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PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article describes teachers' and principals' perceptions of successful and unsuccessful institutionalization of school improvement initiatives. Data from interviews with 12 principals and 200 teachers suggest that differences in school structures, decision making, relationships within schools and community school connections are related to the success or failure of improvement initiatives. These differences may provide predictive attributes for those characteristics of staff and administration necessary for the successful implementation and institutionalization of school improvement, as well as overall school effectiveness.

Introduction

During the past two decades, we have learned a great deal about teacher effects, school effects, leadership effects, change and restructuring. This knowledge base has provided the impetus for numerous school improvement programs. Early attempts at school improvement were informed by the "effective schools research" (e.g., Edmonds, 1979 ; Rutter, et al., 1979) ; numerous correlates of effectiveness

were identified and used as a basis for these initiatives. More recent research has focused on context sensitivity, issues of leadership, parental involvement, cumulative resources, and multilevel effects (Wimpelberg et al., 1989 ; Sackney, 1991). Many of these correlates have been adopted as the generic set for school enhancement efforts. The Saskatchewan School Improvement Program (SSIP) was a larger-scale, multiple-school initiative focusing on collaborative problem-solving ; effective leadership ; developing a vision and a school mission; setting clear goals and priorities ; establishing an orderly and pleasant climate ; quality instruction ; organizing and aligning the curriculum; planning school-based staff development ; monitoring and evaluating priorities, programs, and personnel ; and getting parents and the community involved in school activities.

The difficulty with such school improvement initiatives has been with implementing and institutionalizing of the changes. Fullan (1991) concluded

that the reasons for unsuccessful institutionalization were largely the same as those for unsuccessful implementation. Eastwood and Louis (1992) concurred, noting that there was tendency for change initiatives to stall because of increased resistance from individual users. Miles and Louis (1987) found that the determinants of institutionalization were characteristics of the change, the internal context, and the process. They also noted that leadership was a crucial factor in any successful institutionalization.

Purpose of the Study

The research elaborates on the key features of success and failure of school improvement initiatives from the perspective of leadership roles and teacher behaviour. Our overall aim was to address how well improvement initiatives have taken hold, what aspects of the SSIP model have worked, and what we have learned from it. We were particularly interested in the functions and behaviours of school-based administrators and teachers in those initiatives that have become institutionalized, that is, the practices that have been incorporated into the culture of the school as a means by which the school solves problems and challenges itself.

The focus of this article is directed to the "mental models" of school-based administrators and teachers, that is, the self-perceptions of school principals and teachers concerning who they are, how

they ought to function, and what they do, given their specific school contexts.

We see these individual "leader" and staff role conceptions, among others, becoming embedded in the organization's world view (Kim, 1993, p. 44).

The Importance of Principal and Teacher Perspectives

Current views of change argue for a wider distribution of leadership opportunities and functions among stakeholders (Sergiovanni, 1994). Fullan (1993) contended that, for the individual, there is a "strange partnership of moral purpose and change agency" that leads to our understanding of change. Change agency is the companion to moral purpose. This significant shift in the way change is viewed may be characterized by its emphasis on the individual as a unit-agent of change; it does not limit its focus to an aggregate of persons in the organization (Sackney, et al., 1995). Shakotko (1995) found that where administrators were perceived to be coercive, cautious, or ambivalent toward change, teachers tended to exhibit uncertainty, resistance, passivity, and resignation. On the other hand, where administrators offered "optimism, enthusiastic support, and an empowerment of educators to risk and take an active role in the decision-making process, "the change agency status of

teachers was supported and confidently pursued (p. 118).

The role of the principal and central office administrators has received considerable attention in the processes of change. Louis and Miles (1990) found that, no matter how competent the staff, schools with ineffective principals were unlikely to be exciting places. Schein (1992) claimed that, although many leaders find self-reflective analysis threatening, "organizational learning is not possible unless some learning first takes place in the executive subculture" (p. 50).

Schools can no longer rely on bureaucratic methods to solve their problems. Trust and competence are increasingly necessary for the redefined roles within the school (Fish, 1994). Smylie (1992), for example, found that teachers were more willing to participate in the process of change if their relationships with administrators were open, collaborative, and supportive. Conversely, they were less willing to participate if the relationship was closed, exclusionary and controlling. Leithwood (1992) and others have used the metaphor "transformational leadership" to characterize the kind of direction required in a collaborative culture. Fullan (1992) suggested that, for principals to build collaborative cultures, they must foster collegiality and communication; they must encourage vision building, norms of continuous improvement, conflict resolution skills and teacher

development that emphasizes inquiry and reflection.

Educational leaders "must learn to influence and coordinate non-linear, dynamically complex, change processes" (Fullan, 1993, pp. 74-75). Senge (1990) argued that the new view of leadership was that found in learning organizations, in which leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers (p. 340). Ulrich, Glinow and Jick (1993) "cultural leadership" are important in this regard. Louis, Kruse, and Raywid (1994) suggested that schools must become stronger professional communities. Professional communities focus on teachers working together under conditions that include shared norms and values, reflective dialogue, a de-privatization of practice, a collective focus on student learning and collaboration.

In addition, Fullan (1991) and others have indicated that educational change depends on what teachers do and think. In order for teachers to change their practices they must believe that rewards will be forthcoming. According to Fullan, teachers are governed by the "practicality ethic". These are: need / evidence, procedural clarity and personal costs and benefits. He argues that the strategies used by promoters of change are frequently derived from premises different from that of the teachers.

What makes change work for teachers? Much of the literature (e.g., Fullan, 1991); Rosenholtz, 1989) suggests

that the degree of change was strongly related to the extent to which teachers interact with each other and others providing help. Moreover, the norms, values, degree of trust, and structure of the school make differences for teachers. Collaborative cultures and the extent to which there are shared goals were important factors in determining whether successful change would occur.

Framework for the Study

Although one's theories and ways of knowing influence how one goes about looking at schools, we were particularly influenced by Tichy's (1982; 1983), Senge's (1990), and Louis and Kruse's (1995) frames for understanding organizations. Tichy contends that organizations can be understood by examining the technical, political, and cultural forces that operate within them. The technical perspective emphasizes the rational approach to improving professional practice. It deals with the task orientation and roles of the staff, the resources, both financial and human, that are available; how the resources are used; and the clarity of the technology.

The political perspective recognizes that the process of organizational work is never straightforward. As a result, it deals with the conflicts and compromises that are reached, the decision making practices, how resources are allocated and the nature of communication that exists in a school system.

The cultural perspective, on the other hand, recognizes the importance of shared norms, beliefs and values among school personnel and the symbolic meanings they attach to their everyday experiences. This perspective includes the degree of value consensus among the stakeholders, the vision for the schools and the system, the degree of collaboration of dissonance that exists and the norms that guide behavior.

Senge (1990) contends that effective organizations are those in which members seek out ways to learn from their experiences. He names these "learning organizations" and suggests their members engage in team learning, shared vision and increased personal mastery. Such organizations are characterized by a culture of collaboration, reflective practices and a sense of mission. Similarly, Louis and Kruse (1995) outline how to develop a school-based professional community. Focusing on the structural, social, and human conditions of schooling, they develop a framework for evaluating the elements of community.

These frames helped us to understand the culture that pervaded the schools. Taken together, these views guided our study.

Method

The Saskatchewan School Improvement Program (SSIP) was used as a vehicle for understanding the

institutionalization of change. The program has been described elsewhere (Hajnal, et al., 1998 ; Sackney, et al., 1995). So only a brief overview is provided here. SSIP was a provincially initiated in-service program based on effective schools research. Its purpose was to build a capacity for group planning and problem solving at the school level in order to enhance student outcomes. At the height of the programme, 140 schools were involved across Saskatchewan. Each school identified a SSIP team comprised of the principal, a teacher and a central office person. The SSIP was responsible for facilitating the process of change and improvement. The various SSIP teams met three times during the year to report on their progress, address problems and learn new strategies and processes to help with their work. Provincial consultants were also available to provide support to the schools.

In 1994, the authors surveyed the teachers in the schools that had belonged to SSIP, asking them to evaluate its level of success at their school. Using four indicators of effectiveness, four very successful, four somewhat successful, and four unsuccessful schools were identified for further study (Hajnal, et al., 1998). Semi-structured interviews with the principals and teachers in each of these schools were then conducted. This article deals with the findings from interviews with 12 school principals and 200 teachers.

Using the case analysis approach

advocated by Merriam (1988) and Creswell(1998), the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcriptions analysed by coding the information into themes. Particular attention was paid to patterns and interrelationships. We continually referred back to the transcripts and tapes to ensure that all comments and observations were taken in context. The principals' and teachers' observations and insights were often thoughtful and self-reflective, and they expressed a wide range of views. Areas of agreement served to emphasize an issue or a topic, whereas areas of diversity encouraged us to look for underlying influences.

Results

In this section the findings from the data are presented. The headings are organized around the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Organisational Structure

Among the successful schools, it was found that management was shared widely, and specific structures were in place to facilitate shared decision-making. The size of the school tended to influence these management structures. In smaller schools, teachers worked or school improvement in two or three teams, who then reported back to the entire staff. In one of the larger secondary schools, a council was introduced to organize the requisite activities of SSIP. Each teacher was asked to choose one area of interest and contribute to the

group which had selected this focus. The chair of each group was a member of the council. The council chair, an elected position, collaborated closely with the principal. Several advantages to this structure were articulated. As staff were able to choose where they would concentrate their attention, they were more willing to contribute. This, in turn, lent a certain momentum to the school improvement plan. The fact that teams in the larger successful high schools crossed departmental lines positively affected staff cohesion.

Some level of accountability was apparent in each successful school. Planning and programming were facilitated by scheduled staff meetings. Time lines were established early in the process, and everyone knew which tasks he or she was expected to complete.

Teachers also noted that successful implementation of the SSIP process gave the organizational structure of the school a protocol for effectively addressing needs for improvement. This protocol allowed teachers to examine the "problem" rather than the "people". Communication improved because it was not clouded with personal defensiveness and animosity; it became clearly focused on the school's problem and the needs of students. Committee and staff meetings of high performing schools were streamlined and time efficient, with collaboratively-set agendas and rotation of the chair. Review and evaluation of goals and

actions plans were built into the natural cycle of the school year. In these ways power was spread to everyone, not concentrated at one level, and teachers were willing to commit time to the process because it was time well spent.

In the less successful schools fewer formalized structures were in place and principals appeared disinterested. These schools tended to have fewer committees, poorer leadership, and less support from the Director and Board. Less attention was devoted to planning, to engaging in a needs assessment and to providing time for planning. In one school the staff said: "The principal told us we had to do it." Similarly, in another school the feeling was "it was top down". I think our staff would have embraced it had it been done the other way around." Moreover, in the less successful schools the structures began to dissipate as soon as the financial and the time support was discontinued.

Decision-Making

Decision-making started with a school's resolution to enter the program. Successful schools entered into SSIP of their own free will. One principal recalled that SSIP was turned down the first year: "I can't remember what the vote was but it didn't have enough support". A group of interested individuals worked to build support for SSIP during the year, and the following year staff decided to support it.

Teachers identified several elements that were evident in successful schools. These schools moved slowly into SSIP, giving teachers time to think about the process and their commitment to it, and SSIP was not embraced until it was approved by a majority of the staff. Teachers also chose the committee on which they served.

Teachers in successful schools viewed shared decision-making to be a natural part of the school structure, even if SSIP was no longer formally in operation. Teachers felt empowered and more satisfied with outcomes that were decided by all staff. They felt ownership of the decision and "found group decisions are more long lasting. Decisions that are made in an autocratic method are usually not supported".

In many of the unsuccessful schools the decision to become involved in SSIP was not made as a staff decision. In many instances the project was commenced without any formal opportunity to decide. Furthermore, once the project commenced, the focus for improvement tended to be on conditions that were not internal to the pedagogy of teaching and learning. Instead, the school staff tended to focus on environmental issues and issues that centered on student behavior. In essence, in the less successful schools there were no clearly established procedures for making decisions. Although SSIP called for collaborative and shared decision-making processes,

these were never clearly established .

Teachers in successful schools also indicated that the shared decision-making process aided the staff in sorting personal problems or agendas from school-wide concerns. As well, they suggested that once shared decision-making became a cultural norm, decision that did not follow that route were easily and quickly identified and questioned for their legitimacy. In both these instances, the process of making decisions was defended and renewed in day-day occurrences in the school.

Effective leaders clearly delineated the areas in which their staff did not have jurisdiction ; the length of the school year, for example, was off limits. One principal from somewhat successful school suggested a clear distinction be made between whether an item presented to staff was for discussion or decision. Another reported that he had final say in work allotments, negotiations with central office, teacher supervision, and student discipline, but all other decisions were collaborative. A third principal stated that, once the rules were established, they had to be followed ; there could be no waffling on teacher's rights to make decisions.

Decision-making was affected by the degree of political manouvering in the school . Political manouvering was more common in schools that experienced difficulty in getting

SSIP. A principal from one such school reported, "We had to do some politicking to get the process started". Another indicated that he was "sure that there was a fair degree of political manouvering, at least during the initial stages of getting SSIP of the ground". It appeared, however, that after attempting SSIP, the level of politicking diminished in successful and unsuccessful schools alike. For the moderately successful schools, some degree of politicking continued.

In the less successful schools politics were rampant and affected the decisions that were taken. In every school there were blockers and in one school a radical negative group was put in charge. In one middle-sized high school at the beginning of the third year of the SSIP project, the Division Board decided to bring in an outside consultant to assess the school. As one teacher commented: "This decision destroyed the trust level that was between the board and teachers. We felt that we did not have the board's support." The review process brought SSIP to a halt. In a large comprehensive school the staff characterized itself as being very political. Consequently, when SSIP came along they tended to view the Director's decision as being politically motivated. Typical comments were: "There is a lot of politics on our staff. It is stressful. This is a very political staff." As SSIP encountered problems

the political pressures to discontinue the project also increased. In the more successful schools political influences played a minor role in decision-making. In these schools trust, a commitment to the vision and mission and the desire to become better were the motivating factors.

Collaboration

High performing schools showed evidence of successful collaboration. Teachers said "we can do amazing things. Things that you never thought would happen". Collaboration gave teachers an outward, global view of the school and its effectiveness, a view that broke down teacher isolation and the unwillingness to ask for help. Teachers found that collaboration promoted cooperation, understanding, and confidence in their own abilities and their work. They began to share ideas, volunteer for extra committees and give presentations. Another teacher suggested: "It gives an open-mindedness and keeps you on your toes, assessing how you can improve on the atmosphere in the classrooms and the whole school".

The staff in successful schools believed in and practised collaboration. As one principal stated, "I think we can get more done as a team", although collaboration was not the original operating style of two of the four effective leaders. Both admitted to having operated in a more "top-down"

fashion earlier in their careers. One principal suggested that he "used to be a strong-arm principal, but was now just a member of the team". He felt that, at the introduction of the program, he had been "a bit of a dictator". Another stated that, initially, he had found it difficult to share leadership : " I had to learn that just because somebody else put forth an idea that was eventually adopted, it did not mean that I was any more or any less a leader. It simply meant that somebody else had an idea that more people were willing to accept . That's tough. But it is easier now than it was then". Teachers recognized and appreciated the changes in their principal : " The leadership has become more cooperative than dictatorial ... Now it is very cooperative ...You can be more open . You can say what you feel".

The administrator from a less successful school reported little interest in collaboration. He said : "I like to work more on my own. I have no problem teaming up with somebody to do a project, but I prefer to be on my own". When asked about the level of trust among the teachers at his school, he assured us that they were "all on speaking terms". The teachers in his school reported that they rarely engaged in collaborative processes, and seldom asked for help.

Teachers suggested that collaboration encouraged their talking to each other,

whether in the halls, staff room, after school, in the evenings, or on Friday nights. Other evidence of collaboration were "open doors" throughout the school for students, teachers, parents and new staff members. Teachers also noted that learning team-building skills was a necessary requisite to collaborating successfully. But above all, teachers emphasized the need for trust in establishing effective collaboration : "You cannot mandate collaboration and trust, but if you give the right climate, then you will feel safe and comfortable".

In all of the less successful schools there were few indicators of collaboration. Instead, the culture of "individualism" tended to operate. Generally, in staff rooms the conversation tended to center on mundane matters. "The idea in our school is let us not talk shoptalk in the staffroom because this is a time for a break. Our staff tends to be negative . There is a lot dumping in the staff room." In one large comprehensive school the collaboration that existed centered around departments.

Sense of vision and Mission

In the more successful schools there was a clearer sense of purpose and a greater commitment to the purpose. Typical comments were : "We knew what we wanted to accomplish. We wanted to become a better school." and " There

is a genuine concern for students and a genuine desire that they succeed and mature in the learning process."

In the less successful schools, however, there was no consensus on the vision and mission that the school wanted to pursue. In one large comprehensive school the typical comment was "we did not have a vision". May be if we had a vision and knew exactly where we were going with this, it might have made a difference." Teachers from a small rural school commented : " We had no common direction . It was more individual . Many wanted to focus on leadership because that was an area of concern."

In summary, the less successful schools were never able to clarify their purpose nor derive a shared sense of mission. Consequently, as soon as the funding stopped, SSIP was dropped. In the more successful schools, on the other hand, SSIP became a natural way of doing things . The processes became incorporated into the way the school did its work.

Principals from successful schools made comments such as, " Yes, we have clear sense of where we are going," and "We clarify our goals and objectives every year and then problems are solved." Principals from the less effective schools, on the other hand, did not have the same clarity of purpose. "You have to have the same goal", one commented, " and if you don't, I

can't see how it works. We'd like to see that end, but whether we can all work equally toward that end is difficult to say". Schools that were partly successful indicated that they were working toward a unified vision and mission : " Yes, we developed a mission statement seven years ago, before any time, but they weren't using it. We've made a new one. We're working on everyone buying into it".

From the data, it became evident that those schools that were more successful in institutionalizing SSIP had a core ideology that inspired the staff. Further, the schools in which there was a greater consensus of purpose tended to use the ideology as a basis for improving the school.

The less successful schools, on the other hand, had a mission statement but only paid "lip service" to it.

Organizational Learning

Schools that were more successful in institutionalizing SSIP exhibited a greater level of trust among staff, had a shared vision, shared information more openly and honestly, engaged in greater collaboration, tended to raise sensitive issues more readily, experimented with new practices more easily, had better problem-solving practices, and displayed a greater willingness to change. "We work as a team", was a typical comment. Teachers reflected:

We know what we want our school to be like. We now have a quality instruction committee. We're getting to the heart of the teaching-learning process. We're also looking at cooperative learning and resource-based learning.

I think a lot of the different techniques that are being talked about the people are more willing to start some of them now.

We trust each other more. We are not so sensitive to the comments as we used to be We are not afraid to lay out concerns and really be open.

A principal whose school was somewhat successful reported that "There is a faction that grumbles about change, but it is getting smaller and smaller every year." Another said, " We're better at having regular conversations on academic curricular and instructional concerns." Principals from less successful schools, on the other hand, were much more negative on the same issues : " We don't operate as a team. There is lack of trust on staff "; Teachers do not want any change. They want to continue doing what they have always done " ; and " It's hard to get teachers to work together."

In general, principals from the less successful schools tended to be less

optimistic. Individuals in their schools were less willing to work collaboratively, and had fewer methods for problem solving. Work for many meant working alone. The level of trust also tended to be low. In one school, teachers indicated that they would not trust 70 % of their colleagues. In contrast, somewhat successful; schools tended to be more optimistic. They were beginning to develop trusting relationships, to engage in more open dialogue, and to share a common purpose.

In the less successful schools there were few indicators of organizational learning. Staff spent little time in collaboration and dialogue. There was little discourse on improvement of instruction. Generally morale tended to be poor and teachers tended to engage in frequent negative talk. As indicated by a teacher : "We don't talk about education. There are little groups who sit together. I would say that usually it is negative talk." Teachers spent more time complaining than problem solving and engaged in minimal professional development.

Less successful school staff tended to be older. As commented by staff in a medium-sized high school , "We have an aged staff and people are not as anxious to try new things. And so when this thing did not get off well, the teachers got a negative attitude about anything new coming along." Furthermore, in many of these schools

little time was spent in building programme and team support. Consequently, many teachers were not emotionally ready. As one teacher noted : " You only have a few saying, 'yeah lets do it', and others saying, 'okay lets go through the process but its not going to work anyway'."

Less successful schools also had teachers who quickly alluded to other failed or dropped change experiences. In the more successful schools, on the other hand, principal and teacher attitudes toward change were more positive. There was a feeling that change was a necessary element for being a good school :

"You have to agree with wanting change". In fact, many staff welcomed change it was perceived be invigorating and growth-oriented.

Community Leadership

Generally, the more successful schools had more contacts with their communities than did the less successful ones, and the contacts were characterized as open and trusting. For example, one principal reported that before the school had begun the SSIP process, the community relations were poor, but that situation had changed dramatically : " We have 35 - 40 volunteers coming into this school We can do just about anything and our community will support us". Principals from the less successful schools made comments such as , " Our community does

not support us. It's always been a problem, " while those from somewhat successful schools indicated that school-community relations were improving. " Its getting better. We're really working on this aspect, " one reported. Another concurred : " We have more parents coming to the school now." Less successful schools were more isolated from their communities, and many staff members were unwilling to invest energy in improving those relationships.

Teachers in successful schools invested energy into building better communication with parents through school newsletters, newspapers, "open door" policies, parent surveys, encouraging volunteers, inviting input on educational issues, and implementing more effective reporting procedures. Teachers felt their efforts in these areas were rewarded by the more positive image the school had in the community, and the professional recognition they received from parents for their work :

Our school has a relatively high status in the community. Most parents feel that they came to school and sit down and talk to people A lot of them will say "I don't know how you do this !" We have appreciation of parents. I think it is a real eye opener for them.

For many of the less successful schools there was a lack of community support. As a teacher from the mid-sized high school commented: "We never had the trust of the community. There is a negative image of teachers in this community." These schools reported that there was minimal community involvement in the school and they had few school-community programs that encouraged such participation.

Leadership Presence in the School

Principals in successful schools were ever-present but not obtrusive. They were seen as facilitators and confidants. They were also vigilant in their efforts to block opposition and remove obstacles that might hinder an individual teacher's or a group of teachers' school improvement initiatives. School staff frequently sought them out for advice. They would warn teachers to tone down overly ambitious plans, but at the same time point to past successes and remind teachers to celebrate them. "A lot of my teachers come talk to me," one rural principal reported. "That's one of my roles. Everybody communicates with me. If parents have a problem, they can drop in. We have a good level of respect". Another principal spent time with school staff "particularly doing some trust activities and trying to build that trust ... ; we aren't going to have any team building until we have that."

How principals viewed the staff emerged as an important factor. Principals who acknowledged the teacher as persons with unique needs, expertise, and concerns were featured in the successful schools. Similarly, principal advocacy of the professional community and leadership in team building were characteristics of the successful schools.

Teachers in successful schools described their principals as people who were visible and set the tone for openness and acceptance within the school. These principals listened when staff spoke, supported their staff members during controversy, and gave sincere praise and recognition when it was deserved. Teachers felt that their principals were facilitators and buffers, that they encouraged leadership among their staff members, and that they kept the staff from becoming sidetracked by focusing on the school's goals. One teacher commented, "The administrator should be able to hear what the staff says, facilitate what they can, help where they can, and give advice when they are asked". Teachers recognized the importance of leadership in sustaining effective improvement. "Without leadership and direction from the top, it would have fallen apart."

For the majority of the less successful schools there was lack of leadership stability. In one medium sized school leadership succession changed three times in five years. It should be

noted however that leadership stability alone did not account for the differences between successful and less successful schools. A number of the successful schools also encountered leadership succession yet this did not impact on the program in any significant way.

In a large, less successful school, staff commented that there was lack of leadership commitment to the extent that the principal and director openly disagreed about SSIP. As soon as the Director stopped attending the SSIP meetings the entire project began to disintegrate. In most less successful schools there was a lack of trust between the teachers and either the principal or director. We did not trust our director. We were not sure what his agenda was". The teachers indicated that for them quality leadership was lacking.

Successful schools were led by leaders that "walked the talk." Teachers found these leaders to share their power so that "everyone is on the same level." Rather than being directive and autocratic, these leaders encouraged discussion and comments on any aspect of school life, upheld staff decisions, shared the teaching load, sat as a committee member rather than as an administrator, and attended to equitable distribution of teaching workloads and preparations. In describing their principal, one teacher

suggested," He was an administrator who was able to change the morality of the school, change the direction that it was going in Everybody took ownership Everybody was consulted."

Trust

A common theme raised by teachers was the importance of trust that their voices would be heard and their decisions would be acted upon. One teacher reported, "As soon as there was some trust in the process, the process began to work. Trust was a big area." Personal agendas held by administrators diminished staff motivation and commitment to the school improvement processes.

Trust can be built over time, explained the teachers, but it could also be destroyed in an instant. They saw their principals and directors as holding that balance in their hands. Schools where trust was lacking were characterized by teacher isolation, poor communication, and lack of motivation to improve. Schools in which trust was built and sustained, however, were satisfying workplaces for both administrators and teachers.

Within the space of about one year a lot of trust developed ... The principal was very genuinely interested in changing. He made substantial changes in the way he did things. He ended up with a staff that was very supportive of him.

Discussions and Conclusions

If collaboration is central to the operation of the school and if decision-making is shared, then teachers grow to understand that they can make a difference, that they have a place in the leadership process, and that they are professionally in charge. The direction any school takes is determined by the team. In successful schools, leadership was shared among the staff and decisions were made by those who were affected by them.

The successful SSIP schools displayed many of the expanded characteristics described by Duttweiler (1988) : they have a positive school climate ; they foster collegial relationships ; they promote staff development ; they practise shared leadership ; they foster creative problem solving ; and they involve parents and the community. SSIP provided the mechanism for schools to emphasize the interests of their students and promote student learning while fostering a management role for teachers. The willingness of the principal to share leadership directly affected the success of the programme and the effectiveness of the school. In this respect, the position of the principalship continues to hold the greatest potential for maintaining and improving dynamic, high-quality schools.

Organizing for work is done differently in successful schools. At the elementary level, teachers from different

grades work together in teams. In secondary schools, teams are composed of teachers from different departments. Although team membership can change from year to year, the structure remains intact. In larger schools, a formal layer of administration is introduced : a council composed of the team chairpersons reports to and collaborates with the principal and the different teams. In successful school, more administrative and leadership tasks are accomplished by teams. Teams are a mechanism both for the decentralization of decision-making and for the binding of teachers to the culture and goals of the school.

Although the notion of teaming has been referred to by Loius and Miles (1990) and Rosenholtz (1989), it has not been discussed in terms of participant structures and management (Sashkin, 1984).

Organizational learning has been viewed as simple behavioural change versus complex cognitive and reasoning shifts (Fiol & Lyles, 1985 ; Klein, 1989) ; as changes in routine procedures versus changes in organizational norms, beliefs, ideologies, and assumptions (Argyris & Schon, 1978 ; Frielander, 1983) ; and as incremental versus transformational change. Our study concluded that the schools exhibiting greater organizational learning had shared ideologies, allowed for open and trusting relationships, and had staff who worked as a team to solve the complex problems that faced their schools. In successful school. teachers were more

amenable to critically examining their practices.

Mitchell (1995) found that organizational learning progressed through three phases : naming and framing to develop understandings and build relationships ; analyzing and intergrating to examine current practices ; and applying and experimenting to modify the practices. Although the authors' evidence is limited, it does appear that the successful schools were more likely to go through these phases than were the less successful schools. Some of the highly successful schools engaged in double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) in that they were learning from their experiences and improving on current practices.

Part of the reason they were able to do this was that they operated in an environment that encouraged risk-taking and supported collegiality.

Schools with a clear sense of purpose were more successful in institutionalizing SSIP. In many schools, a shared ideology evolved overtime. Both Rosenholtz (1989) and Louis and Miles (1990) have noted the importance of a sense of vision and purpose. It seemed to us that schools that were clear about their mandate tended to engage in more innovative practices and tended to get to their core ideology namely, teaching and learning. Successful schools were more willing to deal with instructional strategies, and to improve on what occurred between them and their students.

In summary, the authors' interviews with principals and teachers generated themes that differentiated successful schools from less successful schools in terms of the institutionalizing of change. Successful leaders helped staff members to identify and articulate a vision ; they encouraged shared values, beliefs, and attitudes related to teaching and learning; they shared leadership among the staff, and worked toward school improvement; they stimulated people to focus on activities as they related to students ; they encouraged both personal and professional development among their staff, and treated them as individuals with unique needs and expertise ; they helped their staff to think about the personal ramifications of school change, while ensuring their involvement ; finally, they linked school goals and system goals, and encouraged dialogue on the teaching-learning process. Teachers, for their part, were more prone to change if they were empowered, if a high level of trust existed, if a collaborative culture existed, if there was a shared purpose, if conditions for change were right, and if there was community support. In the successful schools the political influences were minimal and more of the conditions associated with the learning environment and professional community were evident. This research gives us a basis for asserting that there are differences in leadership attributes between the principals in successful schools and those in weaker schools, and these differences may warrant the status of predictive attributes.

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