# DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON DEVELOPING COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS THROUGH STUDENT EMPOWERMENT IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Education

with a

Major in Education

in the

College of Graduate Studies

University of Idaho

by

Trina C. Caudle

May 2014

Major Professor: Kathy Canfield-Davis, Ph.D.

**Authorization to Submit Dissertation**

This dissertation of Trina C. Caudle, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education and titled "Distributed Leadership: A Qualitative Study on Developing College and Career Readiness through Student Empowerment in Secondary Education," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

Major Professor: _____ Date: _____
Kathy Canfield-Davis, Ph.D.

Committee Members: _____ Date: _____
Jerry McMurtry, Ph.D.

_____ Date: _____
Richard Reardon, Ph.D.

_____ Date: _____
Tom V. Trotter, Ph.D.

Department Administrator: _____ Date: _____
Jeffery S. Brooks, Ph.D.

Discipline's College Dean: _____ Date: _____
Corinne Mantle-Bromley, Ph.D.

Final Approval and Acceptance

Dean of the College Of Graduate Studies: _____ Date: _____
Jie Chen, Ph.D.

## Abstract

This dissertation utilized a format where each research group member had the opportunity to conduct their own research on a problem of professional practice, write an article about the research to submit for publication, critique each other's research article, and write a white paper to propose solutions to local stakeholders. Researching and critiquing problems of professional practice provided each group member the opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders in the field, conduct research on authentic problems, and practice the scholarly jurying process. Each member conducted research around a problem of professional practice in leadership – student leadership or leadership of administrators in higher education. Research for this dissertation was conducted in a magnet high school focused on implementing a different model for public school education at the high school level. The model incorporates distributed leadership, positive school culture, and the 21st Century Skills Framework in an effort to empower and better prepare students for a global economy and the jobs and careers of tomorrow. Through a constructivist lens, the Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) was used as a strategy within the action research methodology to understand the perspective of students. Data were collected to determine whether or not students feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment.

*Keywords:* professional practices doctorate, distributed leadership, school culture, 21st Century Skills, student empowerment

## Acknowledgements

Researching and writing a dissertation is a journey of the heart, mind, and soul. More people have assisted me through this journey than I could list on this page. However, I do need to recognize those individuals who have been key to my success. I would like to thank my parents, Connie and Doral McGee, for their inspiration and passion for learning. I thank my children – Amanda, Jesse, and Garret – for being my cheerleaders throughout the entire process. Lastly, I thank Dr. Kathy Canfield-Davis, Dr. Jack Dawson, Dr. Richard Reardon, Dr. Thomas Trotter, Dr. John McMurtry, Dr. Sarah Sanders, Dr. Bryan Maughan, Nathan Relken, and Shane Wasden for traveling this journey with me.

# Table of Contents

## List of Figures

## List of Tables

## Preface

The University of Idaho has developed the Professional Practice Doctorate (P.P.D.) in accordance with the Carnegie Project for Education Doctorate (CPED) to clarify the purpose between the Ed.D. and the Ph.D. while preparing recipients as leader-practitioners. As a member institution of CPED, the University of Idaho's Professional Practices Doctorate program is founded on the CPED Working Principles. According to those principles the P.P.D. program at the University of Idaho:

1. Is framed around the questions of equity, ethics, and social justice to bring about solutions to complex problems of practice;
2. Prepares leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities;
3. Provides opportunities for candidates to develop and demonstrate collaboration and communication skills to work with diverse communities and to build partnerships;
4. Provides field-based opportunities to analyze problems of practice and use multiple frames to develop meaningful solutions;
5. Is grounded in and develops a professional knowledge base that integrates both practical and research knowledge, that links theory with systemic and systematic inquiry; and,
6. Emphasizes the generation, transformation, and use of professional knowledge and practice (CPED, 2013b).

The P.P.D program at the University of Idaho also incorporates the signature pedagogy of mentoring. Shulman (2005) described signature pedagogies and teaching

strategies within a field of professional practice, incorporating "all the dimensions of practice – the intellectual, the technical and the moral" (p. 58). Nakamura, Shernoff, and Hooker (2009) researched "how values and conduct as a professional are influenced organically through the extended mentoring relationships that emerge and evolve as novices enter a new profession" (p. xix). Within University of Idaho's P.P.D. program, students are mentored in the area of professional practice from colleagues and professionals in the field and by their Major Professor and committee members in the areas of research and scholarship. Professional practice mentors must be experts in their field and have a stake in the research conducted by the student. Unlike traditional Ph.D. programs, Major Professors and committee members take a more active role in mentoring students.

Most CPED programs and the University of Idaho require a dissertation capstone experience, aimed at solving a problem or issue of professional practice within the field of the student. Members of the University of Idaho's P.P.D. cohort were broken up into research groups of 3 or 4 based on common research themes. Some research groups collaborated entirely on one study or problem of professional practice while others conducted separate studies with the assistance and support of their group members. Each research group's Major Professor and committee members determined the format of the dissertation. Some groups utilized the Three Article Dissertation (TAD) format (Willis, 2010), while others modified the format to meet the specific research topics of each group member.

This dissertation utilized a format where each group member had the opportunity to conduct their own research on a problem of professional practice, write an article about the research to submit for publication, critique each other's research article, and write a white

paper to propose solutions to local stakeholders. Researching and critiquing problems of professional practice provided each group member the opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders in the field, conduct research on authentic problems, and practice the scholarly jurying process. Each member conducted research around a problem of professional practice in leadership – student leadership or leadership of administrators in higher education.

As part of the leadership research group, this dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 is a manuscript for publication regarding my research of professional practice on developing student empowerment through distributive leadership. Chapter 2 contains two critiques of the leadership studies conducted by my research group members, Nathan Relken and Shane Wasden. Chapter 3 is a white paper on how action research and distributed leadership can assist educational leaders at the high school level in improving and developing student empowerment, school culture, and 21st Century Skills. Chapter 4 provides some concluding remarks regarding my individual research study. Further information regarding the Professional Practices Doctorate can be found in Appendix A.

# Chapter 1: Individual Research Article

## Introduction

Advances in technology and communication have changed the world from a collection of individual countries with unique economies and issues to one global community where the economies and issues of the world affect everyone. Students no longer compete with their classmates for jobs; they compete with students across the globe. Advances in technology now put information directly in the hands of students. Teachers are no longer the primary source of information. The world has changed and K-12 education must change with it.

In *Schools Cannot Do It Alone*, Jamie Vollmer (2010) described the formation of K-12 education's industrial model and how it successfully worked after World War II to prepare students for the world of work. During this time period, most students could make a living wage as a laborer with few skills while only the top students were selected to enter college. School leadership in this model is hierarchical with the principal directing the labor of teachers. Students are viewed as products to be molded and sorted into two categories, semi-skilled labor and college bound (Vollmer, 2010).

Technological advances and the shift to a global economy require students to possess a different set of understandings and skills (Association for Career and Technical Education, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical education Consortium, & Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010; SCANS 1991; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The industrial model is no longer relevant and inadequately prepares students for the work force and postsecondary opportunities. In a global economy workers must be highly skilled and participate in some type of postsecondary education (Association for Career and Technical

Education, et al., 2010). School improvement efforts need to shift from working within the constraints of the industrial model to developing a new model aimed at empowering students and teachers to build a positive school culture and to prepare students for a constantly changing world (Vollmer, 2010).

Over the last decade school improvement efforts, in an attempt to break away from the industrial model, have focused on policies, mandates, accountability measures, and a national curriculum. Goals 2000 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 began the movement to national and state accountability measures (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004). After these policy and accountability attempts did not improve the global competitiveness of American students, the 21st Century Skills and Common Core State Standards initiatives joined the movement to reform education (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Although curriculum shifts to 21st Century Skills and the Common Core State Standards are steps in the right direction to better prepare students for college and the world of work, they do not necessarily provide students the opportunity to learn and practice the skills needed to be competitive in a global economy. Empowering students and giving them a voice in their own education is the key to providing students the opportunity to learn and practice the 21st Century Skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The research on educational leadership is abundant and diverse. Recent research calls for including and empowering teachers in leading and guiding the school, shifting from an individual to a collective leadership phenomenon (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Park & Datnow, 2009). The research on empowering teachers promotes cooperation, collaboration, and a culture of trust (Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kotthamp, 1991; Peterson & Deal, 1998;

Roby, 2011; Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2001; Warren, 2005; Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). Research, however, is silent on the empowerment of students and their role as leaders within the school. Students need to have a voice and active role in their own education. Empowering students improves motivation and provides them an opportunity to achieve 21st Century Skills of collaboration, communication, leadership, and responsibility (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Students have much to contribute to the culture of the school and to their own development in preparation for life beyond high school. When students have a voice in the classroom and in the school, students are more likely to engage in the direction of their own learning (Cook-Sather, 2002).

Efforts to improve education will need to shift from working within the industrial model to developing a new model, changing how we view school leadership, school culture, and student learning. What will leadership look like within a school structure and culture aimed at preparing students for the jobs and careers of tomorrow? Will teachers and students have a voice in making decisions regarding teaching and learning? What type of culture is needed to sustain teacher and student voice? How will curriculum and instruction need to change in order to better prepare students for the constantly changing world? Most importantly, how can students take control of their own learning with the support of teachers and the principal?

The purpose of this study is not to address all of these questions, but to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. Understanding the perspective of high school students

regarding empowerment can begin the conversation on how to provide opportunities to empower students to affect and influence the shift to better preparing students for college and careers after high school.

## Background of the Study

Idaho Falls School District #91, in Idaho Falls, Idaho opened a magnet high school, Compass Academy, in September of 2012 to prepare students to be competitive in a global economy. The school opened with only 9th and 10th graders with the plan to add a new incoming grade each year. This year the school enrolls approximately 365 total students in 9th, 10th and 11th grades. The magnet school focuses on building a culture of trust, respect, and responsibility while developing skills identified by the 21st Century Skills Framework through an integrated, project-based curriculum. In order to build this culture, the school intentionally employs distributed leadership practices, where students and teachers have a voice in the decision making process. Idaho Falls School District #91 plans to use Compass Academy as a catalyst for change for all schools within the district, breaking away from the industrial model.

Compass Academy is not alone in their endeavor. The school is a member of the New Tech Network (NTN), a non-profit organization with a mission of supporting schools in revolutionizing the high school experience to prepare students for college and careers (NTN, 2013b). The organization began in the 1990s in Napa California with a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Membership in the organization has grown from the original school, Napa New Technology High School, in Napa Valley to 120 schools in 18 states and 1 school in Australia (NTN, 2013b). As part of the network all 120 schools strive to prepare students for college and the world of work through distributed leadership, project-

based learning, innovative uses of technology, and a culture of trust, respect, and responsibility (NTN, 2013c).

Although Compass Academy is only in its second year of operation, other schools within the network have been implementing the NTN model for many years. Each school in the network participates in a continual cycle of action research to monitor their progress in implementing the model. Schools use the New Tech Network's School Success Rubric to self-assess, receive feedback from the network, and plan for improvement (NTN, 2013a). The rubric has three components with underscoring elements: Learning Outcomes – knowledge, skills, attributes; Cultural Outcomes – connected, engaged, challenges; and, College and Career Outcomes – aware, eligible, prepared (NTN, 2013a). All three components address different skills in one form or another as identified by 21st Century Skills Framework (NTN, 2013a; Trilling & Fadel 2009).

Compass Academy participates in the annual program review process as part of the New Tech Network, but also strives to meet specific annual benchmarks as part of the New Tech Network School Success Rubric as identified by the students and staff (NTN, 2013a). For Compass Academy, the component of Cultural Outcomes is the most important and foundational component of the rubric, directed at establishing a professional culture built on trust, respect, and responsibility where students are expected to take on leadership roles within the school (NTN, 2013a). The school continually examines their culture through a distributed leadership lens. Do teachers and students have a voice in the school? Do interactions between all members of the school community exemplify relational trust, respect, and responsibility? Do students effectively communicate and collaborate during projects? Do students feel connected, engaged, and challenged (NTN, 2013a)?

Compass Academy with the support of the New Tech Network strives to serve as a catalyst for change throughout the Idaho Falls School District #91 secondary system. Shifting from an industrial model to a 21st Century model will require changes in school structure, school culture, curriculum goals, instruction, and implementation of technology (NTN, 2013c). Schools will need to shift from the industrial model mindset of viewing schools as large factories where teachers serve as hired labor to produce students as products to small learning communities with a culture built on trust, respect, and responsibility. Teachers will no longer disseminate information for students to memorize and recall. Students will learn through project-based instruction where they direct their own learning through inquiry facilitated by the teacher. Students, teachers, and staff will collaborate in a professional atmosphere and have a voice in the culture and structures of the school. Technology will not replace textbooks, but serve as tools for communication and collaboration. Leadership will be distributed to include students as well as teachers, giving students the opportunity to learn and practice 21st Century Skills.

The purpose of this study is to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. Research is abundant on how educational leadership and positive school culture promotes teacher voice and empowerment (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kotthamp, 1991; Leithwood & Reihl, 2005; Park & Datnow, 2009; Roby, 2001). Research is limited on how leadership and culture promotes student empowerment. High school students are preparing to enter the real world where they will need to be able to lead,

collaborate, and solve complex issues (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Empowering students as leaders in the school provides students the opportunity to build these skills while contributing to the school as a whole.

## Conceptual Framework

Research on distributed leadership, school culture, and 21st Century Skills will be conducted through a constructivist lens where meaning is derived from how individuals assign meaning to interactions with people and their environment (Paul, 2005). Primarily, researchers in this study seek to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. By examining student empowerment in the context of a magnet high school, researchers can gain insight into the relationship between distributed leadership and school culture in an effort to provide schools information to improve student voice in their own education. Figure 1.1 illustrates the relationship between the concepts of distributed leadership, student empowerment, 21st Century Skills, and school culture in preparing students for college and careers.

In figure 1.1 distributed leadership provides the avenue to support and develop student empowerment. Student empowerment is a necessary component of developing and practicing many of the 21st Century Skills needed to be college and career ready. School culture is nurtured and developed by all three concepts of distributed leadership, student empowerment, and 21st Century Skills. At the same rate school culture paves the way for distributed leadership to empower students and promote the instructional practices needed to develop 21st Century Skills.

The research and literature regarding distributed leadership focuses primarily on theory and very little on how to cultivate and leverage a distributed leadership model within a school. Through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, researchers seek to answer the following questions:

1. Do students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture?
2. How have students influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment?

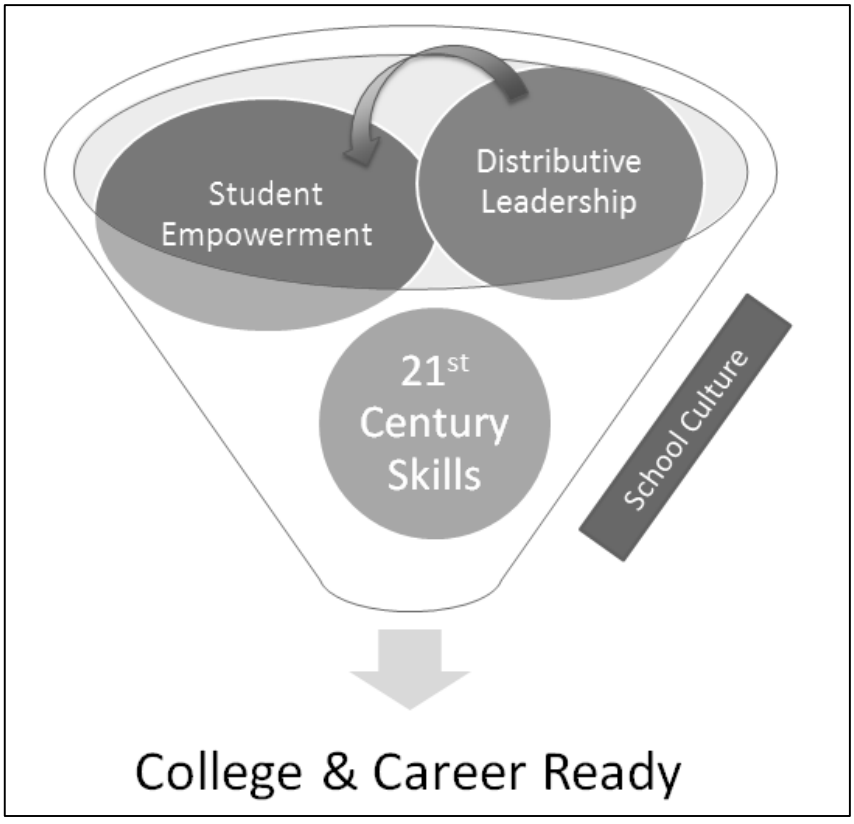


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

With exponential advances in technology and the shift to a global economy, teaching and learning in public schools must change. Students can now easily access information on the internet through a variety of devices and will no longer be dependent on the teacher to

impart information. Students will also need a different set of skills to be successful in postsecondary education and jobs of tomorrow. Some of these skills include the ability to think critically, problem solve, collaborate, and communicate with others (Association for Career and Technical Education, et al., 2010; SCANS, 1991; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In order to provide students the opportunity to learn 21st Century Skills, school leaders and teachers will need to empower students to have a voice in their own learning and in the structures and culture of the school.

The research on distributed leadership and positive school culture promotes teacher voice and empowerment, calls for relationships built on trust, and encourages cooperation and collaboration (Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kotthamp, 1991; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Roby, 2011; Rhodes, et al., 2011; Warren, 2005; Woods, et al., 2004). However, very little research addresses student empowerment, student development and maintenance of school culture, and students as leaders of the school (Woods, et al., 2004. 442). Preparing students for the global economy entails giving student opportunities to master and practice concepts and skills needed for the 21st century and beyond within a safe, structured environment.

## Literature Review

Public K-12 education is not adequately preparing students to become competitive in a global economy. Instead public education continues to center around an industrial model, placing structures and restrictions on education (Vollmer, 2010). One of these structures is hierarchical leadership where leadership is top down with the principal managing his/her school, directing efforts of the labor force (teachers) in order to produce the desired product (students). Instead of principals and teachers directing student learning, students need to be empowered to take control of their own learning (McQuillan, 2005). Instead of imparting

information, teachers and principals need to be charged with providing a learning environment focused on facilitating student voice (Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, & Louis, 2009). This section reviews the literature on distributed leadership, school culture, and 21st Century Skills to develop an understanding of the relationships between the three concepts and preparing students to be competitive in a global economy.

**Distributed Leadership**

Research on distributed leadership focuses mainly on theory and very little on practice. The definition and characteristics of distributed leadership speak to teacher and student empowerment with both teachers and students provided the opportunity to have a voice in developing and building school structures and culture. Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, and Louis (2009) discuss the role of the principal in nurturing distributed leadership by developing new school structures and rebuilding school culture. Spillane (2006) calls for focusing on the practice of distributed leadership by examining how groups within the school influence each other through interactions. Interactions between leaders, interactions between leaders and followers, and how leadership and followers interact within the structures of the school all define leadership practice within the school (Spillane, 2006). By focusing on leadership practice through the lens of distributed leadership, distributed leadership can serve as a framework for reflecting on leadership and improving leadership practice within the school (Spillane, 2006).

Leadership in education is a diverse and well-researched topic. Over the last decade the research on distributed leadership has added to the body of knowledge about leadership as accountability and school improvement efforts have changed. Distributed leadership is often confused with delegated leadership. Harris (2002) defined distributed leadership "as a

form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively" where "leadership resides not solely in the individual at the top, but in every person at every level who, in one way or another acts as a leader" (p. 22).

Distributed leadership is a different view of leadership, shifting from an individual phenomenon to a collective phenomenon where leadership arises from a group of individuals working together (Leithwood & Reihl, 2005; Park & Datnow, 2009). Woods, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004) describe three characteristics of distributed leadership: emergent leadership, openness of boundaries, and leadership according to expertise. Emergent leadership is when people take the initiative to become leaders and work collaboratively together towards a common goal (Angelle, 2010; Wood, Bennet, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). Gronn (2002) further clarifies this collective phenomenon of emergent leadership with his term concertive action (p. 3). Concertive action is the result of people working together and capitalizing on their varying strengths and expertise to produce an outcome far greater than the result of combining their individual efforts (Gronn, 2002; Woods, et al., 2004).

The second characteristic, openness of boundaries, further develops the collective phenomenon associated with distributed leadership (Wood, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004, p. 442). Distributed leadership involves more individuals than the traditional leaders within the school, creating the dilemma of who to include within the leadership circle (Woods, et al., 2004, p. 442). Murphy, et al. (2009) researched how principals can open the boundaries to include more teachers as leaders (Wood, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004, p. 442). Fielding (1999), Trafford (2003) and Wood, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004) call for students and teachers to be included as contributors and leaders within the school.

The final characteristic of distributed leadership, leadership according to expertise, takes into account the different strengths of each individual (Woods, et al., 2004). Successful implementation of distributed leadership is dependent on the level and abundance of educator expertise and not on the allocation of responsibilities (Angelle, 2010; Copland, 2003). Leadership then functions as a team where individual strengths and expertise provide balance and depth (Park & Datnow, 2009, p. 479). Leadership according to expertise not only fosters collaboration, but it improves the capacity of each member by providing an opportunity for members to learn from each other (Park & Datnow, 2009, p. 488).

Distributed leadership as researched by Spillane (2006), comprises both the leader-plus and practice aspects. The leader-plus aspect acknowledges that members in the school community can engage in leadership roles both formally and informally (Spillane, 2006). Leadership does not solely reside in the principal's office. Teachers, parents, support staff, and even students can act as leaders. Research shows teachers often on their own initiative take on leadership functions within the school (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003). Distribution can occur based on leadership function, content area subjects, school type, school size, and school improvement efforts (Spillane, 2006).

Distributed leadership does not necessarily mean both formal and informal leaders within the school are working in concert to reach a specific goal. In his research, Spillane (2006) found three types of distributed leadership patterns can occur in schools, often times simultaneously – division of labor, co-performance, and parallel performance (p. 38). Division of labor occurs when different individuals perform different leadership functions (Spillane, 2006). For example, in a high school each assistant principal may have different

areas of supervision. Co-performance happens when multiple leaders collaborate together to perform the same leadership function (Gronn, 2003; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003). Parallel performance, Spillane's (2006) final leadership pattern, is described as leaders performing the same leadership function without collaborating. All three types of distributed leadership patterns can occur intentionally, unintentionally, or when a school crisis arises (Spillane, 2006).

Spillane (2006) takes a deeper study into distributed leadership by focusing not just on characteristics of distributed leadership, but how distributed leadership is practiced. Distributed leadership in practice "is framed in a very particular way, as a product of joint interactions of school leaders, followers, and aspects of their situation such as tools and routines" (Spillane, 2006, p. 3). The practice perspective of distributed leadership moves the focus beyond the actions of the leader and concentrates on specific interactions between leaders and other members of the school community. Similar to the findings of Woods, et al. (2004) distributed leadership, according to Spillane, is not delegated leadership. Unlike delegated leadership, distributed leadership involves both the practice of leadership and the leader-plus aspect (Spillane, 2006, p. 12). The practice of leadership involves the interactions of those acting as leaders with each other, leaders interacting with followers, and how leaders and followers interact with the situation or context (Spillane, 2006, p. 12).

The practice aspect of distributed leadership shifts the focus from leadership characteristics to leadership practice by analyzing "interactions between leaders, followers and the situation" (Spillane, 2006, p. 14). The collective phenomenon associated with distributed leadership causes this shift from the actions of individuals such as the principal to interactions between multiple leaders within the school. Analyzing the interactions of how

leaders work together is difficult. Research in this area is limited to Spillane and a few of his colleagues (Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2000; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003; Spillane, Diamond, Sherer, & Coldren, 2004). The practice aspect also includes how leaders and followers interact, as well as how leaders use procedures and routines to interact with others within the situation or context. Distributed leadership is not a recipe for leadership, but instead a perspective of thinking and looking at leadership within the school setting (Spillane, 2006).

New school structures will need to be developed as our current industrial model of public education puts up barriers to distributed leadership, teacher empowerment, and student empowerment. The industrial model promotes hierarchical leadership and dampens efforts to open leadership boundaries. To promote distributed leadership, principals need to be intentional with their efforts to revise and develop school structures in order to broaden the leadership circle (Murphy, et al., 2009). New structures will need to be put in place to provide time and opportunity for collaboration and involvement within the decision making process. These structures should also encourage a culture of collaboration instead of a culture of individual autonomy. A culture of individual autonomy undermines collaborative relationships, professionalism, teacher empowerment, and the relationship between teachers and administrators (Murphy, et al., 2009).

Research in the area of distributed leadership is mostly silent on the role of students. Spillane (2006) touches on the role of students as followers in how they interact with leaders, teachers, and routines created by policy and procedures within the school. Forms of student leadership are dependent on school culture and more specifically on peer and student-teacher relationships (Lizzio, et al., 2011). Student relationships with their peers and

teachers impact how students see themselves within the context of the school and can determine their level of engagement in school leadership opportunities. The level of student engagement in school leadership activities often predicts their level of engagement in community leadership roles as adults (Lizzio, et al., 2011). Students need the opportunity to have a voice in their own education and to be included in developing and rebuilding school structures and culture (McQuillan, 2005).

**School Culture**

School culture encompasses the shared vision, mission, values, beliefs, norms, and traditions that impact how members of the school community interact with each other and the school environment (Peterson & Deal, 1998). A positive and productive school culture is contingent upon principals and teacher leaders who promote social capital, cooperation and collaboration, and relational trust to resolve issues and to collaborate towards improving instruction and student learning (Rhodes, et al., 2011; Warren, 2005). The leadership model in a school influences the development and maintenance of school culture, and can be broadened to include students and other members of the school community.

Trust, relationships, and cooperation are the cornerstones to positive school culture. Trust is the "belief that some or something is reliable, good, honest, and effective" (Merriam-Webster, 2013). A plethora of research supports trust as a vital element to healthy and productive relationships, school effectiveness and improvement, and the overall development of a positive school culture and climate (Hoy, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Witkoskie, 1992; Tarter, Sabo, & Hoy, 1995; Hoy, Hoffman, Sabo, & Bliss 1996; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy 1989). Because culture is a social construct, trust, relationships, and cooperation are not

exclusive elements. They exist in concert with each other (Rhodes, et al., 2011; Warren, 2005).

Rhodes, Stevens, and Hemmings (2011) describe the interaction of trust and relationships in culture through the concept of relational trust. Relational trust encompasses all of the possible relationships between students, parents, teachers, staff, and administration in a school setting. Norms and expectations are developed within these relationships, establishing on how each person treats and reacts to the other. Relational trust is developed and improved upon as each person behaves in accordance with the established expectations, exhibiting the characteristics of respect, integrity, and a genuine concern for others (Rhodes, et al., 2011).

According to Hoy (2002) school culture and trust have a reciprocal relationship. For example, when teachers exhibit respect, honestly, and collaboration toward each other, trust between teachers is improved. At the same rate, improved trust among teachers promotes respect, honesty, and collaboration (Hoy, 2002). The reciprocal relationship between school culture and trust includes all relationships in the school between teachers, parents, students, and administration (Hoy, 2002).

Trust, relationships, and cooperation also impact school culture through what Warren (2005) calls social capital. Similar to money, time, and expertise, trust and positive relationships are also assets affecting the school environment. These assets comprise social capital and assist school staff in working toward and reaching a common goal. Robust relationships built on trust can improve school culture, teaching, and learning by taking advantage of social capital. When teachers, administrators, and parents have positive relationships with each other based on trust, they can collaboratively work towards a

common goal of school improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Shirley, 1997; Warren, 2005).

Similar to social capital, the concept of cultural capital can be employed to study the social configuration and power structure of a school. Peirre Bourdiew and Jean-Cleaude Passeron first developed the concept of cultural capital in respect to how information gained from the educational system can influence social structures and social classes in France (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). The concept was expanded and adapted to other contexts, assisting in the understanding of the development of social systems (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Although cultural capital can impact school culture, including the concept within the conceptual framework is beyond the scope of this study.

Teacher leaders and principals are at the heart of creating and sustaining a positive school culture built on trust, relationships, and cooperation (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter & Kotthamp, 1991; Roby, 2011). Teachers and especially students often are not provided the opportunity to develop school culture through shared vision, mission, norms, and values (Brown, 2004; Donaldson, 2006; Roby, 2011). A positive school culture should take advantage of relational trust, social capital, cooperation, and collaboration to promote student and teacher involvement in culture building. By truly involving and empowering students and teachers the reciprocal relationship between trust and relationships can be cultivated through participation and shared ownership.

**21st Century Skills**

21st Century Skills have been shaped by a series of studies directed at changing curriculum and instruction to provide students the knowledge, skills, and attributes to be competitive globally. First, in 1991 the U.S. Department of Labor published *What Work*

*Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*. The Secretary's Commission on Achievement Necessary Skills (SCANS) studied what skills were needed to enter the current work force and whether or not those exiting high school and college possessed those skills. According to the commission's report, students need to learn a different set of skills and understandings to be productive and financially stable. Students need to develop mastery in conjunction with problem solving strategies and real-world applications (SCANS, 1991).

The SCANS (1991) report identified five competencies and three types of foundational skills, all with multiple components, aimed at preparing student to be competitive in a global economy. The five competencies include:

- Resources – Identifies, organizes, plans and allocated resources;
- Interpersonal - Works with others;
- Information – Acquires and uses information;
- Systems – Understands complex inter-relationships; and
- Technology – Works with a variety of technologies (SCANS, 1991, p. x)

The competencies were developed to bridge the gap between school and work while the foundational skills set minimum standards for students in basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities (SCANS, 1991, p. xi). Some examples of these skills and qualities include minimum standards for reading, writing, mathematics, creative thinking, decision-making, responsibility, and integrity (SCANS, 1991, p. xi).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 followed after the SCANS report in an attempt to improve public education through policy. The purpose of NCLB was to increase school and district accountability; improve teacher quality; improve instruction through the implementation of scientifically research-based practices; increase parent

choice; and, provide flexibility in funding (Simpson, et al., 2004). Spillane (2012) questions whether policy can truly change what happens in the classroom, and challenges researchers to provide teachers with the research necessary to improve practice.

Trilling and Fadel (2009) strive to address the challenge of preparing students for the jobs and careers of the future. Students need to be able to quickly learn new information and to apply new information to solve real-world issues and problems. Trilling and Fadel (2009) developed a framework of 21st Century Skills aimed at better preparing students by focusing on reading, writing, mathematics, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, communication literacy, computer literacy, and self-reliance (p. 176). The framework resulted from a two-year study about developing educational goals to prepare students for success in the constantly changing world (Trilling, 2009). Trilling and Fadel (2009) identify four forces of change in the 21st century, necessitating new goals and new skills for students – knowledge work, thinking tools, digital lifestyles, and learning research (p. 21).

Preparing students for the constantly changing world requires schools to not just focus on basic understanding of core subjects, but to apply understanding to complex situations and environments. The framework comprises 14 specific skills, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and design-based learning (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The 14 specific skills or themes fall under the categories of Life and Career Skills; Learning and Innovation Skills; and, Information, Media and Technology Skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 48). Table 1.1 summarizes the framework, identifying each category and skill.

Learning according to the 21st Century Skills Framework requires the implementation of Howard Gardner's (1999) multiple intelligences and Linda Darling-

Hammond's (2008) research on project, problem-based, and design-based learning. Multiple intelligences, project-based, problem-based, and design-based learning support all 14 skills and address the force of learning research in changing K-12 education. Multiple Intelligences within the 21st Century Skills Framework assists students in acquiring the knowledge and skills by differentiating instruction and personalizing learning (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Darling-Hammond's (2008) research on project-based learning, problem-based learning, and design-based learning assists in teaching for understanding, supports learning research, and provides opportunities for authentic learning.

Research shows project-based learning incorporates and teaches many of the 21st Century Skills while allowing students, through inquiry, the opportunity direct their own learning (Bell, 2010). "Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning" (Bell, 2010, p. 39). Project-based learning assists students in learning to be responsible, self-directed, collaborative, and creative while building connections to the real-world (Bell, 2010). Barron and Darling-Hammond's (2008) research discusses how project-based learning can be used as a strategy to teach students how to learn, not just what content to learn. One of the core components of the 21st Century Skills Framework is the need for students to be able to quickly learn new information and to apply information to solve real-world issues and problems (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Teachers will not always be around to show students how to learn. Students will need to be self-reliant and responsible for their own learning.

In 2010 the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, and the Partnership for 21st Century Skills collaborated on a report calling for college and career

readiness as the new reform effort to prepare students for a global economy. College and career readiness means students leaving high school will be able to transition smoothly to postsecondary education and into careers where individuals can earn a living wage. The K-12 educational system is not addressing the skills and competencies needed to prepare students for the current and future work force. The report argues for schools to develop specific competencies and skills, including problem solving, collaboration, and innovation to address this gap (Association for Career and Technical Education, et al., 2010).

Table 1.1

*21st Century Skills Framework*

| Component | Skill |
|---|---|
| Learning and Innovation Skills | Critical Thinking and Problem Solving |
| | Communication and Collaboration |
| | Creativity and Innovation |
| Information, Media and Technology Skills | Information Literacy |
| | Media Literacy |
| | Information and Communication Technology Literacy |
| Life and Career Skills | Flexibility and Adaptability |
| | Initiative and Self-Direction |
| | Life and Career Skills |
| | Productivity and Accountability |
| | Leadership and Responsibility |

Note: The 21st Century Skills Framework is from Trilling and Fadel (2009)

The vision for 21st Century Skills now includes Career and Technical education, encompassing the entire K-12 system and strengthening support through collaborative efforts (Association for Career and Technical Education, et al., 2010). The report clarifies collaborative effort towards an agenda for transforming education:

- Emphasize opportunities to master 21st Century Skills.
- Prioritize strategies to engage students in learning and meet the needs of students with different learning styles.
- Prepare students for STEM occupations, and other high-growth, high-wage careers.
- Give student opportunities to earn valuable credentials.
- Foster productive relationship between students and teachers.
- Support transitions to postsecondary education.
- Employ best practices for college and career readiness. (Association for Career and Technical Education, et al., 2010, p. 12).

The report also includes recommendations for policy makers in supporting the agenda for change through funding and policy development.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative to prepare students for college and the workforce by developing a national curriculum began at the same time period in 2010 with the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013). The Common Core State Standards Initiative developed K-12 standards in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Literacy. These standards incorporate and include the 21st Century Skills as well as other goals and benchmarks to afford all students regardless of where they attend school.

**Summary**

Intentionally implementing distributed leadership to include students as leaders empowers students, giving them a role in developing and maintaining school culture while learning and practicing 21st Century Skills. Whether it is widening the leadership net to include students (Woods, et al., 2004) or involving them in the aspects of leadership-plus and leadership practice (Spillane, 2006), students have much to offer in facilitating school change and directing their own learning. The literature supports the relationship between the concepts of distributed leadership, student empowerment, 21st Century Skills, and school culture as illustrated in Figure 1.1 to prepare students for college and careers.

The concept of distributed leadership practice demonstrates how students can be empowered within the school. Spillane (2006) writes how a distributed perspective in leadership practice can employ three design principles to think about school leadership:

- The practice of leadership should be a central focus in efforts to improve school leadership because it is a more proximal cause of instructional improvement than leadership roles, processes, or structures;
- Intervening to improve leadership necessitates attention to interactions, not just actions, because leadership practice takes shape in the interactions among leaders and followers; and,
- Intervening to improve leadership practice requires attention to the design and redesign of aspects of the situation such as routines and tools because the situation help define leadership practice (Spillane, 2006, p. 93-94).

These three principles can be used to empower students. Whether or not students are leaders or followers in the school, they will still have influence on each other, on the staff, and on

school routines through interactions. Instead of assuming students are followers, schools should consider how students act as informal leaders and embrace opportunities for students to take on more formal leadership roles. Research shows when students are empowered, school efforts to change and improve are more likely to be successful (Cook-Sather, 2002; McQuillan, 2005; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996).

The first two principles of distributed leadership shift the focus from specific actions of individual leaders to leadership practice, specifically to interactions between leaders and followers (Spillane, 2006). To empower students and teachers, principals can study how leadership is practiced within their school and how leaders and followers interact with each other. Who are the formal and informal leaders? Who are the followers? How do leaders interact and influence each other? How do leaders and followers interact and influence each other? What is the connection between leadership practice and instruction? Questions such as these may assist principals in utilizing distributed leadership to reflect on and improve leadership practice within the school. Distributed leadership practice exists in all schools intentionally or not (Spillane, 2006). By studying and reflecting on how leadership practice is spread over members of the school community, the principal can intentionally include students and staff in the practice of school leadership.

The third principle broadens the view of leadership practice to include interactions with the situation (Spillane, 2006). The situation is not only the context of the school, but the structures schools put in place to define routines, support learning, and build school culture. Spillane (2006) warns practitioners to not consider distributed leadership as a framework for school improvement, but a lens to think about leadership in schools. The situation, rules, routines, policies, procedures, and other structures of a school influence interactions

between leaders and followers. Empowering students and staff through a distributed perspective, requires principals to carefully study the culture of the school along with the context of the school. Do the structures and routines of the school promote positive interactions aimed at school improvement goals or do they cause conflict and scatter improvement efforts? Do the structures and routines of the school empower students and staff to take on leadership functions and work collaboratively?

Using a distributed leadership perspective to empower students improves motivation while providing students the opportunity to learn and practice 21st Century Skills of collaboration and communication; creative thinking and problem-solving; initiative and self-direction; productivity and accountability; and leadership and responsibility to name a few (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Students can practice these skills by interacting with administrators, teachers, staff members, and peers when serving leadership functions, assisting in the development of school structures such as routines, and applying content understanding to real-world problems with project-based learning. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills provides information, research, support, and resources for schools in implementing the framework (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The concept of school culture ties together the concepts of distributed leadership, student empowerment, and 21st Century Skills to improve instruction and learning and to better prepare students for college and careers. As stated earlier, school culture encompasses the shared vision, mission, values, beliefs, norms, and traditions that impact how members of the school community interact with each other and the school environment (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Social capital, cooperation and collaboration, and relational trust are all aspects of a positive and productive culture. These aspects are also a vital part of distributed

leadership and 21st Century skills identified by Trilling and Fadel (2009). The distributed leadership perspective opens the door to student empowerment, enabling students to learn and practice 21st Century Skills while culture binds them together through interactions with each other and the school environment.

Trust, relationships, and cooperation are not only cornerstones to positive school culture; they also facilitate how individuals and groups interact with each other. Interactions between leaders, followers, and the school context as part of a distributed perspective have a reciprocal relationship with school culture (Hoy, 2002; Spillane, 2006). These interactions assist in the development of school culture and are also guided by school culture. All 14 of the 21st Century Skills, in one form or another, rely on how students interact with others and the situation or environment. Students need social capital, cooperation and collaboration, and relational trust to solve real-world applications and engage in problem, project, or design based learning (Rhodes, et al., 2001; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Warren, 2005). Students also deserve the opportunity to contribute as leaders, formally and informally, instead of passively serving as followers.

## Methodology/Methods

The purpose of this study is to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. The Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) was used within the action research methodology to examine the collective leadership phenomena of distributed leadership and its relationship to school culture and 21st Century Skills from the perspective of students. The RAP approach

has many characteristics of ethnography and case study research, recognizing all members with decision making power within the study (Beebe, 2009) and conducting inquiry within a bounded system (Creswell, 1998). RAP was developed from Rapid Rural Appraisal and has been utilized in multiple research contexts since the 1970s (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2013; Chambers, 1981). RAP also offers an increased cultural understanding through a diverse research team (Beebe, 2009).

Action research is a strategy of inquiry within the qualitative approach to research where "the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives or advocacy/participatory perspectives or both …with the primary intent of developing themes from the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 18). Qualitative methods such as action research use the terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability in place of validity and reliability to establish the trustworthiness of a study (Guba, 1981). Credibility requires prolonged engagement at the site, peer debriefing, triangulation through a variety of data sources, member checks, and testing interpretations (Guba, 1981). Transferability occurs through the collection of "thick descriptive data" allowing data collected to be compared to other contexts where appropriate (Guba, 1981, p. 86). Dependability of a study occurs through triangulation, replication, and audits of data and data collection methods (Guba, 1981). Lastly, conformability entails data triangulation from a variety of perspectives, practicing reflexivity, and conducting audits of data interpretation (Guba, 1981).

**Research Approach**

An action research approach to qualitative research will be conducted using the Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) to study the relationship between distributed leadership

and student empowerment. Action research empowers insiders to understand their context and to solve problems or improve practice (Stringer, 2007). Action research gives educators the opportunity to solve a problem of practice or to improve practice (Creswell, 1998). RAP is a research methodology aimed at understanding the perspective of insiders in order to take action in solving a problem or informing change (Beebe, 2013). To research and improve student empowerment, an insider's perspective will be essential to understanding the relationship between distributed leadership and student empowerment in order to develop interventions to improve student empowerment and promote the development of 21st Century Skills.

The Rapid Assessment Process (RAP), a modified approach to qualitative ethnography, was utilized to study the relationship between distributed leadership and student empowerment. Creswell (1998) referred to ethnography as a suitable approach "to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues such as power, resistance and dominance" (p. 70). Researchers sought to gain an insider's perspective to the culture of the magnet school, whether or not students feel empowered, and the reciprocal relationship between culture and distributed leadership. It was imperative to achieve an understanding of student perspectives to gain a holistic view of school culture in relation to student empowerment. Understanding the culture of the magnet school through the eyes of students also provided insight on the impact of empowerment on developing the 21st Century Skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Utilizing the RAP strategy within the context of action research alleviates some of the challenges of a traditional ethnography. Traditional ethnographies are very time consuming and require an extended period in the field (Creswell, 1998). Resources and the

possible impact of researchers on the lives of participants are also challenges. Action research provides the principal, teachers, and students of the magnet school the opportunity to participate in systematic inquiry to improve distributed leadership practices within their own school (Stringer, 2007). RAP also reduces the time needed to collect and analyze data by using multiple researchers, both insiders and outsiders, in an iterative process. (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009).

RAP evolved from a group of qualitative research approaches and methodologies called "rapid appraisal, rapid assessment, and rapid rural appraisal" (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2013, p. 12; Chambers, 1991; Kumar, 1993; Scrimshaw & Gleason, 1992). These approaches to research were created in the 1970s from the desire to understand the development of rural cultures and conditions (Cavestro, 2003; Chambers, 1994). Through the 1980s the group of research approaches became widely accepted as a rigorous approach to understanding local conditions in an inexpensive and timely manner (Carruthers & Chambers, 1981; Chambers, 1994). When implemented appropriately, rapid rural appraisal "came out better by criteria of cost-effectiveness, validity and reliability when it was compared with more conventional methods" (Chambers, 1994, p. 956). Rapid appraisal, rapid assessment, and rapid rural appraisal approaches to research have expanded to include research in other areas such as the health fields, farming, and economic structures (Chambers, 1994).

As a more recent member of the family of research approaches sometimes called rapid rural appraisal, Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) specifically assists researchers in understanding the local context through the perspective of the local people (Beebe, 1995). During the RAP, researchers first gather information about the system or context. This

information is then used to develop and plan semi-structured interviews and observations. Through information gathering, interviews, and observations, the RAP researchers look for trends and patterns, often learning information that is not anticipated or expected (Beebe, 1995). RAP researchers alter interview questions and sometimes the direction of the study as new information arises. Because of the adjustments made during the research process, multiple iterations are required to ensure that relationships are thoroughly explored (Beebe, 1995; Carruthers & Chambers, 1981).

RAP provides data triangulation through a team of diverse researchers in the field together, conducting interviews and observations (Beebe, 2009). Teamwork is also applied to the iterative process of continual data collection and analysis until data saturation is reached. Similar to action research, the RAP iterative process represents a cycle of data collection and analysis until the data represents a very close approximation of the perceptions of participants (Beebe, 2009). RAP utilizes Miles and Huberman's (1994) model of data analysis by coding, displaying, and drawing conclusions from data (Beebe, 2009). Using a team of researchers which includes insiders also increases the likeliness of recommendations being implemented within the action research process (Beebe, 2001). An important component of action research is the ability to share research with practitioners in order to solve a problem or improve practice (Creswell, 1998).

**The Rapid Assessment Process Team**

The RAP team for this study consisted of three multi-disciplinary members, one insider and two outsiders. Having an insider on the team assisted the team in understanding the culture and language of the school community while maintaining levels of trust and integrity with participants (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009). The insider was not a faculty

member of the school, but a member of the district office and school community involved in the opening of the school. The two outsiders did not have any professional experience in K-12 education. The two outsiders consisted of a faculty member from a local college and a local business owner. Having a research team of insiders and outsiders improved the team's ability to reduce bias while establishing credibility through the use of peer debriefing and confirmability through triangulation of the different perspective of each researcher (Guba, 1981). The RAP team also consisted of both male and female researchers to reduce any gender bias through triangulation (Beebe, 1995; Shaner, Philipp, & Schmehl, 1982).

All RAP team researchers participated in the process of gathering preliminary information, data collection, and data analysis for the study as well as the action research process aimed at improving student empowerment (Beebe, 1995; Beebe, 2001). RAP team members reflected on the data collection process before, during, and after data collection. Between each semi-structured interview, the team reflected and discussed how to improve the interview guidelines to better ensure that participants felt safe and comfortable sharing their story. The RAP team began with the first round of interview with the grand tour question of "What is it like to be a student at Compass Academy?" The RAP team adjusted the interview questions between each set of interviews based upon the themes that arose during data analysis and coding. Working and reflecting as a diverse team throughout the data collection and analysis process, improves triangulation by monitoring and reducing bias (Schoonmaker-Greudenberger, 2013).

**Preliminary Information**

Collecting preliminary information prior to conducting RAP team interviews is very important (Beebe, 2001). Preliminary information reduces the amount of time and effort

needed during interviews and the data collection process when data is already available through documents and artifacts (Beebe, 2001). Gathering and using preliminary information as data in the action research process also increases dependability by overlapping methods of data collection (Guba, 1981). Preliminary information was gathered based upon the recommendations of Creswell (1998), where the goal is to understand the context while keeping information to a manageable size for analysis. Documents and artifacts were gathered about the history of the school, demographic information about students and staff, school policies and procedures, school structures, student achievement data, the first year progress report on student outcomes, school culture survey results from spring of 2013, general information on the New Tech Network, school budget, and the school events calendar. The RAP team also toured the school and visited several classrooms while they were in session prior to conducting interviews and meeting with key informants.

**Participants**

Participants consisted of students, teachers, administrators, and other staff members within the school. Student respondents were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews conducted by the RAP team. Student respondents were not randomly chosen, but were selected to represent all of the diverse groups within the school (Beebe, 2001). To ensure ample time within the culture and context of the magnet school, only students who have attended the school more than one year were selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Because RAP is an iterative process, a set number of respondents was not established prior to the study. The number of the student respondents were dependent upon the point of data saturation as determined by the RAP team.

Other participants served as key informants or were included in research observations. Care was given to distinguish between key informants and student respondents. Student respondents were student participants who shared personal experiences, insights, and behaviors while key informants consisted of teachers and students who shared information about the entire school in general (Beebe, 2001). Key informants consisted of students, teachers, and other staff members who attended or worked at Compass Academy for at least one year. Both student respondents and key informants participated in the member checking process during data collection and analysis.

**Data Collection**

Data collection occurred over a period of 8 weeks through semi-structured interviews, observations, relevant documents and artifacts, field notes, transcripts, and logs (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009). Researchers began by collecting and reviewing preliminary information about the school. Documents and artifacts collected as preliminary information is shown in table 1.2. Preliminary information was used to develop the interview schedule, initial Grand Tour question, and interview guidelines. Researchers also met with three teacher key informants, toured the facility, and conducted classroom observations prior to interviewing student respondents.

After gathering preliminary information, the RAP team utilized the RAP process to conduct semi-structured interviews with student respondents. The Rapid Assessment Process is an intensive team-based process which uses triangulation and a recursive cycle of data collection and analysis (Beebe, 2001). Therefore, blocks of data were gathered and analyzed after each round of semi-structured interviews, informing and refining the process for the next set of semi-structured interviews. The cycle of data collection and analysis

continued until the point of data saturation occurred where themes became repetitious during the analysis process.

Table 1.2

*Documents and Artifacts*

| Source | Description of Document |
|---|---|
| New Tech Network | School Success Rubric<br>2013 Student Outcome Data<br>A Learning Organization Chart<br>CRA Results 2013<br>New Tech Network Development<br>New Tech Network Overview<br>New Tech Network Recommended Practices<br>New Tech Network Agency Rubric, High School |
| District Level | District Vision, Mission, and Improvement Plan<br>Background information on Development of Compass<br>Contract Agreement with the New Tech Network<br>District Demographic Information<br>District Policy and Procedures |
| School Level | School Budget<br>School Calendars<br>Spring 2013 Culture Survey<br>Year 1 Progress Report<br>School Implementation Plan – Learning Organization<br>Leadership Structure for Staff and Students<br>Student and Staff Demographic Data |

Note: New Tech Network documents were obtained through the NTN website or through the principal of the school (NTN, 2013a; NTN, 2013b; NTN, 2013c).

Semi-structured interviews with student respondents were conducted with the entire team participating in the interview, making observations, and taking notes. Beebe (2009) refers to the semi-structured interviews as a directed conversation where respondents are relaxed and encouraged to share their story. Instead of a list of questions, the RAP team began each set of interviews with a Grand Tour question and used team guidelines,

established prior to the conversation, to promote active listening and guide nondirective probes (Beebe, 2009). Nondirective probes employed the cultural language of the school and were developed prior to the interview along with the team guidelines (Beebe, 2009, p. 5). The Grand Tour question, probes, and team guidelines were adjusted between each round of semi-structured interviews. For example, the initial Grand Tour question was "What is it like to be a student at Compass Academy?" During the second round of interviews, the RAP team asked multiple questions, directly pertaining to themes from the first round of interviews:

1. Do you feel that as a student you have a voice at Compass? Why or why not?
2. There seems to be a conflict or an attempt to arrive at a balance between trust and accountability. Do you feel that way? Can you explain?
3. Do you think compass is preparing you for college and careers? Why or why not?

All interviews were conducted within the school setting, taped for future reference, and transcribed within 36 hours. Respondents could choose to limit or refrain from participation at any time.

During the RAP process, four sophomore and four junior students participated in semi-structured interviews, representing approximately 3% of the students in their grade level. Student respondents were selected to match the demographics of the school and had attended the school for more than one year, limiting student respondents to only those sophomores and juniors meeting the one year enrollment criteria. Freshman students were new to the school this year and did not meet the one year attendance criteria. Because Compass is only in its second year of implementation, the school does not currently have a

senior class. During the entire data collection period three teachers, one student, and one classified employee participated as key informants. Student respondents and key informants also participated in the member checking process by confirming themes that arose during data collection and analysis.

Field notes were taken by all RAP team members during each semi-structured interview and delineated between observations and comments made by respondents. Researcher notes, thoughts, conclusions, and reflections were also documented and noted separately by each individual researcher. Field notes included detailed observations, direct quotations, non-verbal forms of communication, as well as information about the interview process and information about the context or setting (Beebe, 2009). Composite logs were compiled between each round of interviews to capture and summarize field notes from interviews, observations, and document collection.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred multiple times as researchers moved through the cycle of data collection and data analysis over and over until themes became repetitive and data saturation occurred. The iterative cycle of data collection and analysis supported the process of gaining an understanding, as close as possible, of the perspectives of student respondents (Beebe, 2009). Data analysis also improved the data collection process as researchers made changes and adjustments to the questions and guidelines for each additional round of data collection. Changes were made to improve the interview process in an effort to better understand the perspectives of respondents, further explore critical elements related to the research questions, and better understand the situation or context of the school. Changes also led to further gathering of documents and artifacts based upon the themes that arose from coding.

Composite logs after each round of interviews were coded and analyzed by the RAP team together. First the team read, studied, and coded the logs individually, utilizing In Vivo coding. "In Vivo coding uses words or short phrases from the participant's own language in the data record as codes" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Then the team coded the logs together, separating the logs into data units and coding each unit (Beebe, 2009). In Vivo codes were arranged according to themes for each data unit. Data units were not limited to a specific number of codes during the first round of data analysis.

Table 1.3

*Recursive Themes and Codes*

| Recursive Theme | Researcher-generated Codes |
|---|---|
| Student Voice (Empowerment) | Students have a voice at Compass<br>Students can influence groups<br>Students have choice in group structures<br>Students can influence school wide policies<br>Students may have too much choice/voice<br>Peer pressure can be used in a positive way |
| Relationships with Teachers | My teachers trust me<br>I trust my teachers<br>I can talk to any of my teachers<br>Some students abuse the trust given<br>Things are taken away when trust is violated<br>Relationships with teachers are either good or bad |
| Developing Self-Management | Opportunity to choose how to use your own time<br>Some students don't use their time wisely<br>Learn to prioritize and practice self-discipline<br>Students not using their time wisely attend lab classes<br>Not using time effectively impacts a student's grade<br>Need more effective consequences to ensure time is used wisely |

Note: Codes are listed in order beginning with the codes with the greatest repetition and agreement by student respondents. Developing Self-Management arose within the context of the collaboration time built into the school's bell schedule.

Through the iterative RAP process, codes were limited to three general recursive themes – Student Voice, Relationships with Teachers, and Developing Self-Management. In Vivo codes exhibiting the same general description were assigned a researcher-generated code under the appropriate theme. Data from observations, documents, and artifacts were then matched to the appropriate theme and researcher-generated code. RAP team members during data analysis constructed meaning and drew conclusions from the groups of data by identifying themes, looking for patterns, and making comparisons as a team (Beebe, 2009). Table 1.3 displays the three recursive themes and researcher-generated codes associated with each theme.

The RAP Sheet assisted researchers in promoting rigor and transparency by serving as a tool to document each step and action taken during the study. The RAP sheet is a generic checklist developed to keep the RAP team focused during the data collection process, promoting rigor while emphasizing the process of data collection and analysis (Beebe, 2001) to ensure credibility, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981). The RAP sheet was included in the report to the school and contained information on the research team, the data collection process, the data analysis process, and all team discussions and decisions (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009). While preparing the final report, researchers conducted member checks to ensure respondents and key informants agreed with the findings. Member checks included sharing the themes and codes from each set of semi-structured interviews, overall findings, and the RAP sheet.

## Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel

empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. During data collection and analysis common themes arose in the areas of student empowerment and voice, relationships with teachers, and developing student self-management. The findings were consistent with the New Tech Network School Success Rubric (NTN, 2013a) language, providing feedback on where the school currently lies along the continuum for several components. The findings also provided a surprising amount of rich description of the personal and school-wide struggle regarding how to best provide students the opportunity to develop self-management skills.

**Student Empowerment and Voice**

Student respondents described how they had quite a bit of voice and were empowered to make decisions regarding school rules and policies, the structure and focus of their group work, the development of the school culture, and their own academic development. A sophomore respondent stated, "I actually feel like I can take a lead in my academics." A few student respondents reported concerns about having too much power and choice, leading to some groups of students not demonstrating effective self-management skills. A junior student shared the following regarding increased empowerment and self-management, "There's just some students, because of the extended leash we got this year with the expandable schedule and all that, I feel like some of the students that were a little rebellious last year have rebelled more this year because of that."

Last school year was the opening school year for Compass Academy. During the first year students had the opportunity to choose the school mascot, develop school policies and procedures, and design parts of the building that were still under construction. During

the second school year, student empowerment shifted from school physical appearance and startup activities to further developing school culture by making agency type decisions such as self-management, self-directed learning, and time-management. Student respondents seem to be more comfortable with making decisions that have concrete and visible results such as designing the layout and structure of the cyber café. However, making decisions about how to use free time during the day, individually or as a group, has resulted in mixed perceptions regarding how much voice and empowerment is appropriate for students at the high school level. These mixed perceptions are discussed more in depth under the section Developing Student Self- Management.

Students also are empowered to make decisions that affect their academic development. Students at Compass engage in project-based learning where students work in groups to solve relevant and real-life problems. Many times students are given the opportunity to choose group members, roles within the group's structure, how the group will approach the problem, and the structure of the final product. A sophomore respondent shared the following regarding empowerment and group projects:

> Every time you're in a group, you get the contract. Everyone selects the positions they're going to be according to the group, like a football team or something … The leader has to keep everyone together and keep the train going and keep everyone on task. Everyone has to be the leader at one point. You have to step up.

Student respondents shared how each student had to serve as a group leader on multiple occasions. Leading groups empowered students to not only make choices within the project, but to exercise influence over the behavior of group members. One student respondent

shared how leading groups helped her develop self-confidence and work with different types of students:

> When I first started, I was very shy. I would say my opinion, but I would not voice it more than once. And, still I am very quiet. I hardly talk. But at school, you have all these people, and they care about what you think. Last year during Girl Scout cookie sales, my leader's in there going "You've changed. You're so much more confident". The other group members help me boost my confidence.

Student respondents also spoke about the structures in place at Compass where they could exercise their voice to address concerns and make changes. All students are required to attend an advisory class. Each advisory class elects a representative to student council. Through their representative, students can share ideas and suggestions. Some decisions are made through student council and others are put to the entire school for a vote. In describing the process, one student respondent made the statement: "The students here have the power; they can change things." The respondent continued to share how he along with other students worked with the principal to resolve an issue with student use of the cyber café on their own, without direct intervention from the teaching staff.

**Relationships with Teachers**

Most student respondents reported teachers trusted them and were open and easy to seek out for assistance. A few students talked about having a close relationship with one or more teachers where they could share issues, ideas, and outside interests with the teacher. Students also expressed their appreciation for teachers being available and open. One student indicated relationships with staff were either good or bad with no in between. Student respondents often referred to teachers as facilitators, friendly in nature, business-

like, and open to suggestions and ideas. Students also mentioned how teachers were often available for assistance outside of class time. The following statements were made by student respondents regarding relationships with teachers:

- "All the teachers are really open to just going and talking to them and they'll help you. I've never had a teacher that says no or isn't available."
- "Well, most of my teachers, they give us more responsibility and give us more trust."
- "Here at Compass, I feel like the teachers are more like, not per say friends, but more down to your level. They understand if you want to do something your way, they're more open to your decision…you have more of an open teacher, open-minded teachers."

Student respondents also discussed accountability in relation to trust. Trust is the "belief that some or something is reliable, good, honest, and effective" (Merriam-Webster, 2013). In this example students specifically described trust as the ability to demonstrate reliability and honesty. Many respondents discussed how some teachers automatically extended trust to students while other teachers required students to first demonstrate trustworthiness. Regardless of the case, when a student violated trust, freedoms and privileges were reduced until trust was rebuilt.

An interesting finding was students often perceived their teachers as learners too. Teachers actively solicited student input and feedback on projects and school structures. Many students noticed this more the first year of implementation. "Well last year was a little rough just because all the teachers were learning too. Because it's a completely different type of teaching. All the teachers were trying to figure out what to do as well as the

students." Several student respondents discussed how teachers also seemed more confident this year in developing and assisting students with projects.

**Developing Student Self-Management**

In an effort to promote student voice and empowerment while preparing students for skills needed in college and careers after high school, findings show how the school is making progress and struggling in how to develop student self-management. Student respondents expressed very strong feelings regarding this struggle. As discussed above, the findings show that students enjoy and are comfortable with having a voice in concrete decisions such as choosing the school mascot, but have mixed opinions about having a voice in how they manage their free time provided by the bell schedule. These mixed opinions do not stem from their individual choices, but the choices other students are making with how they use their collaboration time.

Last school year, students felt overwhelmed by the amount of work generated from multiple projects occurring simultaneously in several courses. Students and staff came up with the idea of implementing a college schedule with some classes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and other classes on Tuesday and Thursday. Within this schedule they built "collaboration time" for students to work independently or to meet with their groups outside of class time. The purpose of collaboration time was to assist in reducing the stress of multiple projects while giving students the opportunity to demonstrate trust, responsibility, and self-management. At mid-trimester, students who were struggling academically or where caught wasting their collaboration time were assigned to a study lab during their collaboration time, until they improved academically.

Student respondents reported that some students used their collaboration time wisely and others did not. The use and misuse of collaboration time led to some student respondents questioning whether or not students have too much voice or freedom. Student respondents shared how collaboration time gave them the opportunity to choose their time and helped in teaching students how to use their time wisely by prioritizing and practicing self-discipline. One student stated:

> I think with the collaboration hours you actually have more of a voice in what you're working on. For the past two hours, I was able to choose what I had to work on, so between all three things I need to work on I chose the one I thought was most important. You can kind of choose what you do, and also you are able to talk to all the teachers when you need to. So, I can walk into their office and ask them a question during my collaboration hour. That's totally unique and awesome.

Most student respondents were worried about losing collaboration time because others were not using it effectively. "As I walk around the Cyber Café to find a place to sit or anywhere, in fact, I always see students playing games on their computers. It just bugs me so bad, because I appreciate the time that I've been given to work on projects and different homework assignments. I appreciate that time, and I don't want them to take it, have it. I don't want them to ruin it for all to use, you know?"

A few student respondents were angry and upset about others abusing collaboration time. They expressed having an increased adult presence during collaboration time and more severe consequences for students abusing the time. Others shared how they attempted to redirect fellow students who were not using the time wisely. Student respondents did not indicate any one specific group of students who were not using their time appropriately

while staff members shared most students who had difficulty with the collaboration time were the new incoming freshman and a few upperclassman struggling with accountability.

## Discussion

As stated earlier, distributed leadership is not a recipe for leadership, but instead a perspective of thinking and looking at leadership within the school setting (Spillane, 2006). Using the lens of distributed leadership requires examining the practice aspect of leadership by analyzing the different interactions between leaders, followers, and the context of the situation (Spillane, 2006). Analyzing the actions of students and teachers in essence is a study of the school's culture. Besides a shared vision, mission, values, beliefs, and norms, school culture also includes how members of the school community interact with each other and the school environment (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Findings in the three areas - student empowerment and voice, relationships with teachers, and developing student self-management - will be examined in this section using the distributed leadership perspective, specifically focusing on the practice aspect and school culture.

### Student Empowerment & Voice

Distributed leadership, according to Spillane (2006), comprises two aspects, leader-plus and practice. The leader-plus aspect refers to how members in the school community can engage in both formal and informal leadership roles (Spillane, 2006). At Compass Academy findings show students participate in both formal and informal leadership roles. Formal roles include advisory representative positions, student government positions, and leadership positions within group projects. Informally, students take on leadership roles when they influence their project groups, provide feedback to teachers, provide input and

feedback to advisory representatives, demonstrate personal accountability, and influence the behavior of other students both in and outside the classroom.

The practice aspect of distribution leadership analyzes leadership practice through interactions between leaders, followers, and the context of the situation (Spillane, 2006). When engaged in group projects, students sometimes take on leadership roles and other times participatory roles. Each student has the opportunity to experience each role multiple times, with different students in each group, and within different course contexts. Student respondents shared how they develop leadership and social skills to work with different people with different personalities and abilities in their groups. Respondents also shared how as a leader or group participant, they had the opportunity to make decisions within their group and to influence the direction of the project or the opinions and behaviors of individual group members. One respondent shared how he was also able to influence the opinion of community members during a presentation of one of his projects.

Outside of group projects, students have the opportunity to interact with or act as formal leaders or informal leaders to develop school rules, policies, goals, norms, and the college schedule. Informal and formal leaders could be fellow students, teachers, or other staff members. For example, when choosing the school mascot, students first worked in advisory class as a group to develop and promote their idea for a school mascot. Each advisory class presented their mascot and rationale to the student body. Through a vote, the student body reduced the mascot options to three choices. The top three were then presented to the school community on the school's web page for a vote. During this process students had different and varying roles. A similar process occurred with the development of the cyber café, college schedule, and collaboration time. However, in the case of the college

schedule and collaboration time, the creation and implementation of the schedule arose from student concerns instead of a school start up activity.

**Relationships with Teachers**

Student relationships with their teachers impact how students see themselves within the context of the school. Lizzio, Dempster, and Neumann (2011) argue that the different forms of student leadership are dependent on school culture and on student-teacher relationships within the school. Student-teacher relationships also influence how teachers and students interact with each other. The practice aspect of distributed leadership looks specifically at interactions within the context of school culture. "Intervening to improve leadership necessitates attention to interactions, not just actions, because leadership practice takes shape in the interactions among leaders and followers" (Spillane, 2006, p. 93). Regardless of the role of teacher or student, at one time or another each acts as a leader or follower and their interactions develop and maintain school culture.

At Compass Academy most student respondents felt teachers trusted them. Research supports trust as a crucial component of healthy and productive relationships (Hoy, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Witoskie, 1992; Tarter, Sabo, & Hoy, 1995; Hoy Hoffman, Sabo, & Bliss, 1996; Tarter, Bliss, & Hoy, 1989). When students feel trusted, they are more likely to have a connection with the school and take on leadership roles. Teachers and staff members also exhibit trust when they allow students to make and implement decisions to improve the school. At the same rate, trust can be leveraged to provide opportunities for students to practice 21st Century Skills such as initiative, self- direction, leadership, and responsibility (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). For example, one student respondent described how a teacher trusted him to help students who were having software issues. The teacher trusted the

student to be helpful and productive, giving him extended access and allowing him to take the initiate in helping others troubleshoot problems.

**Developing Student Self-Management**

The development and implementation of collaboration time as part of Compass Academy's college schedule is a prime example of how leaders and followers interact with the context as part of the practice aspect of distributed leadership to improve learning and the school environment. In this example, students as well as staff members serve as both leaders and followers. Through collaborating to solve a problem or concern of adequate time during the day to work on projects, students were given the opportunity to develop and implement a solution, resulting in the college schedule and collaboration time. During this process students served as both leaders and followers. This school year, with the college schedule in full implementation, students are now grappling with new issues regarding the effective use of collaboration time and student accountability. Some students are exhibiting leadership skills by making decisions about the wise use of their time. Others are extending their leadership to influence students who are not displaying effective use of the collaboration time.

The three design principles of distributed leadership described by Spillane (2006), challenge practitioners to look at the practice of leadership to improve school leadership, improve interactions between leaders and followers, and promote leadership through the improvement of school design and structure. Compass Academy with the college schedule and collaboration time is attempting to develop student self-management skills. Implementation of the college schedule and collaboration time created a new challenge around how to best develop student self-management skills while creating opportunities for

students to exercise their voice, positively interact with staff and peers, and make improvements to the structure of the school. The challenge is to find a balance in developing appropriate boundaries while encouraging leadership, trust, accountability, and self-management according to individual student readiness levels.

## Recommendations and Conclusions

Compass Academy is in a unique position to continue to provide students with leadership opportunities and student voice within the school in how the school chooses to react to the challenge presented by appropriate student use of collaboration time. The purpose of collaboration time is to promote the development of student leadership and self-management while providing necessary time for students to work individually or collaboratively on projects. As identified by the School Success Rubric under Learning Outcomes, some "students demonstrate the capacity to be self-directed in making choices" while others are not (NTN, 2013a, p. 1). Even a few students "understand and act on the value of standing up rather than standing by" (NTN, 2013, p. 1).

Recommendations are for the school to continue to involve students and staff in the action research process to address the challenge presented by collaboration time and developing student self-management skills. Including students, especially those that do not value the collaboration time, in the process will assist the school in learning how to develop a solution. Research does not support a particular strategy or approach in developing student self-management skills. Different strategies and approaches have shown different levels of success, depending on the school context (Conley, 2010). However, research from Conley (2010) and the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) shows that schools do not have a "systematic program extending continuously from ninth through twelfth grades in

which students are expected to become progressively more responsible for managing their own time in anticipation of postsecondary education" (p. 73). As Compass Academy works through the action research process, the school may want to consider a systematic approach which supports and scaffolds students as they learn to be self-directed. Instead of extending collaboration time to all students at the beginning of the school year and taking away time when students are failing, the school may want to consider different options for incoming freshman and benchmarks for students to achieve in order to earn more collaboration time as they individually demonstrate better leadership and self-management skills.

Students were involved in the creation of the college schedule and collaboration time. Student involvement in making adjustments to the schedule and the structures of the school surrounding collaboration time, will be crucial to continued progress in providing students an opportunity for voice and leadership within the school. Continued student involvement will also contribute to the further development of positive relationships with staff built on trust, respect, and responsibility. Student to student relationships may also improve as the school works to resolve the issue surrounding collaboration time. Student fears of losing the time and student frustration towards other students may dissipate as a solution is developed and implemented.

Although Compass Academy is a small magnet school that incorporates non-traditional methods of delivering curriculum and instruction, results from this study may be helpful to other high schools in improving student empowerment, student leadership, and college and career skills such as self-management. Using distributed leadership as a lens can assist schools in analyzing both the leader-plus and leader practice aspects within their own particular context. Preparing students for a constantly changing world requires schools to

become learning organizations – learning about issues and problems they face and learning about how to develop solutions that change and stretch the school's values and culture.

# Chapter 2: Manuscript Critiques

This chapter includes two critiques of draft dissertation manuscripts intended for publication in a peer reviewed journal. The authors of each manuscript are members of the University of Idaho's Professional Practices Doctorate (PPD) cohort, assigned to the leadership research group. The purpose of the critique is to provide peer reviewed feedback prior to submission for publication and to give each member of the leadership research group the opportunity to experience both sides of the peer reviewed journal process. Upon graduation, cohort members will research appropriate peer-reviewed journals and summit final articles for publication. The format for this critique follows the format suggested by James Key (1997) from Oklahoma State University.

## First Critique

### Bibliographical Entry

Relken, N. A. (2014). *Examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and perceived leadership practices among BYU-Idaho enrollment services administrators.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho.

### Problem

College administrators do not necessarily demonstrate effective leadership in regards to building and developing relationships with colleagues and students. Developing Emotional Intelligence may assist college administrators in improving their leadership skills while increasing the support of students, faculty, and staff. As higher education continues to experience rapid change, understanding emotional intelligence may assist colleges and universities in developing and hiring effective administrative leaders.

Comments – The problem statement did agree with the title and the educational significance of the study. However, the problem statement could be strengthened by including more elements of the educational significance of why college administrators need to develop relationships as an important component of leadership. The author did support the problem statement in the introduction and background of the study.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a correlational relationship between Emotional Intelligence and perceived leadership in order to develop hypotheses for further study.

Comments – The purpose statement could be written more clearly and concisely. The author refers to trends, hypotheses, and levels of reliability in the purpose statement, confusing the reader. The research questions are helpful in understanding the intention behind the purpose statement. The purpose statement does agree with the title and the problem, and is limited to the researcher's capabilities and resources.

**Objectives**

The researcher sought to determine if there is a relationship between emotional intelligence and the perceived leadership skills of college administrators. The study compared the emotional intelligence of college administrators using the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) to effective leadership practices as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Two forms of the Leadership Practices Inventory were given to administrative leaders and their subordinates. If a relationship existed between Emotional Intelligence and perceived leadership skills, the researcher then

sought to determine if college administrators with higher emotional intelligence were perceived as effective leaders by their subordinates.

Comments – The researcher included enough objectives to accomplish the purpose of the study with each objective relating back to the purpose of the study. Results of the study will assist college administrators in improving leadership practice and in building relationships with subordinates.

**Review of the Literature**

The author included a separate section for the literature review. In this section the author discussed the research behind three widely accepted models of emotional intelligence and how the concept of emotional intelligence fits within the research on effective leadership. Emotional intelligence is "the ability to understand one's own deep emotions and the ability to express these emotions naturally" (Wang & Huang, 2009, p. 382). The three models explored in the literature review are the ability, trait, and mixed models of emotional intelligence. The ability model identifies emotional intelligence as a skill or ability the leader naturally possesses, while the trait model considers emotional intelligence to be a personality trait of the individual. The mixed model recognizes that emotional intelligence may be an inherent personality trait, but can also be cultivated as a skill.

The author also included a limited review of the literature regarding leadership theories in the context of higher education, noting a gap in the research surrounding student perspectives of quality leadership. Although the review on this topic was brief, the author revisited the literature around five exemplary leadership practices by Kouzes and Posner (1995) in regards to higher education in the methodology section. The five exemplary practices are:

1. modeling the way,
2. inspiring a shared vision,
3. challenging the process,
4. enabling others to act, and
5. encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 1995)

Sections within the literature review were titled Emotional Intelligence, Higher Educational Leadership, and Conceptual Framework. The conceptual framework section was brief and did not include ample theoretical reasoning around the concept of Exemplary Leadership Practices. For the most part, citations and formatting appeared correct and appropriate. However, there were a few APA errors in citations and formatting.

**Procedures**

Three Student Service Directors at a private baccalaureate degree granting university in the northwest United States completed the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence test (MSCEIT) and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI Self) in an online format. Three subordinate employees of each director completed the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI Observer) in an online format regarding the leadership practices of their respective Student Services Director. Both instruments have been utilized in previous studies and have demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability.

Comments – The research design and explanation of the procedures are adequate. Instrumentation was described in detail to include the validity, reliability, and the research behind each instrument used in the study. The statistical techniques are only described briefly and do not include techniques used to analyze data collected from subordinate employees.

**Findings**

Findings show a correlation between increasing Emotional Intelligence as measured by the MSCEIT and perceived leadership skills as measured by the LPI. This correlation was also found to be consistent in each of the LPI sub-scores – Perceiving, Facilitating, Understanding, and Managing.

Comments – The author's findings in general are brief and incomplete. The findings seem to include only the data collected from the Student Service Directors and not the subordinates. The findings discussed and displayed are objectively reported and statistically correct. Tables and charts given are clear and understandable. The narrative is also brief and incomplete. The author did share that this manuscript was in draft form and data is still being collected and analyzed.

**Summary**

Emotional intelligence is an important skill and attribute of leaders in higher education dealing with constant change. College administrators who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to be successful in navigating change and enlisting commitment on the part of subordinates.

Comments – The summary is brief and discussed possible areas of future research and the importance of emotional intelligence in enhancing leadership skills. As stated above, the author did share that this manuscript was in draft form. Further data collection and analysis may result in a more robust summary.

**Conclusions**

There was not a separate conclusions section in this manuscript. Instead the concluding remarks were contained in the recommendation section.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations were not given for each finding, only for further research. Recommendations include broadening the study to include different positions and other levels of positions within the structure of the university and conducting a similar study in a different institution of higher education.

**List of References**

For the most part, formatting meets APA criteria and is consistent. There are a few APA formatting errors in the reference section. All references are included in the study. References are from a variety of resources and reflect both current and older literature.

**Overall Critique of the Study**

Strengths – The study addresses a research gap in determining whether or not a correlational relationship exists between emotional intelligence and exemplary leadership practices. If a correlation exists, this information could be used to assist leaders in postsecondary education in developing and cultivating leadership skills.

Weaknesses – The study is in draft form and not complete. Key findings are still missing as data is currently being collected and analyzed. Formatting errors also need to be corrected. This critique will be updated once Nathan Relken completes his data collection and makes the necessary changes to his research article manuscript.

## Second Critique

**Bibliographical Entry**

Wasden, S. T. (2014). *Transformational leadership and resilience in higher education.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho.

**Problem**

Higher education is constantly changing and becoming more complex, increasing the need for effective leaders and leadership practices. Research into effective leadership at the post-secondary level is key to assisting leaders and managers by providing guidance for professional development and in the hiring practices. Higher education leaders who understand, possess, and develop transformational leadership and resiliency skills, may be more effective in navigating change and providing improved learning opportunities for students.

Comments – The author did not identify a formal problem statement within the format of the manuscript. Instead, the author discussed the problem in the introduction section of the manuscript. The author's explanation of the problem is clearly described, agrees with the title, and demonstrates educational significance.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to measure the degree of correlation between self-perceived transformational leadership and self-perceived resilience in higher education leaders at a baccalaureate degree-granting private university in the northwest United States.

Comments – The researcher's purpose was clearly and concisely stated. The purpose was consistently stated throughout the manuscript. The purpose agrees with the problem and title while addressing a gap in the research. The study is within the resources and capabilities of the researcher and has the potential for further research.

**Objectives**

The researcher sought to investigate the correlation between transformational leadership and resilience. To achieve this purpose, the researcher used five questions to drive the study.

1. Is there a relationship between transformational leadership and resilience in higher education leaders?
2. Does the relationship between transformational leadership and resilience vary by educational attainment?
3. Is there a difference in resilience between higher education leaders who have less experience and more experience in the higher education field?
4. Does the relationship between transformational leadership and resilience vary depending on age?
5. Does the relationship between transformational leadership and resilience vary by leadership level?

The 45-point Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used to measure transformational leadership and the 25-point Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was used to measure resiliency. These instruments were administered with six demographic questions as control variables.

Comments – Each research question was used to develop a hypothesis. All questions and hypotheses were related to the purpose and inclusive enough to further define the relationship between transformational leadership and resilience. By using commonly accepted instruments to measure transformational leadership and resiliency, the hypotheses

were testable. The researcher also took into consideration other variables such as age, experience, gender, educational attainment, and leadership level.

**Review of the Literature**

The author did not include a separate literature review section. Instead, the literature review occurred in the explanation of the conceptual framework and in the methodology section. The section titles of the conceptual framework were Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformative Leadership, and Resilience.

The author thoroughly reviewed the research and literature on transformational leadership and resilience. Both concepts have been well studied separately within multiple settings to include higher education. Transformational leadership, according to Bass and Aviolio (2004), consists of five characteristics:

1. Idealized Influence – Attributes,
2. Idealized Influence – Behaviors,
3. Inspirational Motivation,
4. Intellectual Stimulation, and
5. Individualized Consideration.

Transformational leadership is often confused with transactional leadership. The author discussed the research and differences behind each concept. The literature behind transformational leadership as an individual and collective effort was also reviewed.

Comments – The review of the literature as part of the conceptual framework was well organized and included figures and tables to assist the author in clarifying each theory and underlying concept. The review, figures, and tables also assisted in clarifying differences between transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Similar studies

were discussed and cited in the conceptual framework section and in the methodology sections, especially regarding the instrumentation. For the most part citations and formatting was correct. Figures and tables, however, did not necessarily meet APA guidelines.

**Procedures**

The researcher surveyed 131 administrators and staff who had managing authority over other personnel within the university. Out of the entire population of 131 participants, 80 responded to both the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). The researcher contacted participants before, during, and after the survey period. Faculty members and the university president did not participate in the study due to constraints put on the researcher by the university. Both the MLQ and the CD-RISC are widely accepted instruments with acceptable reliability and validity measures, and were each administered online. Data analysis was performed using Qualtrics and IBM Statistical Processing for the Social Science (SPSS).

Comments – The research design and explanation of the procedures were detailed, clearly explained, and adequate. Each instrument, MLQ and CD-RISC, were described in detail, including foundational research, reliability, and validity measures. The population was adequate and appropriate for the study with an ample number of participants responding. Statistical techniques, software, and considerations were described in detail.

**Findings**

Findings show a strong positive correlation between transformation leadership as measured by the MLQ and resiliency as measured by the CD-RISC. Respondents scored the lowest on “I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems” and the highest on “I have a strong sense of purpose in life.” Findings did not show a significant

difference in transformational leadership and resiliency based on educational attainment, years of experience, age, gender, or leadership level.

Comments – The author's findings are objectively reported and include well designed tables, charts, and graphs. Descriptive statistics as well as statistical results were included. Narrative, charts, and graphs are clear and easy to understand. Statistical results are well explained, including both analysis process and results. Charts and graphs, however, are not consistently in appropriate APA format.

**Summary**

A moderately positive correlation exists between transformational leadership and resiliency in leaders of higher education for respondents at the local university participating in the study. Results were not clear on whether or not gender, age, educational attainment, leadership level, and experience impact the level of transformational leadership and resiliency. Further studies are needed to explore these other factors as well as the relationship between transformational leadership and resiliency in other higher education settings.

Comments – The summary is clear and concise, touching on each finding and making recommendations for further research. A summary table is not included and not needed. The author also included limitations of the study within the summary section.

**Conclusions**

A better understanding of the relationship between transformational leadership and resiliency can assist leaders in higher education to improve leadership practice and successfully address current changes and challenges. A positive correlational relationship was only found between transformational leadership and resiliency. Other factors need to be

further explored. Effective leadership is essential to the success of higher education institutions, especially in a time of rapid change.

Comments - The conclusion section was actually titled as a summary section in the manuscript. A conclusion was not included for each finding as only a correlational relationship was found between transformational leadership and resiliency and not the other factors. The conclusion related back to the purpose, literature review, and educational significance. Lastly, the conclusion reiterated recommendations for further study.

**Recommendations**

The author recommended further research into the causal relationship between transformational leadership and resilience. Recommendations were also made for research into resilience and transformational leadership from a moral and ethical perspective. These two constructs scored the highest with both instruments. Because this study was conducted at a small private university, final recommendations called for continued research in other institutions of higher education.

Comments – Recommendations were clearly stated and supported the conclusions of the study. Recommendations also included rationale from the findings and other research.

**List of References**

All references were included in the study. Formatting was consistent with APA requirements. References were from a variety of resources and reflect both current and older literature.

**Overall Critique of the Study**

Strengths – The study was thorough and included a well-developed conceptual framework. The study also attempted to address a research gap where two frameworks

regarding leadership were examined in a correlational study. The author clearly described and explained the data gathering and analysis process, including detailed information about each instrument. Tables, charts, and graphs assisted the reader in understanding the findings and results.

Weaknesses – A few formatting errors need to be corrected. Tables, charts, and figures need to comply with APA requirements. The explanation of the problem at the beginning of the manuscript could be stronger.

## Chapter 3: White Paper

Technological advances and the shift to a global economy require students to possess a different set of understandings and skills (Association for Career and Technical Education, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical education Consortium, & Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010; SCANS 1991; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The industrial model is no longer relevant and inadequately prepares students for the work force and postsecondary opportunities. In a global economy workers must be highly skilled and participate in some type of postsecondary education (Association for Career and Technical Education, et al., 2010). Over the last decade school improvement efforts, in an attempt to break away from the industrial model, have focused on policies, mandates, accountability measures, and a national curriculum.

Goals 2000 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 began the movement to national and state accountability measures (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004). After these policy and accountability attempts did not improve the global competitiveness of American students, the 21st Century Skills and Common Core State Standards initiatives joined the movement to reform education (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2013; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Although curriculum shifts to 21st Century Skills and the Common Core State Standards are steps in the right direction to better prepare students for college and the world of work, they do not necessarily provide students the opportunity to learn and practice the all of the skills needed to be competitive in a global economy. Empowering students and giving them a voice in their own education is the key to providing students the opportunity to learn and practice the 21st Century Skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The research on educational leadership is abundant and diverse. Recent research calls for including and empowering teachers in leading and guiding the school, shifting from an individual to a collective leadership phenomenon (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Park & Datnow, 2009). The research on empowering teachers promotes cooperation, collaboration, and a culture of trust (Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kotthamp, 1991; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Roby, 2011; Rhodes, Stevens, & Hemmings, 2001; Warren, 2005; Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). Research, however, is limited on the empowerment of students and their role as leaders within the school. Students need to have a voice and active role in their own education. Empowering students improves motivation and provides them an opportunity to achieve 21st Century Skills of collaboration, communication, leadership, and responsibility (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Students have much to contribute to the culture of the school and to their own development in preparation for life beyond high school. When students have a voice in the classroom and in the school, students are more likely to engage in the direction of their own learning (Cook-Sather, 2002).

The intent of this white paper is to describe to high school leaders how distributed leadership can be used as a lens within the action research process to examine student empowerment and culture in order to assist high schools in improving opportunities for students to learn and develop 21st Century skills.

## Conceptual Framework

By examining student empowerment in the context of a high school, researchers and practitioners can gain insight into the relationship between distributed leadership and school culture in an effort to provide schools information to improve student voice in their own education. Figure 3.1 illustrates the relationship between the concepts of distributed

leadership, student empowerment, 21st Century Skills, and school culture in preparing students for college and careers.

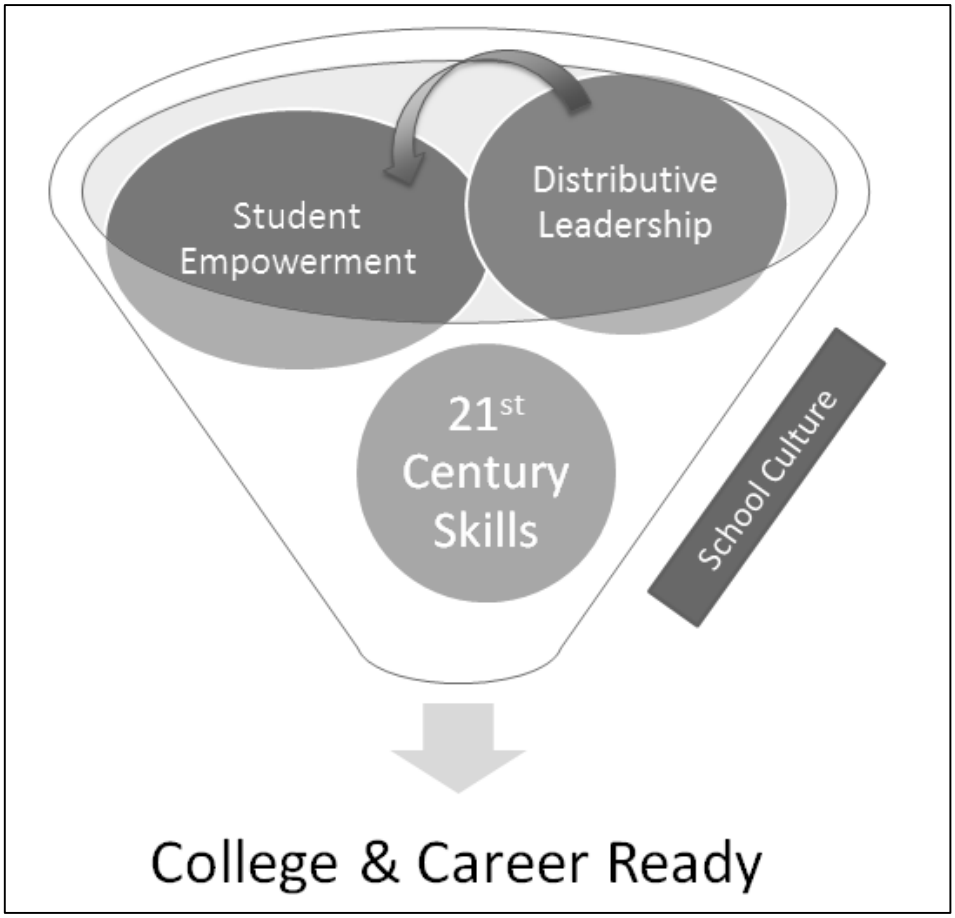


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework

**Distributed Leadership**

Research on distributed leadership focuses mainly on theory and very little on practice. The definition and characteristics of distributed leadership speak to teacher and student empowerment with both teachers and students provided the opportunity to have a voice in developing and building school structures and culture. Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz, and Louis (2009) discuss the role of the principal in nurturing distributed leadership by developing new school structures and rebuilding school culture. Spillane (2006) calls for focusing on the practice of distributed leadership by examining how groups

within the school influence each other through interactions. Interactions between leaders, interactions between leaders and followers, and how leaders and followers interact within the structures of the school all define leadership practice within the school (Spillane, 2006). By focusing on leadership practice through the lens of distributed leadership, action research can serve as a framework for reflecting on leadership and improving leadership practice within the school (Spillane, 2006).

Leadership in education is a diverse and well-researched topic. Over the last decade the research on distributed leadership has added to the body of knowledge about leadership as accountability and school improvement efforts have changed. Distributed leadership is often confused with delegated leadership. Harris (2002) defined distributed leadership "as a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively" where "leadership resides not solely in the individual at the top, but in every person at every level who, in one way or another acts as a leader" (p. 22).

Distributed leadership as researched by Spillane (2006), comprises both the leader-plus and practice aspects. The leader-plus aspect acknowledges that members in the school community can engage in leadership roles both formally and informally (Spillane, 2006). Leadership does not solely reside in the principal's office. Teachers, parents, support staff, and even students can act as leaders. Research shows teachers often on their own initiative take on leadership functions within the school (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003). Distribution can occur based on leadership function, content area subjects, school type, school size, and school improvement efforts (Spillane, 2006).

Spillane (2006) takes a deeper study into distributed leadership by focusing not just on characteristics of distributed leadership, but how distributed leadership is practiced. Distributed leadership in practice "is framed in a very particular way, as a product of joint interactions of school leaders, followers, and aspects of their situation such as tools and routines" (Spillane, 2006, p. 3). The practice perspective of distributed leadership moves the focus beyond the actions of the leader and concentrates on specific interactions between leaders and other members of the school community. Similar to the findings of Woods, et al. (2004) distributed leadership, according to Spillane, is not delegated leadership. Unlike delegated leadership, distributed leadership involves both the practice of leadership and the leader-plus aspect (Spillane, 2006, p. 12). The practice of leadership involves the interactions of those acting as leaders with each other, leaders interacting with followers, and how leaders and followers interact with the situation or context (Spillane, 2006, p. 12).

**School Culture**

School culture encompasses the norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors within a school, guiding how people work together to reach goals and solve problems (Peterson & Deal, 1998). A positive and productive school culture is contingent upon savvy principals and teacher leaders to promote social capital, cooperation and collaboration, and relational trust to resolve issues and to collaborate towards improving instruction and student learning (Rhodes, Stevens & Hemmings, 2011; Warren, 2005). Most importantly, positive school culture empowers both teachers and students, creating an environment of trust, respect, and responsibility for all members.

Research shows teacher leaders and principals are at the heart of creating and sustaining a positive school culture built on trust, relationships, and cooperation (Deal &

Peterson, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter & Kotthamp, 1991; Roby, 2011). Teachers and especially students often are not provided the opportunity to develop school culture through shared vision, mission, norms, and values (Brown, 2004; Donaldson, 2006; Roby, 2011). A positive school culture should take advantage of relational trust, social capital, cooperation, and collaboration to promote student and teacher involvement in culture building. By truly involving and empowering students and teachers the reciprocal relationship between trust and relationships can be cultivated through participation and shared ownership.

Table 3.1

*Century Skills Framework*

| Component | Skill |
|---|---|
| Learning and Innovation Skills | Critical Thinking and Problem Solving |
| | Communication and Collaboration |
| | Creativity and Innovation |
| Information, Media and Technology Skills | Information Literacy |
| | Media Literacy |
| | Information and Communication Technology Literacy |
| Life and Career Skills | Flexibility and Adaptability |
| | Initiative and Self-Direction |
| | Life and Career Skills |
| | Productivity and Accountability |
| | Leadership and Responsibility |

Note: The 21st Century Skills Framework is from Trilling and Fadel (2009)

## 21st Century Skills

Trilling and Fadel (2009) strive to address the challenge of preparing students for the jobs and careers of the future. Students need to be able to quickly learn new information and to apply new information to solve real-world issues and problems. Trilling and Fadel (2009) developed a framework of 21st Century Skills aimed at better preparing students for college and careers. The framework's components and associated skills can be found in table 3.1.

Implementing the 21st Century Skills Framework necessitates distributed leadership and requires teachers to possess the same skills as students (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Learning under the 21st Century Skills Framework calls for the implementation of Howard Gardner's (1999) multiple intelligences and Linda Darling-Hammond's (2008) research on project, problem-based, and design-based learning. Figure 3.1 illustrates the conceptual framework and the relationship between distributive leadership, student empowerment, 21st Century Skills, and school culture in preparing students for college and careers.

In figure 3.1 distributed leadership provides the avenue to support and develop student empowerment. Student empowerment is a necessary component of developing and practicing many of the 21st Century Skills needed to be college and career ready. School culture is nurtured and developed by all three concepts of distributed leadership, student empowerment, and 21st Century Skills. At the same rate school culture paves the way for distributed leadership to empower students and promote the instructional practices needed to develop 21st Century Skills.

## Action Research and Understanding Student Perspectives

Action research using the Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) can be utilized by researchers and practitioners to study the relationship between distributed leadership and

student empowerment in the high school setting. Action research empowers practitioners to understand their context and to solve problems or improve practice (Creswell, 1998; Stringer, 2007). RAP is a research methodology aimed at understanding the perspective of insiders in order to take action in solving a problem or informing change (Beebe, 2013). To research and improve student empowerment, an insider's perspective will be essential to understanding the relationship between distributed leadership and student empowerment in order to develop interventions to improve student empowerment and promote the development of 21st Century Skills.

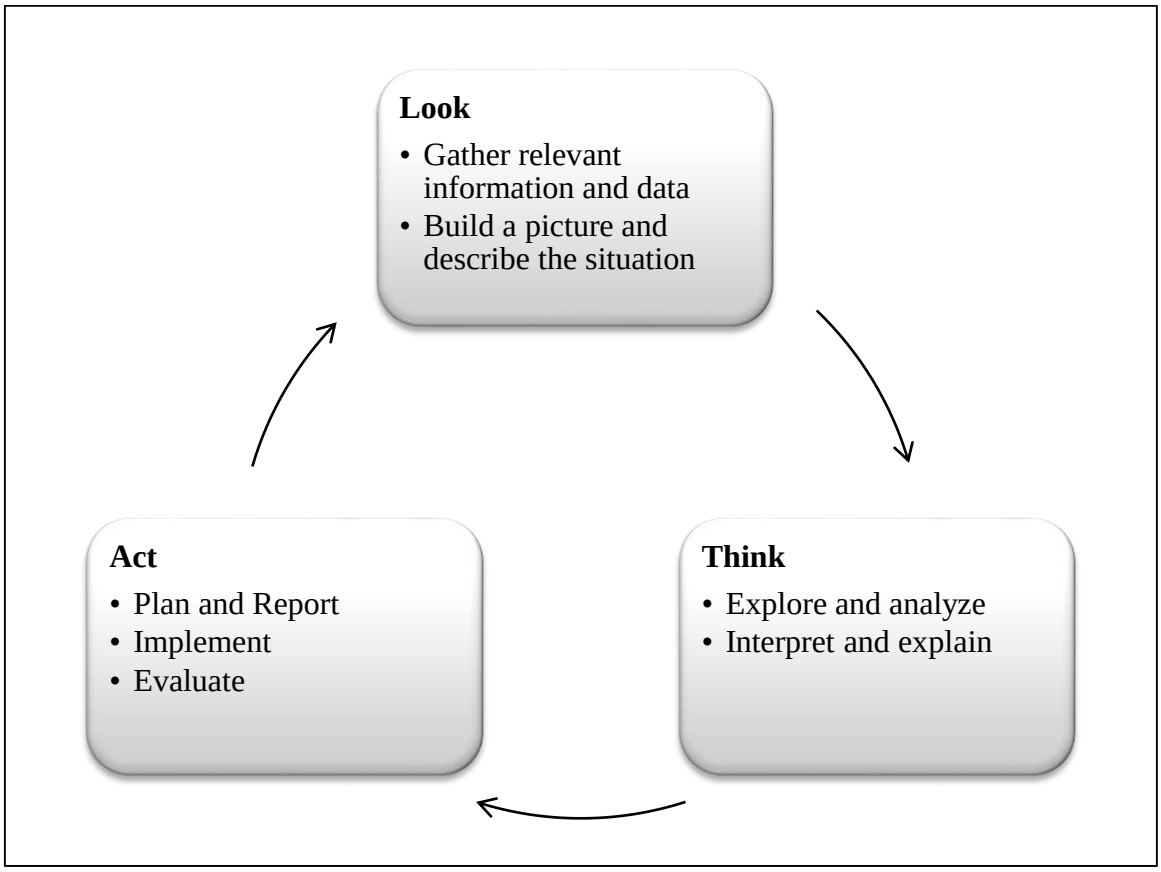


Figure 3.2: Action Research Process as described by Stringer (2007, p. 8).

Action research is an iterative process of systematic inquiry. Stringer (2007), as shown in figure 3.2, posits a simple protocol for action research – Look, Think, Act. Each step in the process is repeated through multiple iterations. RAP fits within the cycle of

action research during the Look and Think phases as a means to gather and analyze data. Both action research and RAP involve insiders in conducting research, promote interaction within a diverse team of researchers, focus on trustworthiness and triangulation instead of validity and reliability, and involve a cyclic, recursive processes (Beebe, 2001; Stringer, 2007).

Action research is a strategy of inquiry within the qualitative approach to research where "the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives or advocacy/participatory perspectives or both …with the primary intent of developing themes from the data" (Creswell, 2013, p. 18). Qualitative methods such as action research use the terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability in place of validity and reliability to establish the trustworthiness of a study (Guba, 1981). Credibility requires prolonged engagement at the site, peer debriefing, triangulation through a variety of data sources, member checks, and testing interpretations (Guba, 1981). Transferability occurs through the collection of "thick descriptive data" allowing data collected to be compared to other contexts where appropriate (Guba, 1981, p. 86). Dependability of a study occurs through triangulation, replication, and audits of data and data collection methods (Guba, 1981). Lastly, conformability entails data triangulation from a variety of perspectives, practicing reflexivity, and conducting audits of data interpretation (Guba, 1981).

**Rapid Assessment Process**

The Rapid Assessment Process (RAP), a modified approach to qualitative ethnography, can be intentionally employed to study the relationship between distributed leadership and student empowerment. Creswell (1998) referred to ethnography as a suitable

approach “to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues such as power, resistance and dominance” (p. 70). Researchers and practitioners can gain an insider’s perspective to the culture of a high school, whether or not students feel empowered, and the reciprocal relationship between culture and distributed leadership. It is imperative to achieve an understanding of student perspectives to gain a holistic view of school culture in relation to student empowerment. Understanding the culture of the high school through the eyes of students can also provide an insight on the impact of empowerment on developing the 21st Century Skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Utilizing the RAP strategy within the context of action research alleviates some of the challenges of a traditional ethnography. Traditional ethnographies are very time consuming and require an extended period in the field (Creswell, 1998). Resources and the possible impact of researchers on the lives of participants are also challenges. Action research provides the principal, teachers, and students of the high school the opportunity to participate in systematic inquiry to improve distributed leadership practices within their own school (Stringer, 2007). RAP also reduces the time needed to collect and analyze data by using multiple researchers, both insiders and outsiders, in an iterative process. (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009).

RAP evolved from a group of qualitative research approaches and methodologies called “rapid appraisal, rapid assessment, and rapid rural appraisal” (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2013, p. 12; Chambers, 1991; Kumar, 1993; Scrimshaw & Gleason, 1992). These approaches to research were created in the 1970s from the desire to understand the development of rural cultures and conditions (Cavestro, 2003; Chambers, 1994). Through the 1980s the group of research approaches became widely accepted as a rigorous approach

to understanding local conditions in an inexpensive and timely manner (Carruthers & Chambers, 1981; Chambers, 1994). When implemented appropriately, rapid rural appraisal "came out better by criteria of cost-effectiveness, validity and reliability when it was compared with more conventional methods" (Chambers, 1994, p. 956). Rapid appraisal, rapid assessment, and rapid rural appraisal approaches to research have expanded to include research in other areas such as the health fields, farming, and economic structures (Chambers, 1994).

As a more recent member of the family of research approaches sometimes called rapid rural appraisal, Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) specifically assists researchers in understanding the local context through the perspective of the local people (Beebe, 1995). During the RAP, researchers first gather information about the system or context. This information is then used to develop and plan semi-structured interviews and observations. Through information gathering, interviews, and observations, the RAP researchers look for trends and patterns, often learning information that is not anticipated or expected (Beebe, 1995). RAP researchers alter interview questions and sometimes the direction of the study as new information arises. Because of the adjustments made during the research process, multiple iterations are required to ensure that relationships are thoroughly explored (Beebe, 1995; Carruthers & Chambers, 1981).

RAP provides data triangulation through a team of diverse researchers in the field together, conducting interviews and observations (Beebe, 2009). Teamwork is also applied to the iterative process of continual data collection and analysis until data saturation is reached. Similar to action research, the RAP iterative process represents a cycle of data collection and analysis until the data represents a very close approximation of the

perceptions of participants (Beebe, 2009). RAP utilizes Miles and Huberman's (1994) model of data analysis by coding, displaying, and drawing conclusions from data (Beebe, 2009). Using a team of researchers which includes insiders also increases the likeliness of recommendations being implemented within the action research process (Beebe, 2001). An important component of action research is the ability to share research with practitioners in order to solve a problem or improve practice (Creswell, 1998).

**The Rapid Assessment Process Team**

The RAP team should consist of three to five multi-disciplinary members with both insiders and outsiders on the team. Having insiders on the team assists the team in understanding the culture and language of the school community while maintaining levels of trust and integrity with participants (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009). Having a research team of insiders and outsiders also improves the team's ability to reduce bias and recommend solutions to improving student empowerment. The RAP team should also consist of both male and female researchers to reduce any gender bias through triangulation (Beebe, 1995; Shaner, Philipp, & Schmehl, 1982).

The action research process focuses on relationships, communication, and participation between researchers and stakeholders (Stringer, 2007). RAP supports relationships, communication, and participation within the RAP research team and within the data collection and analysis process. RAP team members work together to develop the interview protocol, conduct interviews, collect all data, analyze data, and write the final report (Beebe, 2001). RAP team members also work with stakeholders to encourage participants to share their story and to arrive as close as possible to a description of their perspective through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and member checking.

**Preliminary Information**

Collecting preliminary information prior to conducting RAP team interviews is very important (Beebe, 2001). Preliminary information reduces the amount of time and effort needed during interviews and the data collection process when data is already available through documents and artifacts (Beebe, 2001). Preliminary information should be gathered based upon the recommendations of Creswell (1998), where the goal is to understand the context while keeping information to a manageable size for analysis. Documents and artifacts may include items such as the history of the school, demographic information about students and staff, school policies and procedures, school structures, school schedule, map of the school facility, and student achievement data. The RAP team may also want to tour the school and visit several classrooms while prior to conducting interviews and meeting with key informants.

**Data Collection**

Data collection occurs over a period of 6 to 8 weeks through semi-structured interviews, observations, relevant documents and artifacts, field notes, transcripts, and logs (Beebe, 2001; Beebe, 2009). Researchers begin by collecting and reviewing preliminary information about the school. Documents and artifacts collected as preliminary information are used to develop the interview schedule, initial Grand Tour questions, and interview guidelines. Researchers can also schedule focus groups and meeting with key informants.

## Distributed Leadership as a Lens to Analyze Student Empowerment

Distributed leadership is not a recipe for leadership, but instead a perspective of thinking and looking at leadership within the school setting (Spillane, 2006). Using the lens of distributed leadership requires examining the practice aspect of leadership by analyzing

the different interactions between leaders, followers, and the context of the situation (Spillane, 2006). Analyzing the actions of students and teachers in essence is a study of the school's culture. Besides a shared vision, mission, values, beliefs, and norms, school culture also includes how members of the school community interact with each other and the school environment (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

The concept of distributed leadership practice demonstrates how students can be empowered within the school. Spillane (2006) writes how a distributed perspective in leadership practice leads to three design principles to think and reflect about school leadership:

- The practice of leadership should be a central focus in efforts to improve school leadership because it is a more proximal cause of instructional improvement than leadership roles, processes, or structures;
- Intervening to improve leadership necessitates attention to interactions, not just actions, because leadership practice takes shape in the interactions among leaders and followers; and,
- Intervening to improve leadership practice requires attention to the design and redesign of aspects of the situation such as routines and tools because the situation help define leadership practice (Spillane, 2006, p. 93-94).

These three principles can be used to analyze student leadership and empowerment within the school. Whether or not students are leaders or followers in the school, they will still have influence on each other, on the staff, and on school routines through interactions. Instead of assuming students are followers, schools should consider how students act as informal leaders and embrace opportunities for students to take on more formal leadership roles.

Research shows when students are empowered, school efforts to change and improve are more likely to be successful (Cook-Sather, 2002; McQuillan, 2005; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996).

The first two principles of distributed leadership shift the focus from specific actions of individual leaders to leadership practice, specifically to interactions between leaders and followers (Spillane, 2006). To empower students and teachers, principals can study how leadership is practiced within their school and how leaders and followers interact with each other. Who are the formal and informal leaders? Who are the followers? How do leaders interact and influence each other? How do leaders and followers interact and influence each other? What is the connection between leadership practice and instruction? Questions such as these may assist principals in utilizing distributed leadership to reflect on and improve leadership practice within the school. Distributed leadership practice exists in all schools intentionally or not (Spillane, 2006). By studying and reflecting on how leadership practice is spread over members of the school community, the principal can intentionally include students and staff in the practice of school leadership.

The third principle broadens the view of leadership practice to include interactions with the situation (Spillane, 2006). The situation is not only the context of the school, but the structures the school has put in place to define routines, support learning, and build school culture. Spillane (2006) warns practitioners to not consider distributed leadership as a framework for school improvement, but instead a lens to think about leadership in schools. The situation, rules, routines, policies, procedures, and other structures of a school influence interactions between leaders and followers. Empowering students and staff through a distributed perspective, requires principals to carefully study the culture of the school along

with the context of the school. Do the structures and routines of the school promote positive interactions aimed at school improvement goals or do they cause conflict and scatter improvement efforts? Do the structures and routines of the school empower students and staff to take on leadership functions and work collaboratively?

## Using Findings to Inform Practice

The purpose of action research is to assist practitioners in resolving a problem or issue of professional practice (Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010). After the Look and Think phases of action research is completed, the next phase is Act. The Act phase involves collaboration between the research team and key stakeholders to resolve the issue or improve practice by planning and implementing interventions or solutions (Stringer, 2007). In this context, the findings regarding student empowerment, school culture, the development of 21st century skills, and any other findings will be used to develop detailed action plans. Student perspectives are important not only in understanding student empowerment and school culture, but will be vital in the process of developing actions plans for improvement. Action research seeks to involve all stakeholders, especially "the perspectives of people who have previously been marginalized" in the decision-making process (Stringer, 2007, p. 206). RAP also seeks to include outliers when gathering data from a diverse participant group (Beebe, 2001, p. 108). Thus, all stakeholder and especially student involvement will be crucial to the development and implementation of action plans aimed at improving school culture, student empowerment and the development of 21st century skills.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

The University of Idaho's Professional Practices Doctorate (P.P.D.) program was developed in coordination with the Carnegie Projects on the Education Doctorate (CPED) to prepare the leader practitioner. The P.P.D. experience leading up to this dissertation was based on five design concepts – Scholarly Practitioner, Signature Pedagogy, Inquiry as Practice, Laboratories of Practice, and Dissertation in Practice (CPED, 2013c). Scholarly practitioners use both "practical wisdom with professional skills and knowledge to name, frame, and solve problems of practice" (CPED, 2013c, ¶ 2). The signature practice of the University of Idaho's P.P.D. program is mentoring by experts in the field and by the student's major professor and committee members. Mentoring along with relevant coursework provides opportunities for the student to learn and grow in the scholarly inquiry process while applying theories and practices into individual areas of professional practice. The dissertation serves as a "culminating experience that demonstrates the scholarly practitioner's ability to solve problems of practice" (CPED, 2013c, ¶ 7).

Dissertations as part of the University of Idaho's Professional Practice Doctorate could take many forms. Some research groups collaborated entirely on one study, using the traditional five chapter dissertation format. Others research groups employed the Three Article Dissertation (TAD) format. The leadership research group, as in the case of this dissertation, utilized a format where each group member conducted their own research study on a problem of professional practice and participated in the peer reviewed journaling process.

As part of the leadership research group, this dissertation was organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 is a manuscript for publication regarding my research of professional

practice on developing student empowerment through distributive leadership. Chapter 2 contains two critiques of the leadership studies conducted by my research group members, Nathan Relken and Shane Wasden. Chapter 3 is a white paper on how action research and distributed leadership can assist educational leaders at the high school level in improving and developing student empowerment, school culture, and 21st Century Skills.

The purpose of this last chapter, Chapter 4, is to respond to the critiques of my individual research and make recommendations for further study while reflecting on and incorporating the literature.

## Response to Critique on Action Research and RAP

For the most part, traditional and formal research has provided information for educators from the point of view of an outside observer looking in. According to Willis, Inman and Valenti (2010), traditional qualitative research methods include observation, interviewing, historiography, and case study, all of which consist of a researcher peering in from the outside to gather evidence in order to better understand society and human behavior. This type of research is important in understanding our world and does provide educators with helpful theories about how students learn. However, putting theories into practice and actually improving teaching and learning remains a challenge for most educational practitioners. Action research gives practitioners the opportunity to participate in the research process, increasing the chance that findings will be used to improve practice (Creswell, 1998; Stringer, 2007).

### Action Research

Action research is a cyclic process that allows a person or group of people to implement theories or practices in an effort to "solve a problem or answer a question about

professional practice" (Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010, p. 226). The person or group conducts research within the context of the problem or professional practice. Marshall and Rossman (2011) refer to action research as a "democratic inquiry process" (p. 23) where there is a sense of collaboration between all parties - researchers and participants. A common example of action research is the work done by effective professional learning teams or learning communities. These teams usually have a problem they would like to solve or a goal they would like to achieve. The team then gathers information and collaborates on developing a plan to reach the goal. Once the plan is implemented (or sometimes during implementation), the team evaluates whether or not they met their goal. If the goal is not met, the team uses information gathered during implementation and the evaluation process to make necessary changes and adjustments to the plan. The process then continues through a cycle until the goal is met or the problem resolved.

The downside to action research is that it is specific to the context in which it is conducted. For example, a teacher may conduct action research with a class and achieve success. However, if the teacher were to apply the same plan or principles to another class, the teacher may not be as successful. The difference in the makeup of the student body alone may alter the context enough to impact the results of the plan. There is a danger when educators attempt to mirror the actions taken by another researcher or team of researchers. The key is to mimic the process of action research in order to achieve success within each specific context.

The magnet school at the focus of this study already continually engages in the action research as part of the school improvement process. For example, information from the Spring 2013 Culture survey as well as input from students and staff regarding the bell

schedule was used in the action research process to develop the college schedule and collaboration time. Continuing to use a process already employed by the school was helpful to this study in soliciting support and engagement from students, faculty, and staff. Using a familiar process also assisted the school in implementing recommendations to improve practice.

**Rapid Assessment Process**

The purpose of this study was to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. The Rapid Assessment Process (RAP) was used within the action research methodology to examine the collective leadership phenomena of distributed leadership and its relationship to school culture and 21st Century Skills from the perspective of students.

The RAP approach has many characteristics of ethnography and case study research, recognizing all members with decision making power within the study (Beebe, 2009) and conducting inquiry within a bounded system (Creswell, 1998). According to Crotty (2004), in an ethnography "culture is not to be called into question; it is not to be criticized, least of all by someone from another culture. Instead, one is to observe it as closely as possible, attempt to take the place of those within the culture, and search out the insider's perspective" (p. 76). RAP has many of the characteristics of ethnography and requires less of a time commitment. RAP "intentionally involves decision makers in the research process and attempts to ensure sufficient rigor for credibility with decision makers" (Beebe, 2009, p. 3).

It was imperative in this study to achieve an understanding of student perspectives to gain a holistic view of school culture in relation to student empowerment. Action research and RAP both use an iterative process of data collection and analysis until the data represents a very close approximation of the perceptions of participants (Beebe, 2009). RAP is a useful methodology to address this goal by capitalizing on the constructivist view where one individual's perception is not truth. However, by triangulating the perceptions of multiple researchers from diverse backgrounds, the team comes closer to the truth, increasing the reliability and validity of the study. RAP provides data triangulation through a team of diverse researchers in the field together, conducting interviews and observations (Beebe, 2009). Teamwork is also applied to the iterative process of continual data collection and analysis until data saturation is reached.

**New Tech Network Culture Survey Winter 2014**

In January of 2014 the New Tech Network surveyed students at every school participating in the network about their perception of school culture. "The survey serves as a formative assessment measure, providing feedback to school administrators, teachers, and school development coaches" (NTN, 2014). All Compass Academy students were invited to participate in the online survey. Out of the 366 students at Compass Academy, grades 9 through 11, 200 responded to the survey. Incidentally, the survey occurred during the last month of data collection and analysis for this study and results from the survey were very similar to the findings discussed in this dissertation.

The New Tech Network developed the survey to align with the network's rubric on school culture and was created with input from school practitioners (NTN, 2014). The Winter 2014 Culture survey has high correlations between each sub-construct of school

culture as identified in the design principles of the network schools: Learning (r = .847), Peer Relationships (r = .833), Adult Relationships (r = .868), Connectedness (r = .791), and Discipline (r - .718) (NTN, 2014, p. 2). Overall, the New Tech Network Culture survey for Winter 2014 has a Cronbach's Alpha score of r = .930 and a Spearman-Brown's split-half reliability of r = .839 (NTN, 2014, p. 2).

The survey did not specifically ask students if they felt empowered in making decisions affecting the school culture and structures. Instead, the survey measured the percentage of student reporting positive perceptions in six areas of school culture. Table 4.1 displays each of the six areas, the percentage of positive responses from Compass Academy students, and the range of positive student responses from all high schools in the network (NTN, 2014).

Table 4.1

*Positive Responses to Sub-Constructs of School Culture*

| Sub-Construct of School Culture | Compass Academy Response | Range of NTN Schools |
|---|---|---|
| Connections to the school | 77% | 50%-86% |
| Learning experiences through PBL | 78% | 48%-83% |
| Discipline is fair, enforced and based on rules students helped establish | 64% | 30%-71% |
| Peer relationships on campus | 71% | 31%-89% |
| Adult relationships on campus | 79% | 55%-88% |
| Preparation for college or career | 56% | 45%-82% |

Table 5.1: NTN Culture Survey Winter 2014 Results for Compass Academy (NTN, 2014).

The survey results provided by New Tech Network also contain detailed information in each of the six sub-constructs, including both closed and open ended-responses. As the school works to implement recommendations from the study on distributed leadership, the results from the Winter 2014 culture survey on Connections to the school, Discipline, and

Adult relationships can be compared to the student perceptions found in this study. Delving into each sub-construct and comparing the data to findings in the distributed study is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to determine, through a constructivist lens, action research, and systemic inquiry, whether or not students at Compass Academy feel empowered to take an active role in the development and maintenance of school culture and how students have influenced school culture based upon their perceptions of empowerment. Research is abundant on how educational leadership and positive school culture promotes teacher voice and empowerment (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kotthamp, 1991; Leithwood & Reihl, 2005; Park & Datnow, 2009; Roby, 2001). Research is limited on how leadership and culture promotes student empowerment. High school students are preparing to enter the real world where they will need to be able to lead, collaborate, and solve complex issues (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Empowering students as leaders in the school provides students the opportunity to build these skills while contributing to the school as a whole.

Recommendations for future research for Compass Academy, specifically, is to continue to involve students and staff in the action research process to address the challenge presented by collaboration time and developing student self-management skills. However, research from Conley (2010) and the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) shows that schools do not have a "systematic program extending continuously from ninth through twelfth grades in which students are expected to become progressively more responsible for managing their own time in anticipation of postsecondary education" (p. 73). As Compass

Academy works through the action research process, the school may want to consider a systematic approach which supports and scaffolds students as they learn to be self-directed. Compass Academy may also want to incorporate results from the New Tech Network Culture Survey Winter 2014 in developing action plans to address the development of student self-management skills.

Although Compass Academy is a small magnet school that incorporates non-traditional methods of delivering curriculum and instruction, results from this study may be helpful to other high schools in improving student empowerment, student leadership, and college and career readiness skills such as self-management. Using distributed leadership as a lens can assist schools in analyzing both the leader-plus and leader practice aspects within their own particular context. Preparing students for a constantly changing world requires schools to become learning organizations – learning about issues and problems they face and learning about how to develop solutions that change and stretch the school's values and culture.

As stated earlier, distributed leadership is not a recipe for leadership, but instead a perspective of thinking and looking at leadership within the school setting (Spillane, 2006). Other high schools may want to consider using the lens of distributed leadership within the action research process to examine whether or not students feel empowered and how student perceptions regarding empowerment impact school culture and the development of 21st Century Skills. Action research provides the opportunity for educators to understand their context and to solve problems or improve practice (Creswell, 1998; Stringer, 2007). Although curriculum shifts to 21st Century Skills and the Common Core State Standards are steps in the right direction to better prepare students for college and the world of work, they

do not necessarily provide students the opportunity to learn and practice the skills needed to be competitive in a global economy. Action research into distributed leadership, student empowerment, and school culture can assist school in improving student empowerment, giving students a voice in their own education, and better providing students the opportunity to learn and practice the 21st Century Skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

## References

Angelle, P. S. (2010). An organizational perspective of distributed leadership: A portrait of a middle school. *Research In Middle Level Education Online*, 33(5), 1-16.

Association for Career and Technical Education, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, & Partnership for 21st Century Skill. (2010). *Up to the challenge: The role of career and technical education and 21st century skills in college and career readiness.* Retrieved from http://www.p21.org.

Barron, B. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2008, October). Powerful learning: Studies show deep understanding derives from collaborative methods. *Edutopia.* Retrieved online: http://www.edutopia.org/inquiry-project-learning-research. Retrieved April 8, 2013.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2004). *Multifactor leadership questionnaire manual and sample set* (3rd. ed.). Menlo Park, CA: Mind Garden Inc.

Beebe, J. (1995). Basic concepts and techniques of rapid appraisal. *Human Organizations*. 54(1), 42-51.

Beebe, J. (2001). *Rapid assessment process: An introduction*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Beebe, J. (2009, November). *Introduction to rapid assessment process*. Improving leadership for transformation in cross-cultural situation through rapid assessment. Handout presented at the meeting of the International Leadership Association.

Beebe, J. (2013). *Rapid assessment process (RAP) and participatory action research (PAR): Complementary approaches with similar methodologies but different implications for leadership*. Retrieved from: http://www.rapidassessment.net.

Bell, S. (2010). Project-based learning for the 21st century: Skills for the future. *The Clearing House,* 83, 39-43.

Brown, R. (2004). *School culture and organization: Lessons from research and experience.* Denver, CO: Paper for the Denver Commission on Secondary School Reform.

Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation Press.

Carruthers, I. & Chambers, R. (1981). Rapid appraisal for rural development. *Agricultural administration,* 8(6), 407-422.

Cavestro, L. (2003, October 10). P.R.A.: Participatory rural appraisal concept methodologies and techniques. Universitia Degli Studi di Padova Faculta' DI Agraria.

Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate. (2013a). *About CPED.* Retrieved from: http://cpedinitiative.org/about.

Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (2013b). *Definition of and working principles for Ed.D. program and design.* Retrieved from: http://cpedinitiative.org/definition-and-working-principles-edd-program-design.

Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (2013c). *Design concept definitions.* Retrieved from: http://cpedinitiative.org/design-concept-definitions.

Chambers, R. (1981). Rapid rural appraisal: Rationale and repertoire. *Public administration and development*, 1, 95-106.

Chambers, R. (1994). The origins and practice of participatory rural appraisal. *World development*, 22(7), 953-969

Common Core State Standards Initiative (2013). *Implementing the common core state standards.* Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org.

Conley, D. T. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cook-Sather, A. (2002). Authorizing students' perspectives: Toward trust, dialogue and change in education. *Educational Researcher*, 31(4), 3-14.

Copland, M. A. (2003). Leadership of inquiry: Building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(4), 375-395.

Creswell. J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (2010). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Crowther, F., Kaagan, S., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2002) *Developing teacher leaders.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Darling-Hammond, L., et al. (2008). *Powerful learning: What we know about teaching for understanding.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Deal, T. E. & Peterson, K. D. (2009). *Shaping school culture: Pitfalls, paradoxes, and promises.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Donaldson, G. A. (2006). *Cultivating leadership in schools: Connecting people, purpose, and practice.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Fielding, M. (1999). Radical collegiality: Affirming teaching as an inclusive professional practice. *Australian Educational Researcher*. 26(6), 311-318.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence reframed: Multiple intelligences for the 21st century.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed leadership. *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Gronn, P. (2003). *The new work of educational leaders: Changing leadership practice in an era of school reform.* London: Paul Chapman.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2004, April). The seven principles of sustainable leadership. *Educational Leadership,* 61(7), 8-13.

Harris, A. (2002). Distributed leadership in schools: Leading or misleading?. *Management In education (Education Publishing Worldwide Ltd),* 16(5), 10-13.

Heller, M.F., & Firestone, W.A. (1995). Who's in charge here? Sources of leadership for change in eight schools. *Elementary School Journal,* 96(1), 65-86.

Hoy, W. R. (2002). The development of the organizational climate index for high schools: Its measure and relationship to faculty trust. *High School Journal*, 86(2), 38.

Hoy, W. K., Hoffman, J., Sabo, D., & Bliss, J. R. (1996). The organizational climate of middle schools: The development and test of the OCDQ-RM. *Journal of Educational Administration* 34, 41-59.

Hoy, W. R., Tarter, C. J., & Kottkamp, R. B. (1991). *Open schools/healthy schools: Measuring organizational climate.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Hoy, W. R. Tarter, C. J., & Witkoskie, L. (1992). Faculty trust in colleagues: Linking the principal with school effectiveness. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 26(1), 40-47.

Key, J. P. (2013). *Critiques.* Oklahoma State University. Retrieved from: http://www.okstate.edu/ag/agedcm4h/academic/aged5980a/5980/critique.htm.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. (1995). *Credibility: How leaders gain it and lose it, why people demand it.*

Kumar, K. (1993). *Rapid appraisal methods.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Lamont, M., & Lareau, A. (1988, Autumn). Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments. *Sociological Theory*, 6(2), 153-168.

Leithwood, K. A., & Reihl, C. (2005). What do we already know about educational leadership? *A New Agenda for Research in Educational Leadership*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lizzio, A., Dempster, N., & Neumann, R. (2011). Pathways to formal and informal student leadership: The influence of peer and teacher-student relationships and level of school identification on students' motivations. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 14(1), 85-102. Doi:10/1080/13603124.2010.482674.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2001). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

McQuillan, P. J. (2005, Winter). Possibilities and pitfalls: A comparative analysis of student empowerment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(4), 639-670.

Merriam-Webster, (2013). Retrieved from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trust.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Muncey, D.E. & McQuillan, P. J. (1996). *Reform and resistance: An ethnographic view of the Coalition of Essential Schools.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Murphy, J., Smylie, M., Mayrowetz, D., & Louis, K. (2009). The role of the principal in fostering the development of distributed leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, 29(2), 181-214. Doi:10.1080/13632430902775699.

Nakamura, J., Shernoff, D. J., & Hooker, C. H. (2009). *Good Mentoring*: *Fostering excellent practice in higher education*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

New Tech Network – School Success Rubric (2013a, June 1). *School Success* Rubric. Napa Valley, CA: New Tech Network. Retrieved from http://www.newtechnetwork.org/sites/default/files/fpfiles/schoolsuccessrubric2013.pdf

New Tech Network. (2013b). *Our Story*. Retrieved from http://www.newtechnetwork.org/our-story.

New Tech Network. (2013c). *Our Model.* Retrieved from http://www.newtechnetwork.org/newtech_model.

New Tech Network. (2014). *New Tech Network student culture survey winter 2014: Compass Academy report.*

Park, V., & Datnow, A. (2009). Co-constructing distributed leadership: District and school connections in data-driven decision-making. *School Leadership & Management*, 29(5), 477-494. doi:10.1080/13632430903162541.

Paul, J. L. (2005) (Ed.). *Introduction to the philosophies of research and criticism in education and the social sciences.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.

Peterson, K. D., & Deal, T. E. (1998). How leadership influence the culture of schools. *Educational Leadership,* 56(1), 28.

Rhodes, V., Stevens, D., & Hemmings, A. (2011). Creating positive culture in a new urban high school. *High School Journal*, 94(3), 82-94.

Roby, D. E. (2011). Teacher leaders impacting school culture. *Education*, 131(4), 782-790.

Schoonmaker-Greudenberger, K. (2013). *Rapid rural appraisal (RRA) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA): A manual for CRD Field workers and partners.* Baltimore, MD: Catholic Relief Services. Retrieved from http://www.crsprogramquality.org/storage/pubs/me/RRAPRA.pdf.

Scrimshaw, N. & Gleason, G.R. (1992). *Rapid assessment procedures" Qualitative methodologies for planning and evaluation of health related programmes.* Boston: International Nutrition Foundation for Developing Countries.

Shaner, W. W., Philipp, P. F., & Schmehl, W. R. (1982). *Farming systems research and development: Guidelines for developing countries.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Shirley, D. (1997). *Community organizing for urban school reform.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Shulman, L.S., Golde, C.M., Bueschel, A.C. & Garabedian, K.J., (2006, April). Reclaiming education's doctorate: A critique and a proposal. *Educational Researche*r, 25-32.

Simpson, R. L., LaCava, P. G. & Graner, P. S. (2004, November). The no child left behind act: Challenges and implication for education. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 40(2), 67-75.

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Spillane, J. P. (2012). The more things change, the more things stay the same. *Education and Urban Society*, *44*(2), 123-127. doi:10.1177/0013124511431567.

Spillane, J., Diamond, J., & Jita, L. (2000, April). *Leading classroom instruction: A preliminary exploration of the distribution of leadership practice.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J.B., & Jita, L. (2003). Leading instruction: The distribution of leadership for instruction. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(5), 533-543.

Spillane, J., Diamond, J., Sherer, J., & Coldren, A. (2004). Distributing leadership. *Developing leadership: Creating the schools of tomorrow*. New York, NY: Open University Press.

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tarter, C. J., Bliss, J. R., & Hoy, W. K. (1989). School characteristics and faculty trust in secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 25(3), 294-308.

Tarter, C. J., Sabo, D., & Hoy, W. K. (1995). Middle school climate, faculty trust, and effectiveness: A path analysis. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 29, 41-19.

Trafford, B. (2003). *School Councils, School Democracy, School Improvement: What, Why, How.* Leicester: SHA Publications.

Trilling, B. (2009). Innovating learning and teaching. *Leadership*, 39(2), 16.

Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

U. S. Department of Labor, Secretary's Commission on Achievement Necessary Skills (SCANS). (1991). *What work requires of schools: A SCANS report for America 2000.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor.

Vollmer, J. (2010). *Schools cannot do it alone: Building public support for America's public schools.* Fairfield, IA: Enlightenment Press.

Wang, Y., & Huang, T. (2009). The relationship of transformational leadership with group cohesiveness and emotional intelligence. *Social Behavior and Personality*. 37(3), 379-392.

Warren, M. R. (2005). Communities and schools: A new view of urban education reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(2), 133.

Willis, J., Inman, D., & Valenti, R. (2010). *Completing a professional practice dissertation.* Charlotte, NC: IAP-Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Woods, P. A., Bennett, N., Harvey, J. A. & Wise, C. (2004). Variabilities and dualities in distributed leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 32(4), 439-457. doi:10.1177/1741143204046497.

Young, M.D. (2006, Summer). From the director: The M.Ed., Ed.D., and Ph.D. in educational leadership. *UCEA Review*, 45(2), 6-9.

# Appendix A

Professional Practices Doctorate

## Professional Practices Doctorate

Doctoral programs in education have long experienced problems with perception and purpose. Education doctorates are perceived as deficient in the areas of rigor and have sometimes been called "Ph.D.-lite" (Shulman, Golde, Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006, p. 27). Confusion between the purpose of the Ph.D. and Ed.D. has perpetuated negative perceptions while raising questions on whether either degree is adequately preparing students for research or professional positions (Shulman, et. al, 2006). To resolve these issues, scholars argue to eliminate the Ed.D. or to restructure the Ed.D. and Ph.D. to clarify the purpose of each degree and to offer a rigorous program supporting each degree's objective (Shulman, et. al, 2006; Willis, 2010; Young 2006).

Ideally, the educational Ph.D. and the Ed.D. began with two separate purposes with the role of the Ph.D. to prepare scholarly researchers and the role of the Ed.D. to prepare professional practitioners (Willis, 2010). Similar to the differences between the Ph.D. in biomedicine and the doctor of Medicine (M.D.), each degree should have a different program designed to meet their specific goals (Shulman, et. al, 2006; Willis, 2010). Although the two degrees began with distinct purposes, the Ed.D. evolved to resemble the Ph.D. in direction and curriculum (Shulman, et. a., 2006). Shulman and his colleagues (2006), argue for revising Ed.D. programs by starting fresh with the Professional Practices Doctorate, based on providing "an extremely demanding, rigorous, respectable, high-level academic experience that prepares students for service as leading practitioners in the field of education" (p. 29).

Members of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) have participated in the discussion on how to clarify the purpose of each type of graduate degree in education (Young, 2006). Young (2006) calls for each degree to be distinct in a variety of

areas such as “degree objective, primary career intention, knowledge base, research methods, internship, and the capstone experience” (p. 6), and has complied information from UCEA members on examples of each area for all three graduate degrees in education (i.e. M.Ed., Ed.D. Ph.D.). Table 5.1 displays some of the differences between improved Ed.D. programs and the traditional Ph.D. presented by Young (2006) from work conducted by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Missouri-Columbia (ELPA, 2005). Members of the UCEA have also participated with the Carnegie Project for Education Doctorate (CPED) where many of the key differences between the Ed.D. and Ph.D. shared by Young are also reflected the differences between the P.P.D. and the Ph.D.

Willis (2010) discussed how Professional Practice doctorate programs are growing out of a dissatisfaction with the tradition Ph.D. In some situations, the P.P.D. has evolved to keep pace with the “growing body of knowledge, skills, and expertise in many of the professions” (Willis, 2010, p. 24). P.P.D. programs do contain some elements of the Ph.D. such as scholarly research, however, research centers on a problem of professional practice instead of a gap in the research (Shulman, et. al, 2006; Willis, 2010). Other elements common to most P.P.D. programs include coursework aligned to professional practice, relevant field work experience, and cohorts focused on collaboration (Willis, 2010). The culminating experience for a P.P.D. program may be a dissertation, portfolio, or other type of activity (Willis, 2010). P.P.D. dissertations focus on a problem or issue of professional practice, tend to be conducted in the professional setting of the student, often rely on collaboration of multiple researchers, most often uses qualitative methodologies, and usually involves more interaction with all doctoral committee members (Willis, 2010). “While the stated purpose of research Ph.D. dissertations is usually defined as making an original and

significant contribution to the scientific knowledge of a field, universities that offer doctorates in professional practice often define the professional practice dissertation as an effort to solve a problem rather than discover universal knowledge" (Willis, 2010, p. 43).

Table 5.1

*Compiled Differences between Ed.D. and Ph.D.*

| Ed.D. | Ph.D. |
|---|---|
| Primary Career Intention | Primary Career Intention |
| Administrative leadership in educational institutions or related organizations. | Scholarly practice, research, and/or teaching at institutions of higher education. |
| Degree Objective | Degree Objective |
| Preparation of professional leaders competent in identifying and solving complex problems. | Preparation of professional researcher, scholars, or scholar practitioners. |
| Knowledge Base | Knowledge Base |
| Develops and applies knowledge for practice. | Fosters theoretical and conceptual knowledge. |
| Research Methods | Research Methods |
| Develops an overview and understanding of research including data collection skills for action research, program measurement, and program evaluation. | Courses are comparable to doctoral courses in related disciplines. Courses develop an understanding of inquiry, and qualitative and quantitative research. |
| Dissertation | Dissertation |
| Well-designed applied research of value for informing educational. Practice. Reflects theory or knowledge for addressing decision-oriented problems in applied settings. | Original research illustrating a mastery of competing theories with the clear goal of informing disciplinary knowledge. |

Note: The Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of Missouri-Columbia as cited in Young (2006, p. 6).