even coined the phrase "corporate culture" when analyzing organizations. Mini-societies are found in organizations and have their own patterns of culture, subculture, and personalities. According to Morgan (1997), the components of an organizational culture include shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding, and shared sense making. Organizations are socially constructed realities and produce systems of shared meanings. Cultural artifacts such as organizational structure, rules, policies, goals, missions, job descriptions, and standardized operating procedures help shape the view and context of an organization's reality.

A collaborative culture is the essence of schools. Eaker, et al. (2002) stated, "The most fundamental cultural shift that takes place . . . involves how teachers are viewed. In traditional schools, administrators are . . . viewed as being in leadership positions, while teachers are viewed as . . . followers. In professional learning communities, administrators are . . . leaders of leaders" (p. 22).

7 Shared Values and Vision

Learning organizations collaborate to have a shared vision (Senge, 1990). According to Eaker, et al. (2002), shared values and vision is an organizational staff sharing visions for school improvement. Staff focus will not deviate from student learning plus shared values will support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning. Hord (1997) defined learning communities as embracing shared values and vision that "bind norms of behavior that the staff supports" (p. 3). The main challenge of a school leader is to involve staff members in creating a shared vision for the organization (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). Tacit and explicit knowledge sharing will benefit staff members in creating a collaborative vision. By sharing the personal visions of staff members, a collective vision can be molded and embraced by all members (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). DuFour and Eaker (1998) examined shared vision and described it as:

7.1

What separates a learning community from an ordinary school is its collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create. Furthermore,

these guiding principles are not just articulated by those in positions of leadership; even more important, they are embedded in the hearts and minds of people throughout the school. (p. 25)

According to Sergiovanni (2000), the promotion of values is a key factor for effective schools. Lezotte (1997) added "creating a community of shared values" (p. 74) is identified as the fundamental leadership function in contemporary organizations. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) considered an organization such as a school "as a system of shared meanings and beliefs" (p. 42). Bruffee (1999) contended that people must be understood in the context of a social group. Such group interaction would broaden the perspectives of the participants. Therefore, when inclusive decisions are made, the outcomes are more often stable.

Willower and Licata (1997) suggested the implementation of a shared vision depends on the "realities of the situation and the values of the participants" (p. 3). Their opinion is that collaboration is vital. Through the valuation process, the various stakeholders are able to negotiate school issues and form shared values and visions. According to Thomas, Enloe & Newell (2005), "the more we are social, relating and communicating with each other, the smarter we can become; and the smarter we become, the greater chance we have to succeed" (p. 60).

8 Issues That Large Schools Encounter

The 2009 Education Commission of the States announced that hundreds of high schools across the nation, in both urban and suburban districts, have populations exceeding 2,500 students. In the 1999-2000 school year, an estimated one in six students in the nation attended a large city school. The Educational Commission report (2009) surmised that large school environments create anonymity and alienation which can produce a variety of problems in schools. Those problems were suggested to range from chronically low levels of student achievement to acts of violence.

Different researchers have found much data to support the negative effect of large schools on student performance. Garbarino (1981) found large schools contribute to depersonalization, negativism, alienation, and ultimately truancy, and drop-outs. Lindsey (1982) stated school size affects a student's participation and satisfaction independent of the effects of social-economic status and academic ability. Fowler and Walberg (1991) noted large schools are discriminatory against minority students, low socio-economic students, and students who are academically marginal, because small schools have been found to be extremely beneficial for them. Cotton (1996) found there is no research that finds large schools superior to smaller schools in academic achievement. Hamilton (1983) wrote, "students in the large schools were more polarized, with a group of active participants at one end of the continuum and a large group of students who did not participate in an extracurricular activities at the other" (p. 65). Gottfredson (1985) contended that large schools appeared to promote negative teacher perceptions of school administration and low staff morale.

Several researchers have commented that states with the largest schools and school districts have the lowest school achievement, highest dropout rates, and least favorable teacher-student ratios (Cotton, 1996; Jewell, 1989; Walberg, 1992). Cotton (1996) performed a research study which surmised that poor students and those of racial and ethnic minorities were more adversely affected academically, attitudinally, and behaviorally by attending large schools than were other students. Barr & Parrett (2007) reported large schools always have certain isolating factors: (a) students with few friends; (b) students who have no special relationships to any teacher; (c) students who feel no one cares for or about them, and (d) teachers who are isolated. The authors expressed great concern when they stated, "Large schools are perhaps the least effective possible educational environment" (p. 163). In conclusion, researchers agreed high schools are too big and too impersonal (Barr & Parrett, 2007; Cotton, 1996; Fowler & Walberg, 1991; Garbarino, 1997; Gottfredson, 1985; Hamilton, 1983; Jewell, 1989; Lindsey, 1982; Walberg, 1992).

9 Statement of Problem

Research supports the theory that successful organizations have a direct correlation to the effectiveness of the leadership, organizational learning, school culture, and shared values and vision (Bolman & Deal, 2008; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Thomas, et al., 2005). Three values have been reported

by Astin and Astin (2000) that are generally found in definitions of leadership: (a) to create a supportive environment where people can grow, thrive, and live in peace with one another, (b) to promote harmony with nature and thereby provide sustainability for future generations, and (c) to create communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility where every person matters and each person's welfare and dignity is respected and supported. Astin and Astin's three values of leadership were significant factors in promoting an atmosphere for students to succeed and teachers to feel valued. Subsequently, further research correlating successful schools with the effectiveness of leader's abilities and the learning culture was investigated in this study.

High schools across the nation have primarily neglected to focus on the type of leadership style and learning culture necessary to enhance high school programs (Chalker, 1996). Because of the nature of the school population, the foremost concern has been how to help students graduate and enter the work force or post-secondary schools. Few studies have compared staff satisfaction to effective leadership, organizational learning, and culture.

10 Purpose of the Study

This research study focused on the research question, "How do school leaders (staff members) describe the leadership styles and cultures used within their different high school settings?" The question was addressed to faculty members in different size high schools (small schools and large schools) and types of high schools (alternative schools, professional learning communities, small learning communities, and non-professional learning communities/small learning communities). Teachers in different sized schools, different types of schools, and schools with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were assessed using a qualitative component of the Brown Learning Culture Assessment (BLCA) (Brown, 2009; Oliver, Hipp & Huffman, 2003; Thomas, et al., 2005) and asked open-ended question about their administration and school environment's leadership styles.

The perceptions of high school teachers in Missouri regarding the leadership and learning cultures in different size and types of high schools were examined in this study. Perceptions were investigated to determine if staff members believed shared and supportive leadership, collaborative culture, collective learning, and shared values and vision existed and were effective in these schools. Qualitative results were obtained from a representative sample of school leaders in different size and types of schools, including professional learning communities, through administration of the BLCA. Analysis of the perceptions of high school staff members regarding leadership and the comparison of learning cultures will assist educators who are planning to assume leadership positions in different size and types of schools. Results of this study will add to research to help facilitate successful school environments for students and staffs.

11 Research Question

The following research question was developed to identify possible factors that may make a difference in how school leaders perceive their leadership styles and learning cultures and how they address their leadership roles in different size and types of high schools.

1. How do school leaders (staff members) describe the leadership styles and cultures used within their different high school settings?

12 Design of the Study

A qualitative element was chosen from the BLCA (Brown, 2009). The qualitative element was used to "gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives constitute education" (Seidman, 1998, p. 7). The different high school settings were small, large, and small learning communities, alternative school, professional learning communities, and nonprofessional learning communities.

13 Definitions of Key Terms

In an effort to clarify the terminology used in this study, the following key words are defined:

Alternative Schools. Alternative schools are an educational alternative to the traditional high school or middle school. "It is based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which education may occur" (Morley, 1991, p. 4).

Brown Learning Culture Assessment (BLCA). The Brown Learning Culture Assessment (BLCA) is a survey instrument that was created by Brown (2009). The purpose of the survey was to assess teachers in different size and types of schools to determine what type of learning culture characteristics are found in their teaching environment. The survey was created by researching information from professional learning communities (Huffman & Hipp, 2003) and small learning communities (Thomas, et al., 2005) and assembling characteristics that were found to be similar. The BLCA was composed with the assembled characteristics into four categories: Shared and Supportive Leadership, Collaborative Culture, Collective Learning and Application, and Shared Values and Vision. Each of the four categories has six questions. The questions are assessed using a six point Likert scale.

Collaborative Teams. The basic structure of the PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002).

Collaborative Learning. Collaborative learning is a consensus where people construct knowledge interdependently by talking to one another. The knowledge created is the common property of the group. The learning process happens because knowledge results from acknowledgement. Bruffee (1999) stated, "Once we acquire language, this lifelong learning process of reacculturation from knowledge community to knowledge community accelerates" (p. 138).

Collective Learning. Collective learning is the staff's collective learning and application of the learnings (taking action) that creates high intellectual tasks and solutions to address student needs (Hord, 1997).

Effective Leadership. Effective leadership is found when administrators collaboratively create a vision and establish a climate for people to reach their highest level of achievement by: constantly sharing and promoting the vision; communicating clearly and effectively; collaborating and cooperating with others; maintaining focus; developing and nurturing staff; holding themselves and others responsible and accountable; constantly learning and honing their skills; and taking action/risk to support their vision (New York State Education Department, 2003).

Large Schools. Large high schools have been identified by the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA, 2009) as having populations that categorize them as 5A and 6A high schools. Population size is determined by selecting the top 32 most populated schools as 6A and the next 50 most populated schools as 5A.

Learning Organizations. Learning organizations are organizations, such as schools, that learn rapidly and use the knowledge to become more effective (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006).

Organizational Learning. Organizational learning is the continual collaborative learning process individuals and organizations go through to educate themselves in order to maintain sustainability (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Participatory Leadership. Participatory leadership is a leader who invites others to share the authority of the office and expects those who accept the invitation to share the responsibility as well. A participatory leader is strong enough to trust others with his or her fate, just as he or she expects their trust in return (Schlechty, 2000).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The essence of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) is "educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students they serve" (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006, p. 46). PLC's focus on and are committed to the learning of each student. The organization embraces high levels of learning for all students as both the reason the organization exists and the fundamental responsibility of those within it. A PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006).

School Culture. Schein (1996) defined culture as "the set of shared, taken-for- granted implicit assump-

tions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments" (p. 236).

School Types. School types are the three types of schools being researched in this study: Alternative schools, Small Learning Communities, and Professional Learning Communities.

Shared Leadership. Shared leadership happens in an organization that shares the authority and expects all members to share the responsibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Shared Values. Shared values are a system of shared meanings and beliefs (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Small Learning Communities (SLC). Small Learning Community is the term applied to the practice of organizing high schools into small units or free standing schools that parallel the developmental thinking surrounding the crucial components of effective learning. Small Learning Communities focus on the learner and learning, and more importantly the active collaboration between students' and the teachers' work. The principal is ultimately responsible for the entire school (National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, 2004).

Small Schools. Small schools have been identified by the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA, 2009) as 1A and 2A schools (2009). The population of a 1A and 2A schools averages between $100 - 800$ students.

14 Population and Sample

Participants in this study consisted of high school teachers in Missouri from small schools, large schools, small learning communities, alternative schools, professional learning communities, and non-professional learning communities. A visual description of the population is shown in Table 1 (Appendix A). Two non-professional learning communities/non-small learning communities, two small learning communities, two professional learning communities, and four alternative high schools of different sizes in Missouri were chosen as a purposive sample for this study.

Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) has divided high schools into six size categories (2009). The size categories for 1A and 2A schools range from 100 to 800 students. The six categories are listed as 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A and 6A. The large schools are listed as 5A and 6A schools and are determined by selecting the top 32 most populated schools as 6A and the next 50 most populated schools as 5A. With this in mind, for this study, school size (small vs. large) is measured with reference to 1A and 2A schools as being small schools and 5A and 6A schools are referred to as large schools. Ten high schools were identified based on the recommendations of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for having the necessary programs (small learning communities, professional learning communities and alternative schools) in place. Three alternative high schools were used to create the N for that category. This information was cross referenced with MSHSAA size guidelines to allow the researcher to further define the sample schools based upon population patterns shown in Table 1 (Appendix A).

15 Instrumentation

The Brown Learning Culture Assessment (BLCA) was developed for the purpose of assessing learning cultures. The BLCA is a survey instrument used to assess high school staff perceptions of the four learning culture practices: shared leadership, collaborative culture, collective learning, and shared values and vision. It was developed after extensive research on learning cultures in alternative schools, small learning communities, and professional learning communities (Oliver, Hipp, & Huffman, 2003; Raywid, 1998; Thomas, Enloe, & Newell, 2005).

In the first phase, the BLCA was developed using research from Huffman and Hipp's (2003) book *Reculturing Schools as Professional Learning Communities* and research from *The Coolest School in America: How Small Learning Communities are Changing Everything* by Thomas, Enloe and Newell (2005). Important constructs from the literature review were used to develop subscales in the BLCA. The merging constructs of *Shared Leadership, Collaborative Culture, Collective Learning, and Shared Values and Vision* were found and developed into subscales. These subscales were essential for data collection.

The BLCA has a total of twenty-four questions and four learning culture subscales and is assessed with a six point Likert scale. However, the focus of this study addresses the two open-ended questions which were written to address the leadership style and learning cultures found in the schools.

The BLCA was used to assess different size and types of high schools. A representative sample of high schools that fit each size category of small and large schools and each type category of professional learning communities, small learning communities, alternative schools, and non-professional learning communities was asked to participate in the study. Staff members from these schools were asked to participate by filling out the BLCA survey during a staff meeting.

The BLCA was piloted through a field test with a sample pre and post survey to twenty high school staff members with a period of two weeks between the two events. The sample population was from a mid-western district in Missouri. Test-retest statistics were used on the BLCA survey with a Pearson product moment correlation between the two sets of scores. The results yielded for each subscale category were as follows: shared and supportive leadership had a reliability coefficient of $r = .807$; collaborative culture had a reliability coefficient of $r = .647$; collective learning and application had a reliability coefficient of $r = .747$; and shared values and vision had a reliability coefficient of $r = .765$. Thereliability was further substantiated using the data with Crombach Alpha statistics which are used to check the internal consistency of the instrument. The results yielded for each subscale category were as follows: shared and supportive leadership had a reliability coefficient of $r = .804$; collaborative culture had a reliability coefficient of $r = .780$; collective learning and application had a reliability coefficient of $r = .824$; and shared values and vision had a reliability coefficient of $r = .799$. Field testing the instrument proved reliability and also helped improve validity.

16 Procedures for the Study

Superintendents were contacted to gain gatekeeper approval to contact high school principals and determine their willingness to participate in the study. After gatekeeper approval was obtained, permission was requested and granted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study and begin contacting principals. The survey was administered during faculty meetings or via e-mail with each staff member.

Three hundred sixty-two surveys were returned. The qualitative element was included on the BLCA with two open ended questions. Open coding was used to analyze comments for thematic patterns to add in-depth knowledge to the results (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 1998).

17 Analysis of Data

Participant responses to the BLCA were collected, analyzed, and triangulated by themes.

The following research question was significant for the purpose of this article: **How do school leaders (staff members) describe the leadership styles and cultures used within their different cultures?**

Two open-ended questions on the BLCA were used to answer the research question. Question 25 asked teacher participants what style of leadership was found in their high schools, and Question 26 asked teacher participants to describe the learning culture in their high schools. Answers to these questions were open coded by analyzing each individual response for conceptualized themes (Merriam, 1998). Those themes were categorized for common patterns between other participants' responses. The data were then reassembled and divided into thematic perspectives of leadership characteristics and learning culture. The thematic perspectives for leadership characteristics were: shared leadership; participatory leadership; transformational leadership; and open communication. In the large schools and non-PLCs, there were angry voices. Those voices used themes such as: dictatorship; top-down leadership; authoritative; and bureaucratic. Thematic perspectives found for learning culture were: collaborative culture; teaming; collective learning; shared vision and smaller class sizes. Again, in large schools and non-PLCs, there were angry voices that rendered thematic characteristics such as: no shared vision; teacher input not considered; over all culture does not support learning; students are lazy; and resistance to change.

18 Thematic Leadership Characteristics

Shared Leadership. A common pattern to participant response was an acknowledgement of the staff being involved with decision-making, group leadership, staff leaders, shared opinions, and teachers' voices being heard by the principal. Of 243 teachers who responded to the opened ended questions, 86 (35%) respondents included shared leadership ideas. Teachers felt ownership and respect when their shared voices were used to make important student, curriculum, and building decisions. One teacher wrote, "Our principal uses shared leadership that solicits input from staff and other stakeholders in a collaborative environment." Another teacher wrote, "Leadership is shared, supportive, and open to the concerns and needs of students/faculty, and works to resolve their issues."

Participatory Leadership. Participatory leadership emerged as a dominant trend to the open-ended responses. Eighty-one (33%) participants responded with statements that included power-sharing or empowerment themes. For example, one teacher stated, "Teachers are treated as colleagues and professionals. Our opinions count when making important decisions." Another teacher responded, "Each staff member feels they are part of the decision-making." A participative/democratic style of leadership was mentioned numerous times in the data. *Transformational Leadership.* Twenty-two (9%) participants responded with statements that defined transformational leadership. In particular, the principal's ability to increase teacher motivation and performance was found in many of the responses. One teacher stated, "Our principal is a transformational leader as he motivates the staff to make changes." A second teacher described their principal's leadership style as "Motivating by being visible and using positive interactions with staff/students/parents."

Open Communication. Open communication was mentioned in92 (38%) responses as a positive leadership trait. One teacher stated, "There is an open dialogue between administrators and staff, who take an active role in the development of new policies and initiatives." According to another teacher, communication has been a needed improvement in their building when the response stated, "It is such an improvement to work with our new principal who uses open communication and constantly works towards mutual understanding."

19 Thematic Learning Culture Characteristics

Collaborative Culture. Collaborative cultureemerged as a dominant trend in 121(49%) responses. Collaborative time was mentioned as an important aspect of the learning process. One teacher stated, "Our district provides opportunities to collaborate with other faculty members because our learning culture is very student driven with collaboration being the backbone of what goes on in and out of the classroom." Collaboration responses were often associated with student learning and achievement. For example, "The learning culture is a collaborative culture with students, staff, and administration working to maximize student learning."

Teaming. Teaming was also a common pattern identified by participant responses. Forty-five (19%) responses included teaming ideas. In particular, the teacher's ability to work together as a team to focus on curriculum development and student achievement was found in several responses. One teacher wrote, "Departments work as teams to collaboratively work on methods to increase student achievement." Another teacher added, "The majority of our staff work as teams to improve student learning and achievement. Teachers collaborate to create common assessments, lesson plans, and prepare for state testing."

Collective Learning. Characteristics of collective learning are mentioned in seventy-four (30%) responses. Learning cultures are defined by student, staff, teams and buildings learning together to increase student learning. One teacher stated, "Our teachers are willing to try new techniques to improve the learning culture and to increase learning in our school." A second response added, "The learning culture revolves around a collaborative effort between departments to learn best practices, strategies and curriculum which will promote student learning."

Shared Vision. Characteristics of shared vision emerged as another theme with twenty-three (9%) responses. One teacher stated, "Everyone works with the same goals and objectives that will promote student learning." Teacher trainings are mentioned in the data as assisting with the creation of shared vision. For example, "The district provides in-service programs to enable teachers to learn new teaching techniques. A shared vision is not always shared by all members of the staff. The data related that some staff members

are not entirely sold, "Whether 'everyone learning everyday' is a shared vision by all teachers is debatable, but one that most staff embrace."

Small Class Size. Thirty-one 13%) participant responses mentioned the importance of small class size. One teacher stated, "The learning culture in our school is one that focuses on the one-on-one needs of a student, which makes smaller class size a must." The data related the importance of small class size to meet the individual needs of students. For example, "Differentiated instruction is valued. We strive to personalize classrooms in order to build connections with our students."

20 Conclusion

The researcher found qualitative data that revealed teachers valued open communication with their principals. Throughout the data, teachers noted open communication was important, and it allowed them to communicate effectively and honestly their ideas, concerns, and opinions without feeling threatened.

The most surprising data found in the qualitative data were the divergent angry voices. The angry voices were centered in the large schools and non-PLC/SLCs. There were no angry responses from either the large or small alternative schools or the small PLC/SLCs.

The data reflected 52 (21%) angry voices throughout the data. When responding to leadership, they used descriptors such as: dictatorship; top-down leadership; authoritative; and bureaucratic. Descriptors used for learning culture were: no shared vision; teacher input is not considered; overall culture does not support learning; students are lazy; and resistance to change. The angry comments were made mostly from participants from large schools and non-PLC/SLCs. There were no angry comments from either large or small alternative schools or small PLC/ SLCs. Negative comments were made from teachers who seemed frustrated with either the leadership, learning culture, or possibly change. For example, "Many people are resistant to change and struggling to find ways to address all types of students. There is a lot of negativity in my department due to frustrations that come with change." Another angry voice stated, "Our school leadership is top-down. They are only interested in numbers and figures and seem to have very little interest in comprehensive student achievement." A third angry voice stated, "The learning culture is directed at numerical and statistical success, not student success." A fourth teacher commented, "No prevalent leadership style is present. Management is in effect." Many of the comments addressed the fact that school leaders were willing to listen but did not enact any changes after ideas were given. Another teacher added, "Administration leads, staff follow."

The data also related that SLCs were not clear on the definition of learning culture. Their comments on question 26, focused more on student behavior rather than student achievement with comments like, "Still trying to get kids and parents on board that learning is important." Participant comments were vague about learning culture. Comments included, "Our school culture is slowly evolving into one with higher expectations and one that involves different styles of learning." Another statement added, "Teachers for the most part have tried to create a warm learning community."

Qualitative findings were used in this study to support the quantitative results and to expound on the findings from the identified subscale themes (shared and supportive leadership, collaborative culture, collective learning and application, and shared values and vision) and provide the researcher with rich accounts and details of teacher perceptions of the leadership and learning cultures in their buildings. As previously mentioned, two new themes were abundant and prevalent across the qualitative data and served as additional information to support the discussion of the findings.

The first newly developed theme, which was mentioned by 84 (35%) participants from all size schools and types of schools, was open communication. This theme emerged from teachers' satisfaction or desire to be able to openly speak or be heard by administration without feeling they would be reprimanded for their opinions. Teachers indicated this was the most effective method to create a sincere learning culture. One teacher commented, "I feel our principals are very open to hearing ideas from staff; therefore, we feel we are apart of the school and the decisions made." Another teacher stated, "Leadership is shared between staff, administration, and stakeholders, and decisions are made after a collaborative effort has occurred. Teachers who were satisfied continued to make statements that included everyone being open-minded and working

together to solve problems. One teacher stated, "The staff is very involved in the decision-making process of how our building functions on a daily basis, and we all feel responsible for student learning."

Teachers who were dissatisfied made statements that were filled with anger and frustration over their opinions being restrained. They were also upset because decisions being made in their buildings were mandated for them to uphold without understanding and buy-in. For example, one teacher commented, "There is rarely discussion, never input. Teachers have a mantra here that basically says 'NO MORE', which is too bad!"

The second theme that occurred, when analyzing the divergent angry voices, was fear and frustration with change. One teacher stated, "There is a lot of negativity in my department due to frustrations that come with change." This fear of change seemed to occur with changes of leadership. For example, one teacher stated, "We have new leadership, steps were made to appear as if teacher input was considered, but decisions were made before outcomes were considered." Some responses dwelt on changes in programs such as adopting professional learning communities or small learning communities. For instance a teacher stated, "Still trying to get on board, overall culture among teachers and students does not support learning." Another teacher expressed frustrations with changes in philosophy, "Many people are resistant to change and struggling to find ways to address all types of students."

Not all angry voices were related to change. Some teachers simply felt they had no input in decision-making. One teacher commented, "Shared vision means a vision shard by administration – not by teachers. Teachers are mandated to, not included in the real decision-making process." The responses from teachers who felt left out came from large size schools or the schools who were non-PLC/SLCs.

Data gathered from the qualitative questions clearly indicated teachers placed an emphasis on shared and participatory styles of leadership with an emphasis on open communication. Teachers valued an "open door policy" where they could walk into a principal's office and share their opinions and concerns. However, the most important component of that communication was actually being heard and knowing their input was valued, heeded, and used to better the school and student performance. One teacher commented, "Open door policies exist. Staff and patrons all feel their opinions are valued and decisions are made collaboratively." Teachers also felt valued if they had a share in leadership. Millette and Fisher (2001) commented, "Leadership happens with and among people" (p. 209). Teachers who felt they had input into decision-making were much more positive with their comments about leadership and the learning culture. For instance, one teacher expressed, "We have a shared leadership style with positive interactions. The staff is very involved in the decision-making process of how our building functions on a daily basis."

The qualitative data for learning culture emphasized collaborative culture, teaming, collective learning, shared vision, and smaller class sizes. This data coincided and enriched the quantitative data. Teachers valued these concepts with comments such as, "Collaborative sharing of ideas is encouraged." Another teacher added, "We work as a team to make this school better and to make learning more relevant." According to DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2006), "A collection of teachers does not truly become a team until they must rely on one another and need one another to accomplish a goal that none could achieve individually" (p. 23). Therefore, it is questionable, in some of the schools, whether there are truly collaborative teams, because there were angry voices in the data.

Within the qualitative data, there were many divergent angry voices. The voices were found mainly in larger schools and non-PLC/SLC data. The angry voices were unhappy about the leadership in their buildings and also the learning culture. One teacher commented, "The leadership style is communist." Another teacher added, "Many teachers are resistant to change and struggling to find ways to address all types of student needs." A third teacher stated, "Our leadership seems to be defined 'Coaching!'" No negative comments came from alternative schools or small PLC/SLCs. These results add credence to the research on effective alternative schools and small size schools. According to Raywid (1998), "Successful alternative schools need stable and strong leadership, plus a staff within a caring environment and individual attention provided by small classes" (p. 10). Barker and Gump (1964) concluded in their book *Big School, Small School: High School Size and Student Behavior*, "small schools are best and that the supposed superiorities of large schools are "illusions" (p. 195). Teachers with angry voices may also fear change. According to Johnson (2005), there is an "emotional" side to change, "People embrace progress but loathe change" (p. 5).

21 Final Implications

The final implication is for principals to be aware of divergent angry voices within their schools and to be knowledgeable of change theory (Davis, 2003; Johnson, 2005; Osterman, 1994). The qualitative responses clarified that angry voices were mainly heard in large schools and non-PLC/SLCs. These angry voices seemed frustrated with change, either because of new leadership, implementation of new programs, or implementation of new philosophies. According to Osterman (1994), "School leaders who are effective in achieving change communicate frequently and effectively with individuals and with groups, and they facilitate communication among group members of their organizations" (p. 385). There were other angry voices that felt they were simply not heard, appreciated, or asked to be apart of the learning culture. These voices came from large schools, so they may be disengaged because of the large size of the schools. Gottfredson (1985) stated, "Large schools appear to promote negative teacher perceptions of school administration and low staff morale" (p. 263). Therefore, principals in large schools and non-PLC/SLCs may want to study effective ways to promote change in their cultures, examine ways to reorganize their environments into smaller size teams, and create a culture of shared and collaborative culture.

22 Recommendations

Principals in large schools and non-professional learning communities/small learning communities could create a stronger learning culture in their high schools if they adopt methods to create smaller schools or communities within their large school settings. To achieve this, they may want to practice shared leadership and open communication with their staff to help avoid divergent angry voices who are frustrated with change. Teacher teams that collaboratively work together and collectively learn new methods to assist with student achievement would be an advantage to the learning culture. Finally, within the learning cultures, principals should value staff opinions, ideas, and welcome staff input to build ownership. This will help build shared values and vision among all staff members.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Population and Sample of Schools by Size and Number of Teachers

Type of Schools	Large Schools (5A & 6A)	Small Schools (1A & 2A)
Non-Professional Learning Communities/Non-Small Learning Communities N = 93	Otis High School N = 73	Macy High School N = 20
Small Learning Community N = 107	Warren High School N = 87	Teal High School N = 20
Professional Learning Community N = 118	Calvin High School N = 83	Ellen High School N = 35
Alternative Schools N = 44	Harp High School N = 24	Feseme High School N = 20

Note. All school have been assigned fictional names.