

ABSTRACT

HARRELL, TIMMY EDWARD. Historical Role Conceptualizations of the Superintendent and Their Relationship to North Carolina Low Wealth Public School District Superintendents. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance Fusarelli).

“Since the inception of the role, the demands on the superintendent have changed as a result of numerous social, political, and economic trends in our society” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 107). Several researchers agree the role of the superintendent has evolved over time (Bjork, Brunner, & Glass, 2000; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011;). Kowalski (2006) contends that for us to understand the modern role of the superintendent we must first understand the history behind the position.

This research study used the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent developed by Raymond Callahan (1966) and Theodore Kowalski (2006) to compare them to what low wealth superintendents in North Carolina public schools are doing today. The researcher endeavored to discover which historical role a select group of superintendents operated from as well as if a new historical role conceptualization has emerged for this group of superintendents.

The findings indicate this group of superintendents did operate from multiple historical role conceptualizations. This group of superintendents spent most of their time operating from two historical role conceptualizations and as shown by several researchers (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011), the superintendents’ roles have changed based on the needs around them as a new historical role emerged from this study. The superintendent as the Promoter. It became clear from this research study the role of the superintendent continues to evolve.

Historical Role Conceptualizations of the Superintendent and their Relationship to North
Carolina Low Wealth Public School District Superintendents

by
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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my family, especially my wife and son. Without their love, support, and encouragement this would not be possible. To every educator who has been a part of my life from kindergarten through college. You have so greatly impacted my life and planted seeds within my mind and heart so many years ago that have now brought forth so much fruit. I solute you and humbly say thank you. To my God who has been a shield for me. I pray I use my new found knowledge to serve your perfect will. This has never been about me but those whose shoulders I stood upon. Thank you.

BIOGRAPHY

Timmy Edward Harrell was born in Goldsboro, North Carolina and raised in Grantham, North Carolina on his family's small family farm. He attended Wayne County Public Schools and graduated from Southern Wayne Senior High School in Dudley, North Carolina in 1993. He attended North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina and graduated with his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Extension Education with a Minor in Horticultural Science in 1997 and again in 2005 earning his Master of School Administration.

Tim, as he is known by his friends, has spent over twenty years working in public education. He worked in Wayne County Public Schools as an Agriculture Teacher, Science Teacher, Physical Education Teacher, Coach, Assistant Principal, and Principal. He was the youngest principal ever named in Wayne County Public Schools at the age of 29. While in Wayne County he served as principal at two of his former schools, Grantham School and Southern Wayne Senior High School. He is currently working in Johnston County Public Schools as the Career and Technical Education Director. While working in Johnston County Public Schools he has served as both an Assistant Principal and High School Principal.

He currently resides in Grantham with his wife Jessica and their son Landon.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“The democratic foundation of U.S. public education ensures a political underpinning for nearly every activity in and around schools” (Bjork & Lindle, 2001, p. 76) and in this arena the players are many. Of the actors involved this study will focus on the superintendent, specifically superintendents within the state of North Carolina. This study seeks to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts are doing today. Through qualitative methods informed by the research, the researcher will conduct a case study of selected superintendents from low wealth districts in North Carolina to develop a clear picture of how these low wealth district superintendents compare to the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent. The researcher will also endeavor to understand how much time they spend operating from each role, what factors influence the roles they operate from, and is a new role conceptualization emerging for these group of superintendents.

“Since the inception of the role, the demands on the superintendent have changed as a result of numerous social, political, and economic trends in our society” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 107). Several researchers agree the role of the superintendent has evolved over time (Bjork, Brunner, & Glass, 2000; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011;). Kowalski (2006) contends that for us to understand the modern role of the superintendent we must first understand the history behind the position. Kowalski (2006) wrote about five role conceptualizations of the superintendent, four of which were previously

identified by Raymond Callahan (1962). Callahan (1966) identified four roles a superintendent can play: teacher-scholar, organizational manager, democratic statesman, and applied social scientist. Kowalski (2006) later identified a fifth role, communicator. According to Kowalski (2001, 2003a, 2006) this role developed with the United States' transition into an information-based society.

Over the course of time superintendents' roles have changed based on the needs around them (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011). With the creation of the position in 1837 in Buffalo, New York, superintendents took on the role of teacher-scholar or instructional leader to ensure a standard level of education for all students (Springs, 1994). As the 19th century approach, superintendents gained more instructional control by being able to hire teachers, supervise instruction, and handle the finances of the school system (Callahan, 1962). After the Civil War superintendents were labeled "master teachers" and teachers were asked to emulate their behavior (Callahan, 1962).

During this time a concern began to arise over the managerial skills of superintendents (Kowalski, 2006). Scientific management theory began to be used in school administration (Callahan, 1962). These business principles greatly influenced the superintendency (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). In the 1920's with the influence of the Industrial Revolution many superintendents pushed for administrative work to be seen as more important than being an instructional leader (Thomas & Moran, 1992). Superintendents now took on the role of "organizational manager".

In the 1940's superintendents began to take on the role of "applied social scientist". This role conceptualization came about in part due to the growing dissatisfaction with democratic leadership after World War II, the rapid development of social sciences in the late 1940s and early 1950s, grants provided by the Kellogg Foundation to universities in the 1950s to research school administration, and the resurgence of criticisms of public education in the 1950s. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, confidence in public education and in those leading schools began to wane (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In the early 1990's, those intent on educational reform focused on several issues but none more intently than public school governance and leadership (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). The modern era of accountability began and the focus has been high on school leaders and school reform.

Although Kowalski (2006) described the role of superintendent as political from its inception, Callahan (1966) identified the role of political statesman developing between 1930 and 1950. He makes a connection with the Great Depression and superintendents having to be more involved in community activities. Bjork and Gurley (2005) concluded superintendents of today need "higher levels of political acuity to succeed than their predecessors" (p. 167). Johnson (1996) noted that superintendents' work in a politically charged environment characterized by demands for greater participation, patronage, and partisan power struggle. In modern times one could argue superintendents have to become more politically active as they compete for resources for their school systems.

Kowalski (2006) identified communicator as a stand-alone role for superintendents. Callahan (1962) believed communication was part of each role he had identified and not a stand-alone role. Evidence began to emerge in the 1980's that communication was a core competency for all school administrators (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Gousha & Mannan, 1991). Kowalski (2006) believed that historically communication was treated as a skill and was role specific, but in modern times superintendents are expected to communicate the same way regardless of the role they take on. Superintendents now have to lead school improvement reforms and lead groups such as school administrators and community stakeholders in this process.

Statement of the Problem

The 2008 election brought about sweeping changes to the General Assembly in North Carolina. Arguably one of the most affected areas has been public education. For many years, the Democratically controlled General Assembly along with the governor have been seen as pro public education (Fiske & Ladd, 2014). Now public educators including superintendents are hearing terms like charter schools, vouchers, and educational tax credits (House Bill 250; North Carolina Association of Educators, 2013; Senate Bill 337). Public funds have now begun to flow into a charter system in which the cap has been lifted. Some see this as a move to privatize our public education system in North Carolina. Within the last two years legislators have stripped public education teachers of tenure (North Carolina Association of Educators, 2013) and passed legislation denying teachers the right to pay professional membership dues to NCAE by payroll deduction.

Compounded by the financial crisis of 2008, K-12 public education budgets have been greatly reduced in our state (The North Carolina Justice Center, 2013). This brought about several years of budgetary reversions, frozen pay scales, reductions in teaching force, and political maneuvering even among fellow party members to redefine policy to rob from Peter to pay Paul (Low Wealth Money as an example). Rowan and Miskel (1999) as cited by Bjork and Lindle (2001, p. 77) list a scarcity of resources and rudimentary social services in public education as helping to provide for a contested arena in local politics and competing interests. Now more than ever with the scarcity of resources and hostile political environment in North Carolina, the role of superintendent as political statesman has reemerged and turned them into the most visible lobbyists for public education.

There is also a void of research within North Carolina that focuses on superintendents from low wealth school districts. To my knowledge there has been no research looking at this group of superintendents with a focus upon comparing what they do today to the historically identified role conceptualizations. When looking at the role of superintendents a handful of research studies have been done to understand the superintendent's political role in policy making at the state level (Knapke, 1986) as well as tactics used at the state level to influence policy making (DePree, 1971). Shirk (1995) conducted a study in California attempting to determine why superintendents get involved in policy making at the state level. These studies were not conducted in North Carolina and did not focus on the role conceptualizations of the superintendent as this study will. no study has attempted to look at superintendent roles and

define what a politically active superintendent looks like, let alone what a politically active superintendent looks like in North Carolina.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts are doing today. Through qualitative methods informed by the research, the researcher will conduct a case study of selected superintendents from low wealth districts in North Carolina to develop a clear picture of how these low wealth district superintendents compare to the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent. The researcher will also endeavor to understand how much time they spend operating from each role, what factors influence the roles they operate from, and is a new role conceptualization emerging for these group of superintendents.

Definition of Terms

1. **Teacher-Scholar** - Role of a superintendent first defined by Raymond Callahan (1966) where the superintendent is viewed as possessing both the content knowledge and pedagogy to be a “master teacher” or “teacher of teachers”.
2. **Organizational Manager** - Role of a superintendent first defined by Raymond Callahan (1966) where the superintendent is viewed as running a business where they must increase operational efficiency pertaining to fiscal policy, facility management, etc..

3. Democratic Leader - Role of a superintendent first defined by Raymond Callahan (1966) where the superintendent is viewed as balancing many voices and including stakeholders within the process of running a school system. This role has evolved based on the research of others to be named “political statesman”.
4. Applied Social Scientist - Role of a superintendent first defined by Raymond Callahan (1966) and later expanded upon by other researchers where the superintendent is viewed as being able to understand how their actions can affect and influence social justice issues.
5. Communicator - Role of the superintendent defined by Theodore Kowalski (2006) where the superintendent is viewed as having to collaborate with stakeholders to build visions, strategic plans, lead change initiatives within the school system and community, and be able to effectively manage conflict.
6. Low Wealth District - North Carolina defines a school district to be low wealth if it’s wealth percentage is below 100%. The wealth percentage is comprised of the following: 40% of county’s anticipated total revenue as a percentage of the state average, 10% of county’s tax base per square mile as a percentage of the state average, 50% of county’s average per capita income as a percentage of the state average. These three measures are added together to derive the wealth percentage.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to do something which has yet to be clearly done, research how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in

low wealth districts are doing today. This is something which has not been researched in North Carolina. Through qualitative methods the researcher will conduct a case study of five to seven superintendents who work in low wealth school districts in North Carolina. These superintendents will be interviewed one time for approximately one hour to gain in depth knowledge of what their job entails both locally and at the state level. This research will provide a clear understanding of which previously identified role conceptualizations superintendents from low wealth school districts in North Carolina are operating from, uncover things which influence the role they operate from, and possibly lead to the identification of a new role conceptualization of the low wealth district superintendent in North Carolina. Future superintendents as well as current superintendents can use the findings to inform their daily practice. The findings could influence superintendent educational programs to tailor their training to the roles in which superintendents of low wealth districts spend the majority of their time. This could have the potential to encourage educational reform as well as level the playing field for those inexperienced superintendents in fighting for much needed resources at both the local and state level, reducing superintendent turnover due to lack of political savvy, as well as encouraging higher education curricular reform in educational administration programs.

Overview of Methodological Approach

This study is a qualitative research study that utilizes a case study approach. Creswell (2007) describes case study as a methodology:

On which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

There are many identifiable cases; that is, superintendents in the state of North Carolina. Data collection sources such as interviews, observations, and written documentation will allow the researcher to provide a detailed portrait of the cases as related to identifiable superintendent roles in North Carolina (Creswell, 2007).

The case study approach will provide the best method of analysis when studying superintendent roles in North Carolina. The study will target five to seven superintendents from the state of North Carolina whose school districts are all classified as low wealth districts. These districts are defined as having a wealth percentage less than one hundred percent. The researcher will target the superintendents from the ten poorest counties in the state. One hour interviews will be conducted with each research subject. The need may arise to conduct follow up interviews with the subjects to gain more in depth data. The data collection process will capture where the subjects are spending their time and in what type of activities they are participating. Through the data collection process, the researcher will determine from which identified role(s) the subjects are operating, what influences the roles they operate from, and if a new role conceptualization emerges. The bounded system in this study is the superintendency as all subjects are superintendents.

Subjectivity Statement

I grew up in a small community in eastern North Carolina on the corner of my grandfather's small family farm. That place became, and still is my "Fortress of Solitude". I spent many of hours there watching the hands crop tobacco, riding on my grandmother's knee as she drove the "35" down the tobacco middle pulling the harvester. Washing my hands in the outside sink before we went in to eat at noon, always at noon as grandma ordered. There was always a spread on the table, never leftovers. I always had a dog of one name or another that spent all his time with me. My loyal companion everywhere I went. Huck Finn had nothing on me.

Growing up in this small community there were no strangers. I attended school at Grantham Junior High. A school that had been in existence before the 1920s and where my family went to school before me. This school once was a high school but became a junior high after the consolidation movement of the 1960s. My father was in the school's last senior class. I spent ten years there as a student. My mother worked in the office and my grandmother was the cafeteria manager. Many days I would ride to work with mom and then home with grandma after we would make our daily stop at the bank so she could deposit the lunch money collected that day.

I was very lucky being the son of a school employee that worked all summer. I spent many hours at Grantham running up and down the halls, playing basketball in the gym, helping the custodial staff clean the floors and mow the grass. There were some colorful characters working in that building and fond memories I have of them all. I also met school

board members and superintendents of our county. They knew me by my first name and those relationships opened doors for me in the future when I became an adult.

Upon leaving Grantham for high school I went to Southern Wayne High. I had a connection there as well. I had family to graduate for there so teacher knew me. I spent three years there making some new friends and playing sports. Those years went by a lot faster than junior high. When I look back on my public school experience I see myself as a Grantham “Bulldog” and not a Southern Wayne “Saint” because I spent so much time there and it was home.

After graduation I attended North Carolina State and changed majors three times. It was a conversation from a former teacher that made me decide to become a teacher. I majored in Agriculture. That decision was influenced by my growing up on the family farm. Those years went by fast and upon graduation I ended up back at Southern Wayne teaching and coaching. I taught there 6 years and was encouraged by my principal to consider administration. The next year I was assigned an assistant principal position at a local elementary school. There, I had a wonderful mentor who looked after me and helped me grow as a building administrator. While working as an administrator I took MSA courses at night to finish my degree.

After spending one school year at this elementary school the superintendent sent me back to my old high school. There I worked alongside a veteran principal who became a great mentor and friend. I learned a lot about managing people and resources while spending

a large majority of my time handling buses, textbooks, and discipline. I was there one year as assistant principal.

The following year I was named principal of Grantham Middle School. This was my home. It was no longer a junior high because the 9th grade was now at the high school. I became the first student from the school to become principal of the school and the youngest principal named in our county. I was not yet 30 years old. I learned a lot that year. We were Title I and had to offer after school tutoring due to some corrective action steps. The kids were wonderful. The kindergartners would get off the bus and hug me every day. You really felt you were making a difference with the kids. This was also where I received my first real taste of politics in education and how to be a good listener before you open your mouth to speak. At this point I started to develop an interest in school leadership beyond the principalship. I started to wonder what was going on above the school building level to make what we call school happen. I was principal at my old school for one year.

The next year I was moved back to my old high school as principal. I became the first graduate of Southern Wayne to become principal. I was excited for the opportunity but looking back I was very green behind the ears. I worked very hard and was now taking blood pressure meds. I spent many hours there. The days were long between conferences with parents and students, dealing with situations in the community, staying for athletic events, and much much more. I gained lots of on the job wisdom about running a school. I spent even more time working with central office level administrators learning and watching,

increasing my interest in the superintendency. I was principal at my old high school for a year and a half.

In November of my last year there, the old teacher of mine whom talked to me about teaching informed me of a job in the adjacent county. An administrative job as assistant principal at a school I had interview for a teaching position several years before but never took. It's a long story, but this time I was not going to let this opportunity pass me by. I resigned my position and started at a new school, in a new county the next semester. It was hard to leave home. I knew everyone including board members and the superintendent for a long time. They would call me by my first name when they saw me. But it was the right move.

My new school was Princeton School. A graded school with a great principal from whom I learned even more about people and the school business. I was the assistant principal for the high school. The community was very accepting of me as was the staff and to top it all of they were the "Bulldogs" just like my old school. I spent two and a half years there.

From there I was given my first principalship in Johnston County Schools at North Johnston High School. That place changed my life. I spent 5 years there as principal and worked with an awesome staff. My son was born while I was there. I lost three students while I was there. It became home. The school is a small community school with great support. Every day and North was a great day. We had our problems like all schools but we overcame and worked for the betterment of all of our students. Over those five years I grew a lot. It was during this time I became even more interested in the superintendency. Our

superintendent was very approachable and opened his office to me to ask questions and have candid conversations about what he did and what influences his job. I was able to watch him and how he spoke, what he said, and how he handled leadership problems. As I stated I was at North for five years. It was hard to leave. Thanks to a new opportunity I am now the Director for Career and Technical Education for our county. I now have the opportunity to see a different side of public education. This opportunity was afforded to me by our superintendent and is one I am looking forward to.

In all of my memories I cannot remember a time I was not in a school building somewhere. To me schooling is more than a job, it's my life. I know nothing else other than what I learned on that small family farm that keeps me grounded. I have spent nineteen years working in public education, all in two rural school districts that are classified as low wealth. I have been blessed to work with great people and learn from the best. I have a natural goal to one day possibly become a superintendent myself. Because of my experiences and this interest, I wanted to study the superintendency to learn more about it and what these individuals do on a daily bases. With my luck, I may end up back in my old school system once again working hard to make a difference in the life of a child.

Organization of the Study

The next chapter of the study will be the review of research literature relating to superintendent roles. Chapter Two will look at the literature related to the widely accepted roles of the superintendent, how these roles have changed over time, challenges or sources of influence on these roles, and how these roles affect current practices of the superintendent.

The literature will create a framework in which the new study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Chapter Three will detail the methodology to be used in the study. This chapter will include an overview of the case study method. It will detail the data collection process and how that data will be utilized to determine the primary role of superintendents in North Carolina. Member checks will be conducted to ensure accuracy and guarantee subjects are represented accurately.

In Chapter Four the researcher will discuss the findings of the study. As the case study is conducted, data will be collected and coded to answer the research question. This chapter will explain in detail the primary and secondary roles superintendents in North Carolina are operating from.

Chapter Five will provide implications and recommendations derived from the study which will include recommendations for future research and practice (Wolcott, 2009) as well as situate the findings of the study in the existing research knowledge base. Chapter Five will contribute to the existing body of literature and serve as a starting point for future research on superintendent roles in North Carolina.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Since the inception of the role, the demands on the superintendent have changed as a result of numerous social, political, and economic trends in our society” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 107). Several researchers agree the role of the superintendent has evolved over time (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011). For us to better understand the roles of superintendents, we must first understand the roles of their past and how they relate to the work of superintendents today. “To fully appreciate the complexity of this pivotal position and its evolution over more than 100 years, one must understand how roles and responsibilities have waxed and waned over time” (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011, p. 1). Barnett and Petersen (2005) state, “Although most historical analysis imply that a specific role of the superintendent may have dominated in a particular time period, other scholars suggest that superintendents have always been expected to blend multiple roles, each of which might have dominated the scene in earlier years” (p. 107).

For the purpose of this study, this chapter will look at the literature related to the widely accepted roles of the superintendent, how these roles have changed over time, challenges or sources of influence on these roles, and how these roles affect current practices of the superintendent.

Historical Roles of Superintendents

Kowalski (2006) notes that as far back as the 1800s the superintendent position was recognized as the most politically influential position in the public school system. Joseph Mayer Rice (1893) declared, “the importance of the position cannot be overestimated” (p. 11). Charles Thwing (1898) as cited in Kowalski (2006) noted in the 1800s superintendents were “rendering a service to the people far greater than that which any other citizen was rendering” (p. 30). The position of superintendent has clearly changed over the years since its first inception. Kowalski (2006) contends that for us to understand the modern role of the superintendent we must first understand the history behind the position. He wrote about five role conceptualizations for superintendents (Kowalski, 2006). Four of these roles were identified by Raymond Callahan (1962). These four roles are teacher-scholar, organizational manager, democratic statesman, and applied social scientist (Callahan, 1966). The fifth role, communicator, according to Kowalski (2001, 2003a, 2006) developed with the United States’ transition into an information-based society.

It is important to note that Callahan (1962) believe that each role developed within a specified period of time and that those roles were isolated to that specific time period except organizational manager. Callahan (1962) believed it was possible for that role to exist outside of it’s first identified time period.

Teacher-Scholar (Instructional Leader)

A long-standing tradition in our county and especially in the colonial United States was the idea of local control. This extended to the rights of local citizens to control what their

children were being taught in the one room schoolhouse. As the United States grew, state government officials feared local control of public schools would produce an inadequate and unequal education system (Kowalski, 2006). Thus began the push for a common educational experience for children within states and across the country. The responsibility for ensuring what each child experienced was relatively the same became that of the superintendent (Springs, 1994). The first position thereof was appointed in 1837 in Buffalo, New York (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). In the last half of the 19th century, conflict between democracy and professionalism began to increase (Kowalski, 2006). Many school boards reluctantly hired superintendents and resisted turning over power to them (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Complaints increased over the years due to school board politics and this prompted several prominent educators to recommend superintendents be given the ability to hire new teachers, supervise instruction, and handle the finances of a school system (Callahan, 1962).

After the Civil War urban school districts' superintendents provided instructional support and best practices and they were given the label "master teachers" which in turn caused their behavior to be emulated in smaller rural districts (Callahan, 1962). Superintendents of this era saw themselves as "students of education and as teachers of teachers and as educational leaders in the community" (Callahan, 1966, p. 188). These superintendents wrote journal articles (Cuban, 1988a) and some even became state superintendents, professors, and college presidents (Petersen & Barnett, 2003). Early on, superintendents were seen as some of the most highly respected scholars (Willower &

Forsyth, 1999). Kowalski (2006) reported the political power some gained caused them to be seen by some as “manipulative individuals driven by two motives: amazing power and remaining independent of local politics (Kowalski, Bjork, & Otto, 2004)” (p. 38).

Sources of Influence on the Role of Teacher-Scholar

The Reform Era

Fast forward to 1983 and the publication of *A Nation at Risk*. This report condemned the state of American public education and eroded confidence in schools and their leaders (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Much of the literature of this era blamed superintendents for the problems with public education because some saw them as being resistant to change and not being innovators for improvement (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). *A Nation at Risk* raised the question of the nation’s ability to compete at a high level when compared to the achievement levels of other countries (Barnett & Petersen, 2005).

This event caused many states and national organizations to develop new performance standards for students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In 1989 President George H. W. Bush met with the nation’s governors and various business leaders in Charlottesville, Virginia to convene a national education summit (Backman, 2009). The summit was the first meeting of the president and our nation’s governors devoted solely to education since the Great Depression (Backman, 2009). Although there were no educators or members of Congress there, the summit did secure a commitment to a set of national performance goals focused on a set of benchmarks to be achieved by the year 2000 (Backman, 2009)

Beginning in the early 1990's, those intent on educational reform focused on several issues but none more intently than public school governance and leadership (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). "Federal and state legislation, litigation, changing social and economic conditions, alternative schooling, and increased calls for accountability have resulted in an uneasy tension between public school leaders and their communities" (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 109). With the growing importance of academic achievement, technology, diversity, equity, and the changing demographics of school districts, superintendents are now required to make decisions about numerous and sometimes conflicting issues (Fusarelli, Cooper, & Carella, 2002). Now of greatest importance is the superintendents' ability to maintain organizational relationships and policies that advance curriculum and instruction (Elmore, 1999; Morgan & Petersen, 2002).

Instructional leadership became a professional standard of the superintendency when in 1993 the American School Board Association Commission on Standards for the Superintendency published professional standards for the district superintendent (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). According to Barnett and Petersen (2005) the standard of Instructional Management:

required superintendents to implement a system that would incorporate research findings on learning and instruction, instructional time, and resources to maximize student outcomes and apply best practices in the integration of curriculum and resources for multicultural sensitivity as well as assessment strategies to help all students achieve high levels. (p. 109)

Barnett and Petersen (2005) believe that even though these professional standards have been out for a decade, there are those who believe the work of the superintendent “is so fragmented and consumed with politics and conflict that their ability to be instructional leaders is, at best, an elusive goal” (p. 109), but even with the scrutiny schools are receiving due to increased expectations, superintendents must focus on expanding their professional knowledge base and devote more time to curriculum and instruction (Kowalski, 1999).

External Sources of Influence

The superintendent’s daily work is constantly interrupted by internal or external groups (O’Day, 2002). Much of the work a superintendent faces does not originate from their local school board, but from outside the school (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). External arguments such as those of site based management, teacher empowerment, parental choice, with reforms focused upon curriculum, graduation requirements, and testing accountability have brought challenges to the superintendent's authority and leadership (Grogan, 1996; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996). As superintendents try to respond to the call for greater involvement of key stakeholders they find themselves in the position of having to support and facilitate school based decisions, shared leadership, and other forms of site based decision making (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Crowson, 1987).

External pressures have also affected the governance structures of schools (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Kowalski (1999) points out that ideas such as charter schools, school choice, and the decentralization of school decision making have provoked thoughts about the need for school boards and their role and relationship with the district superintendent. Chaddock

(2002) reported that with “a significant downturn in student achievement and K-12 education’s ever-increasing demand on state budgets have motivated 23 states to pass laws authorizing state or city takeovers of schools perceived to be ‘in crisis’” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 110).

In areas such as Boston (1991), Chicago (1995), Cleveland (1998), and Philadelphia (2001), states have taken over the local schools due to school boards not exhibiting leadership and students failing academically (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Although the dysfunctionality of school boards have been well documented (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Iannacone & Lutz, 1994; Trump, 1986), changes in this governance structure can impede a superintendent's ability to effectively implement reform initiatives faced by schools (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Barnett and Petersen (2005) state that, “One could argue that boards should be maintained because potentially they represent the community and the purpose of education in a democracy (Schlechty, 1992)” (p. 111). With an ever-changing environment, local control and decision making becomes less of a daily reality for school districts (Petersen & Short, 2001).

In the current climate of reform high stakes testing has become a major source of external pressure (Cunningham & Sperry, 2001). Because federal and state policymakers have concluded schools are in a state of crisis they have focused on mandates aimed at increasing educational outcomes for students which are measured by standardized tests (Kowalski, 1999). This current climate has put large amounts of political pressure on schools

to demonstrate effective leadership at the district level (Ashbaugh, 2000; No Child Left Behind, 2002; Petersen & Young, 2004).

O'Day (2002) points out current accountability policy assumes when schools have accurate achievement data they will take the steps necessary to improve student achievement. "Given that assumption, district leaders will now be held accountable to provide powerful, authentic, and rigorous learning for all students (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; No Child Left Behind, 2002)" (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 111). New accountability policies seek to influence from the outside what goes on inside of schools (O'Day, 2002). "Moreover, such policies assume that external forces can play a determining role in changing the internal workings of schools" (O'Day, 2002, p. 3). However, Elmore (1996) found that rules dictated from outside of school seemed to have little impact, especially on that of teaching and learning.

There are many sources of influence upon the role of teacher-scholar/educational leader of the superintendent. Barnett and Petersen (2005) conclude, "Although there continues to be debate regarding the potential effects these accountability approaches will have on the achievement of students, it is important to keep in mind that these policy streams are very influential in the work of school superintendents and their attempts to be instructional leaders" (p. 111).

Internal Sources of Influence

Superintendents are required to be knowledgeable about all facets of education within the school district (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). They understand the complexity and

importance of their role as instructional leaders (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Regardless of their district size few of them reject the idea they should not be focused on curriculum and instruction (Kowalski, 1999; Petersen, 2002). However, Trump (1986) concluded many superintendents see the role of instructional leader as virtually unattainable due to internal issues such as school board relations and community politics. O'Day (2002) points out large formal systems such as public education tend toward bureaucracy and reliance of formal rules. They have mechanisms that control the behavior of individuals and subunits (March, 1994). Hess (1999) concluded, "Superintendents lack effective tools with which to promote change"... "Furthermore the physical structure of most schools place the superintendent a long way from the classroom" (p. 188).

Barnett and Petersen (2005) believe, "The most time-consuming internal pressures faced by district superintendents is establishing and maintaining an effective and positive relationship with their school boards of education" (p. 112). Research has clearly stated this relationship has far reaching implications on leadership and policy which affect the quality of a school district's educational programs (McCurdy, 1992; Nygren, 1992; Odden, 1995). "Blumberg and Blumberg (1985) suggest that the most critical association in running a school system is the interplay between the superintendent and board of education" (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 112). Feuerstein and Opfer (1998) suggest a poor relationship between school board and superintendent can hinder the district's ability to serve the educational needs of the community.

Superintendent Instructional Leader Studies

Barnett and Petersen (2005) contend that, “Because of the contextual and professional responsibilities of district superintendents, several authors have questioned the concept of “superintendent as instructional leader.”” (p. 113). These authors ask the question can superintendents truly be instructional leaders with historical and current expectations of the position (Barnett & Petersen, 2005)? A growing body of research has been conducted about the superintendent as instructional leader.

Some of this work implies that factors such as school board relations, politics of the position, organizational structure of districts, superintendent turnover, and the ambiguity of educational outcomes in isolation or in concert impeded superintendents from focusing on curriculum and instruction (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Other authors have said the work of superintendents has no direct impact on student achievement (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). There have been research studies (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Petersen, 1999; Petersen, 1984; Wissler & Ortiz, 1988) that have consistently noted the effect of district size on superintendents’ ability to focus on core issues of curriculum and instruction. Current research on district size follows research on school size which suggests smaller schools provide a more effective learning environment and are more manageable for school personnel (Kelley & Finnegan, 2003).

Barnett and Petersen (2005) in *The Contemporary Superintendent; Preparation, Practice, and Development* summarize six recent research studies on superintendents which “examined the instructionally oriented skills, professional and personal behaviors, and

organizational relationships and structures established by superintendents in leading curriculum and instruction within their districts” (p. 115). Coleman and LaRocque (1990) looked at the link between districts ethos and high levels of student achievement and found that the leadership role of the superintendent in high performing districts involved a considerable amount of team building and collaboration with building level principals and teachers (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Herman (1990) looked at 48 district leaders and identified 5 instructional leadership-associated skills and competencies for superintendents (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). These skills are allocation of instructional personnel, organization of the instructional program, support of the instructional program, development of instructional personnel, and planning for the instructional program (Barnett & Petersen, 2005).

Bredesen (1996) looked at superintendents’ descriptions of how they are involved in curriculum development and instructional leadership. He identified four roles for district leaders. These are instructional visionary, instructional collaborator, instructional supporter, and instructional delegator (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). In 1999, Petersen studied five instructionally recognized superintendents in the state of California. He identified four essential leadership attributes: articulation of an instructional vision, assessment and evaluation of personnel and instructional programs, and organizational adaption (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). In 2002, Petersen conducted a follow-up investigation this time including principals, school board members, and community members in the districts (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). He found a “significant statistical relationship between the articulated vision

of the superintendent and the mission and goals of the district, instructional planning, and community involvement in the academic success of the district” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 116).

Lastly, Morgan and Petersen (2002) conducted a study of five purposefully selected superintendents and their school districts and five randomly selected school districts of similar size with similar demographic and superintendent tenure (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). They concluded that superintendents in academically successful districts possessed an instructional vision and were closely involved in monitoring and evaluating instruction (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). They also practiced collaborative planning and developed instructional goals with district personnel and members of the community (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Barnett and Petersen (2005) state, “The results of their investigation clearly demonstrated that superintendents in academically successful school districts possessed an instructional vision but were also closely involved in the evaluation and monitoring of instruction, as well as collaborative planning and developing instructional goals with district personnel and members of the community” (p. 116).

While these studies do not conclusively identify a direct relationship between what superintendents do and student achievement, they point to the fact that superintendents can influence school board members and others by articulating and demonstrating active involvement, a sincere interest in curriculum and instruction, and viewing it as their primary role (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Barnett and Petersen (2005) conclude that most importantly, “these studies provide evidence contrary to historical and current conventional wisdom,

which implies that superintendents are too consumed with administrative and managerial issues to focus on the core technologies of curriculum and instruction” (p. 118).

Teacher Scholar Summary

Today, there are individuals who believe the superintendent should have a strong background in pedagogy and have experience in using that knowledge in the classroom (Kowalski, 2006). Others argue those pedagogical skills are not needed and they are barriers which have been created to protect the interest of the educational lobby (Kowalski, 2006). Some believe former teachers make the best superintendents because they can build those positive relationships and relate to those teachers who are still in the classroom and provide that strong instructional leadership (Elmore, 1999-2000; Murphy, 1992, 2002; Negroni, 2000). Others reject the idea only former teachers make the best superintendents (Broad Foundation & Fordham Institute, 2003; Hess, 2003).

Research has been directed at the relationship superintendents have with their school boards and their influence over educational outcomes. Outcomes of these studies have been mixed at best. Using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study for, 1988, 1990, and 1992, Zigarelli (1996) concluded there is no relationship between district administrators and schools improving instruction (Kowalski, 2006). Other studies have come to different conclusions about superintendent influences. Petersen and Barnett (2003) examined several studies (Bredeson, 1996; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Petersen, 2002; Petersen, Murphy, & Hallinger, 1987) and concluded superintendents “can influence the views of school board members and others by articulating and demonstrating involvement, a sincere interest in the

technical core of curriculum and instruction and viewing it as their primary responsibility” (p. 15).

Out of all the research what is evident is that the role of the superintendent has changed over time, particularly the responsibility of school district leaders to lead instruction and to improve the lives of their students (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). Carter and Cunningham (1997) suggest superintendents must fully grasp the conditions within which they find themselves and what direction they will need to lead their organization before they can provide the leadership needed for their schools. Superintendents can no longer afford to ignore establishing a strong cultural norm of being supportive of curriculum and instructional issues. “In this era of accountability, superintendents who do not have a primary focus on the academic success of students will not last long in their role of district leader” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 130).

Organizational Manager

Concerns over the managerial skills of superintendents began to arise in 1890 and focused on their perceived lack of knowledge and skill in this area (Kowalski, 2006). Cuban (1976) reported debate centered on the two jobs of business manager and superintendent of instruction. With the shift of our society from agrarian to industrial, school boards began to shift their focus to resource management (Kowalski, 2006). “The need for school district management also emerged with the consolidation of school districts and expansion of education laws and programs” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 137). Under pressure from their school boards, superintendents began to use scientific management theory in

school administration (Callahan, 1962). These business principles greatly influenced the superintendency (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002) and were believed to be the success behind the Industrial Revolution (Callahan, 1962).

By 1920 superintendents were expected to be able to improve operations by improving efficiency (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). During this time superintendents began to question their role as professional educators and how others view them (Kowalski, 2006). “Many decided that relinquishing this persona was necessary if policymakers and the general public were to accept the contention that administrative work had become separate from and more important than teaching (Thomas & Moran, 1992)” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 40).

Several researchers (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005; Razik & Swanson, 2001) believe the transformation of the superintendency mirrored that of the social, political, and economic evolution of America from a rural agrarian society to an urban society. Not everyone was pleased with this role transformation. Opposition to the transformation of the superintendency came for mayors, city council members, and political bosses (Callahan, 1962). These individuals feared the potential political power and influence superintendents might gain in their new role as a manager (Callahan, 1962). Some were even concerned about the loss of local control as “business and government power elites would act in concert with superintendent-managers to seize control of public education, thus diminishing participatory democracy (Glass, 2003)” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 40). Historian Raymond Callahan (1962) in his book *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* as summarized by Kowalski (2006) referred to this era “as a tragedy, he concluded that both social forces and

the collusion of leading big-city superintendents were responsible for an anti-intellectual context in which school administrators paid little or no attention to teaching and learning” (p. 41). Most historians agree that management became the role expected of school superintendents in the 1900s (Kowalski & Brunner, 2005).

Contemporary Superintendents

“Superintendents today have multiple responsibilities as administrators of complex educational systems” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 137). Superintendents must have skills in areas such as vision setting, policy implementation, priority establishment, public relations, collaboration, communication, participatory decision making, student learning accountability, and program evaluation (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Kowalski, 1999, 2003; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). They must make sure leadership capacity is expanded in the district to insure successful implementation of reform innovations (Johnson, 1996). They must also be able to distribute fiscal resources, material resources, and human resources to ensure student learning (Fullan, 2003, 2004). Several authors (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Kowalski, 2003; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996) report these task alone “require a staggering knowledge base and range of skills” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 137). “Although several distinctive role expectations for the American superintendency emerged over time, management emerged and was inextricably embedded as one of the most important role expectations” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 138).

Researchers over time identified several managerial tasks of the superintendency. Griffiths (1966) suggested the work of the superintendent fell into four main categories:

finance, personnel, instruction, and public relations. In 1976, Cuban suggested that the expectations of a superintendent are situational based on the school board and local community. With this in mind he was able to identify four roles all superintendents manifest: educator, business executive, politician, and social scientist. Blumberg and Blumberg (1985) asserted the job of superintendent had more to do with “maintaining the viability of the school system as a human organization, in its several dimensions-political, economic, social, and psychological” (p. 2) than with educating children.

Cuban (1988b) in 1988 combined his on four roles down to “three dominant images of what a superintendent should be: instructional supervisor, administrative chief, and negotiator-statesman” (p. 113). Cuban (1988) also observed these “roles are enacted” differently among school system executives (p. 142). Johnson (1996) affirmed Cuban’s (1988b) findings with her case study of 12 superintendents and the three main themes which emerge from their work: educational, political, and managerial. Although the role of the superintendent has changed over time, the role of manager remains critically important to the successful operation of local education agencies (Callahan, 1962; Glass, 2003; Johnson, 1996; Kowalski, 2003b, 2005).

Leadership and Management Defined

Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) state, “To function successfully as the CEO of a contemporary school system, a superintendent must be both leader and manager” (p. 142). To know the difference between the two concepts we must first be able to define them. Rost (1991) reviewed past research on the subject of leadership versus management. He believed a

clearer definition for both leadership and management was needed to eliminate confusion between the two concepts (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005).

Rost (1991) defined leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real change that reflects their mutual purposes” (p. 102). Rost (1991) next defined management as “an authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinates their activities to produce and sell particular goods and/or service” (p. 145). Rost (1991) said management “is a two-way relationship that is primarily top-down as to the directives given and bottom-up as to the responses given” (p. 147).

Rost (1991) also believes that management exists in all kinds of organizational models. In this relationship, coordination of activities between the manager and subordinate is key to meeting the goals of the organization (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005). Rost (1991) believed that his definition of leadership and management would make it easier to distinguish between the two. Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) point out both leadership and management are based on relationships. “Leadership uses influence, whereas management requires authority. Leadership influence is multidirectional, but never coercive; management is top-down directional and coercive when or if necessary” (p. 141). Rost (1991) suggests “the words leader and manager, follower and subordinate...cannot be used interchangeably” (p. 151).

Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) believe for a superintendent to be successful he/she must be both a leader and a manager. The expectation that superintendents be leaders is clearly stated in performance standards developed during the end of the twentieth century

(Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Hoyle, 1993; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998). The words leader and leadership appear throughout documents used to guide the work of superintendents (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005). Browne-Ferrigno and Glass also report that “embedded within the statements, however, are references to managerial topics, dispositions, and skills required by educational leaders” (p. 142). School systems are very bureaucratic in nature and much of the superintendent’s work “involves the mundane work of making a bureaucracy work” (March, 1978, p. 233). Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) point out “school districts are accountable to taxpayers who support them and policymakers who regulate them” and “to ensure order, uniformity, and accountability,...management must be dispersed throughout school districts” (p. 143).

Johnson (1996) believes that without effective management school systems collapse into chaos. Other authors (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Gardner, 1990) claim that without management, leadership is not possible. To go a step further, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) assert that a school system can survive poor leadership for years but not poor management because “poor management impairs the effectiveness of the organization” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 143). Although Rost (1991) points out leadership and management are defined differently and achieve different purposes, Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) believe both are “critically essential” for educational administrators (p. 143).

Current Management Tasks

Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) summarize the six major management tasks of superintendents. These tasks are derived from the work of Rost (1991) as well as current

professional standards held by organizations such as the American Association of School Administrators and the ISLLC standards for educational administrators.

Task 1: Government Regulations/School Law

American schools are regulated by federal and state statutes and local policies (Pulliam & Van Patten, 1999; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). School districts are governed by state boards of education who give local boards the authority to monitor schools and implement educational policy (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005). These local boards in turn give superintendents the authority “to ensure that policies are interpreted and implemented appropriately and that all children have opportunities to learn (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Leithwood, 1995a)” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 145). Superintendents must “stay abreast of changes to school laws” and “review and recommend policy options to the board about solving problems and planning for the future” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 145). If superintendents fail to do this it could lead to litigation and to their dismissal (Glass, 2004).

Superintendents must also oversee special education programs and ensure policy is followed so students receive their special education services (Kowalski, 1999). They also oversee numerous programs such as student discipline, school security, family support, and extracurricular activities (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Superintendents may choose to delegate many tasks to other central office staff or building level principals but they are still accountable for providing the services (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005).

Task 2: Personnel Management

Superintendents of large districts usually delegate out the function of human resource management to a subordinate administrator (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004), while those superintendents of smaller districts may personally perform the personnel management task (Kowalski, 1999). Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) contend, “A superintendent must use discretion in hiring those who manage human resources activities (Castetter, 2001; Rebore, 2000)” (p. 146).

Task 3: Finances and Budget

Glass (2004) contends the school district is a trustee of the community's children and its tax dollars. Proper management of public tax dollars is a key responsibility for every superintendent (Glass, 2004). Superintendents are often assessed on how they manage the district budget (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996) making this the most visible management function performed by a superintendent (Kowalski, 1999). The degree to which a superintendent is involved in the budgetary process depends on the size of the district (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005).

Fiscal management is a major challenge for superintendents as they try to distribute limited resources in a manner which ensures equitable opportunities for all (King, Swanson, & Sweetland, 2003). Kowalski (2006) contends that “for the casual observers, financial resources may appear relatively unimportant to schools, but to those who build, approve, and manage budgets, resources are paramount” (p. 307). Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) report that 97% of superintendents viewed finance issues as a factor inhibiting school effectiveness.

They also view high quality financial management as a characteristic of academically high-performing districts and lack of quality financial management skills as the leading reason for superintendent dismissal. Glass (2004) concurs, citing mismanaging finances as a primary driver behind superintendent dismissals. Carter and Cunningham (1997) report that “as school budgets shrink, all issues have the tendency to be put in financial terms, with the budget process becoming the battlefield” (p. 85). Carter and Cunningham (1997) also contend one of the most prevalent causes of short tenure for superintendents is reaction to budget cuts, and that the state of the budget is a good predictor of the level of peace or conflict in superintendents’ lives.

Task 4: Facilities

Land, the buildings built upon them, and the equipment inside them are the single largest investment of public funds in most communities (Glass, 2004a; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998). Goodlad (1997) emphasizes public schools serve as custodians of children and youth because of compulsory school attendance laws. Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) report school districts are often the largest employer in communities. Because of this, Kowalski (1999) reports superintendents are obligated to ensure the district's buildings are safe, healthy, and adequately maintained. To some this may seem like aspects of housekeeping (Griffiths, 1966) but Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) stress “facility management has become a major task and challenge for many reasons” (p. 147).

Many school districts have experienced increased population growth which has exceeded their ability to build new schools, while others have experienced a reduction in their

tax base which has reduced the amount of funds available to build new schools or maintain what districts already have (King, Swanson, & Sweetland, 2003; Kowalski, 1999; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). Increased technology needs of schools and the need to constantly update existing infrastructure items such as telephones and computers have further expanded the facility maintenance responsibilities of superintendents (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003; Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1999) in addition to now having to remove such items which are no longer safe for children to be around such as asbestos, lead paint, toxic indoor air, sewer, and air conditioning problems (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Ornstein & Cienkus, 1990).

Task 5: Contractual Negotiations

Among the most difficult legal issues a superintendent can handle are those involving personnel matters (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) report that “depending on school board policies and procedures, state constitutional provisions and statutory laws, district size, and degree of collaboration between parties, collective bargaining and other contractual agreements related to the district are managed personally by the superintendent or an appointed representative (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005)” (p. 147). Contractual agreements must also be carefully checked to ensure employees have the professional licensure or certification to perform their contractual obligation to the district (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004).

Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) also report that, “Management of non-personnel contractual agreements for purchasing supplies and materials, maintaining and operating

facilities, transporting students, supplying and operating food and custodial services, maintaining information databases, and acquiring insurance and employee benefits are also a superintendent's responsibilities (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990)" (p. 147).

Task 6: Public Relations

Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) contend the superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school system and as such they must communicate regularly with the community and media. Leithwood (1995b) reports superintendents need to maintain good relations with the public from day to day because the perceived performance of the district is often linked to the approval of the superintendent's performance. Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) state, "Public satisfaction with the superintendent and district becomes critically important when additional revenues for capital improvements are needed" (p. 148). Superintendents often coordinate levy and school bond campaigns; the success or failure of the fundraising effort rests with the superintendent (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990).

School board meetings, because they are open to the public, provide a place for viewing the relationship the superintendent has with board members (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005) and is a place where a superintendent's leadership and management styles are easily visible and thus open to public scrutiny and critique (Johnson, 1996; Kowalski, 1999). This environment can often be a source of conflict and how the superintendent resolves that conflict is in direct relationship to how that superintendent manages public relations (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005).

District Size And its Effects

Konnert and Augenstein (1990) noted the level of which a superintendent is involved in the day-to-day management of a school district depends upon school board expectations, available tax revenue, and district size based upon student enrollment. Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) added, “Districts with large student enrollments and sufficient revenues often have large central office staffs that allow the superintendent to delegate managerial responsibilities to others” (p. 148). Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) reported that in the majority of school districts in America that serve approximately 2,400 students, superintendents report performing managerial tasks themselves or with one other individual.

In very large districts which according to the AASA serve more than 25,000 students, superintendents report working as a general supervisor who delegates managerial authority (Kowalski, 1999). Superintendents who serve student populations between 3,000 to 25,000 students report having “differentiated management responsibilities based on the number of students served” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 149). Superintendents in districts with 10,000 or more students have the opportunity to hire additional office staff, while superintendents with a student population of 3,000 to 10,000 students assume greater hands-on responsibility for management tasks (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005). In districts of 300 to 3,000 students, superintendents report directly supervising the work completed by central office staff and building principals (Glass, 2004). Of districts with enrolment below 300 students Glass (2004) suggests superintendents are management workers because no one else is available to do the work.

Organizational Manager Summary

Today's modern picture of superintendents still involved with management skills and the importance of this role is rarely questioned (Kowalski, 2006). The level of management skills needed can vary with where the superintendent works. Glass (2003) noted the work of small district superintendents was very dissimilar to that of a large urban district superintendent. For this reason Glass (2003) said you should be careful when comparing managerial responsibilities of superintendents as this could be precarious (Kowalski, 2006). The importance of the management role according to Kowalski (2006) is rarely questioned but the real challenge faced by today's superintendents is to have a balance between both leadership and management (Kowalski, 2006).

Democratic Leader

Callahan (1966) said the role of educational statesman is one of the most important a superintendent must play to do their job effectively. Considering the political climate superintendents face when performing their jobs today, the term "statesman" may not be appropriate (Bjork & Lindle, 2001; Boyd, 1974). Bjork and Gurley (2005) sum up several authors' views when discussing the realities of what superintendents face today:

Pressures stemming from unrelenting calls for school reform, heightened levels of instructional accountability, demands for providing a broader range of support services to more students, increased interest group activity, and the politicization of educational policy in contexts characterized by declining resources depict the harsh reality of superintendents' present

circumstances...(Bjork & Keedy, 2001; Cibulka, 1995; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). (p.163)

Bjork and Gurley (2005) contend superintendents require more than “street-level political savvy” (p. 164). To be able to “respond to demands from multiple and diverse groups” (p.163) and be able to “endure criticism” (p. 163), superintendents “require understanding the purpose of public education and acuity for achieving balance through democratic processes” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 164).

Callahan (1966) identified the role of superintendent as educational statesman as being common between 1930 and 1950. The stock market crash of the 1920’s had the effect of causing the American populace to discard the former ideal of business efficiency and turn to the idea that school should prepare children for work and life in a democratic society (Kowalski, 1999). Because of this, the role of the superintendent shifted to educational statesman to meet the needs of the communities and school boards (Callahan, 1966). This new role of superintendent as statesman resulted from a growing belief that “public schools should practice and model democracy and develop symbiotic relationships with the communities in which they functioned” (Kowalski, 1999, p. 191).

Negotiator-Statesman

Bjork and Gurley (2005) in reviewing and summarize the work of Callahan (1966) point out he suggested superintendent “roles represented roughly distinct and consecutive eras of leadership” (p. 166). Callahan’s (1966) “presentation implied that the roles evolved and developed in a normative fashion, wherein superintendents, though not entirely

abandoning a previous role, focused primarily on the role best suited to meet the contextual demands of the day” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 166). District size can also influence what role a superintendent enacts (Bjork & Gurley, 2005).

Cuban (1976) offered a different interpretation on the role of statesman. Cuban’s research compiled eight decades of data collected from the *American School Board Journal*, 1870 to 1950. He noted three types of role conceptualizations: teacher-scholar, chief administrator, and negotiator-statesman. These are similar to Callahan’s (1966) first three conceptualizations (Bjork & Gurley, 2005). Cuban’s (1976) interpretation differed from Callahan’s as he states “each [role] waxed and waned as time passed, yet none disappeared” (p. 21). He pointed out that multiple roles of the superintendency existed at the same time and “superintendents donned each role as the individual contexts dictated” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167). According to Cuban (1976), the role of negotiator-statesman “was never a distinct, time-bound conceptualization; it was an abiding, if steadily increasing, reality of the position” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167).

Political Strategist

Boyd (1974) posed the question of whether the role of superintendent is better conceptualized as statesman or politician strategist (Bjork & Gurley, 2005). Boyd concluded in his research “superintendents who were both politically sensitive and proactive in their management approaches met with greater success in addressing multiple and often conflicting interests within a community” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167). Bjork and Gurley (2005) report, “There is broad agreement among policy makers, professors, and practitioners

that the nature of schooling is becoming increasingly complex and decidedly political” (p. 167). Bjork and Gurley (2005) go further concluding superintendents of today need “higher levels of political acuity to succeed than their predecessors” (p. 167). Johnson (1996) noted that superintendents work in a politically charged environment characterized by demands for greater participation, patronage, and partisan power struggle.

Bjork and Gurley (2005) contend the view of the superintendency being a political position depends on the definition of political. They state, “School district operations not only garner considerable public attention but also are viewed as conflict ridden arenas in which competing interest groups influence the distribution of scarce resources” (p. 168). Laswell (1958) called the political process “who gets, what, where, when and how” (p. 187). Thus, Bjork and Gurley (2005) conclude “...superintendents faced with negotiating demands from multiple and diverse community interest groups are engaged in politics viewed as practicing the art of the possible” (p. 168). Cuban (1988a) sums up the superintendent’s political leadership as having “...a need to build coalitions, to negotiate the distribution of resources among multiple and diverse interest groups to gain their support for district initiatives” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 168).

The arena of public politics has a public perception of corruption around it (Bjork & Gurley, 2005). However, Bjork and Gurley (2005) contend public politics is not always corrupt and it “...is a process through which individuals and groups openly express real needs and interest and reconcile their differences” (p. 168). It is an area where conflict can arise. As noted by Blumberg (1985) community conflict is unavoidable and as our nation

becomes more diverse, "...expectations for schools will differ, and individuals and groups will become more contentious as they press policymakers and school officials to satisfy their needs" (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 168). Bjork and Gurley (2005) further conclude, "Conflicts arise when values and interests of individuals and groups diverge and generate heightened levels of political activism within communities that contest the purpose and goals of public education and influence changes in local community power structures and administrators" (p. 168).

Today's superintendents have faced a higher level of conflict than superintendents of the past (Bjork & Gurley, 2005) and Kowalski (1999) reports with all the sources of conflict there is a growing concern over who will control public education in the future. Bjork and Gurley (2005) conclude there are few today who would "...dispute the superintendency has become more politicized" and they are now "...at the vortex of interest group politics that demand greater political acuity and a different way of enacting this role than during previous decades" (p. 169).

Democratic Statesman

"The democratic leader characterization is anchored in both philosophy and political realities" (Kowalski, 2006, p. 43).

In the 1930s, scarce fiscal resources forced school officials to engage more directly in political activity, especially in relation to lobbying state legislatures. Previously, the behavior of highly political superintendents was regarded as unprofessional (Bjork & Lindle, 2001; Kowalski, 1995). But such

convictions faded when it became apparent that public schools had to compete with other governmental services for limited state funds. (Kowalski, 2006, p. 43)

Howlett (1993) describes democratic leaders as those who are expected to “galvanize policymakers, employees, and other taxpayers to support the district’s initiatives” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 43). As the 1950’s came to a close the idea of democratic administration became less prominent but it has never really gone away (Kowalski, 2006). Kowalski (2006) points out one of the reasons it has never gone away totally is the economic realities of public education having to compete for scarce resources. Because of the ever changing democratic political environment superintendents continually face difficult choices and decisions. As stated by Kowalski (2006) “in a democracy, policy and politics are squarely joined and this reality perpetuates expectations of democratic administration” (p. 44).

Bjork and Gurley (2003) studied several perspectives on the role of superintendent as “statesman” and concluded the term “is not and may never have been an appropriate role conceptualization, inasmuch as the role has never been about a stately, patriarch ubiquitously and benevolently guiding school systems single-handedly” (p. 35). “Their analysis led them to conclude that superintendents more accurately were expected to be astute political strategists” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 43). Bjork and Gurley (2005) believe the historical definitions of the term statesman are not accurate depictions of the role conceptualization for the American superintendent. Instead, Bjork and Gurley (2005) propose “...the American superintendency has always been about respecting the public’s lawful claim to its schools,

managing them efficiently to ensure that students became literate and numerate, and leading them wisely to make certain that the commonwealth is served” (p. 169). They conclude by stating superintendents of the future must have “...a high level of political acuity tempered by moral principles and the capacity to communicate effectively with a broad range of community based constituents and work collaboratively for the common good” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 169). Furthermore, “...changing demographics and community contexts might require viewing superintendents as democratic leaders” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 169).

Applied Social Scientist

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) contend that within the past decade “superintendents have been called [upon] to lead district wide, systemic reform efforts and educate all children to proficiency, regardless of ethnicity, income, or family background” (p. 187). With limited resources and waning public support superintendents are under the expectation to junk old programs that do not work and seek data driven decision opportunities to improve the educational outcome of all children (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) believe for a superintendent to be able to do all these things it will require them to take on the role of applied social scientist. With dwindling financial resources and increased expectations, Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) believe superintendents will also have to become social activists which is a very public role where they engage their community and business organizations to involve them in school reform initiatives.

Changing Expectations Over Time

Around the 1940s the role conceptualization of the superintendent began to change. Callahan (1966) identified four forces which were influential in producing the applied social scientist view of the superintendent. These were as follows: The growing dissatisfaction with democratic leadership after World War II, the rapid development of social sciences in the late 1940s and early 1950s, grants provided by the Kellogg Foundation to universities in the 1950s to research school administration, and the resurgence of criticisms of public education in the 1950s.

Two other factors have now been seen to have been as equally influential (Kowalski, 2006). The first was the effort around 1955 to make school administration and established discipline equal to business management and public administration (Culbertson, 1981). This infused the social sciences into the curriculum for preparing school administrators (Crowson & McPherson, 1987).

Secondly, prior to the 1950s school administration had focused on internal operations but with the introduction of systems theory it became evident how external factors such as legal, political, social, and economic systems affected organizations (Getzels, 1977). Because of this school administration professors recognized the importance of theoretical constructs to their students' education (Kowalski, 2006). Kowalski (2006) explains "the superintendent of the future would be expected to apply scientific inquiry to the problems and decisions that permeated their practice" (p. 45).

Study of theory was at the core of this change. Before 1950 administration textbooks never mentioned theory (Getzels, 1977) but by the 1970s the behavioral sciences were fully integrated into the literature (Johnson & Fusarelli, 2003). Emphasis on the behavioral sciences lessened after 1980 (Kowalski, 2006) and in more current times Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2003) identified school reform and social justice as relevant issues. Superintendents are now expected to have the knowledge base to research deficiencies and recommend policies which ameliorate those deficiencies and superintendents are expected to have the expertise necessary to deal with social and institutional ills (Kowalski, 2006).

An emphasis on data driven decision making has also contributed to the renewal of superintendent as social scientist as they are expected to be able to conduct research related to problem solving as well as apply existing research to problem solving (Manheimer & Manning, 1995). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) expound that with “limited resources and elevated expectations, superintendents and other central office personnel must be well-grounded in the research on effective schools” (p. 188). They are expected to use data and with new technology the accumulation of data has become very easy (Kowalski, 2006) although the adoption of using data to make decisions is still complicated by politics and emotions which sometimes take precedence over rationality (Doyle, 2002).

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) believe there is a re-emergent view of superintendents as applied social scientists and social activists. They see this role reemergence as being shaped by three “distinct, yet interrelated policy and ideational currents” (p. 192). The three

currents include: (1) powerful demographic and societal changes that challenge efforts at school improvement; (2) recent system reform initiatives; and (3) changes in administrator preparation. I briefly review these below.

Demographic Changes and Educational Failure

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) believe urban reform efforts over the past several years have “not produced significant and sustainable results” (p. 193). Hess (1999) notes, “A cacophony of reform efforts marketed as solutions to unsatisfactory school performance has produced little substantive change in urban schooling” (p. 10). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) continue, “Despite wave after wave of school reform, the condition of education, particularly in urban areas populated by the nation’s most impoverished, disadvantaged children, remains perilous” (p. 193). Fusarelli (2000) adds student achievement gaps still exist and may be widening between minority groups.

According to Hess (1999) poor student performance has been blamed on several groups or ideals such as local school boards, teacher unions, and high teacher turnover. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) argue past reforms only produced superficial changes in schools but did not affect “instruction in the classroom nor addressed the fundamental problems that school face” (p. 193). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) contend, “What is needed is substantive change in the structure and design of schooling, and educational leaders committed to equity and excellence must lead this effort” (p. 193). Several authors (Freire, 1989; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Purpel, 1989) have concluded education reform cannot be debated outside politics and social power. Many educators still deny that schools are political

entities (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). For reform efforts to work and produce lasting change educators and policymakers must accept that education is politics (Counts, 1969; Freire, 1970). Stone, Henig, Jones, and Pierannunzi (2001) found, “Successful educational reform ultimately requires a broad and sustainable coalition of support, and the route to this goes directly through, and not around, politics” (p. 1). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) contend that:

A first step in this process is the recognition that although schools in the United States have historically served labor market interests and cultural uniformity, schools and those who lead them must become social activist. The process of becoming social activist and agents of social justice must begin during leadership preparation. (p. 194)

Because the path to the superintendency for most runs through the principalship, Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) proposed the “dominant paradigm and administrative practice is to remain out of politics and as far removed from politics as possible” (p. 195). However, they continue, “as principals assume district-level leadership positions in school systems, they must become adept at moving the entire system toward school improvement” (p. 195). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) conclude, “Effective leadership at this level requires “playing politics--getting multiple partners with diverse interests to buy into your vision and provide you with the resources necessary to achieve that vision” (p. 195).

System Reform

It is evident from the review of the literature the reform era which encompasses NCLB has had a significant effect on the work and role of the superintendent. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) affirm, "In today's increasingly competitive environment, in which school leaders are best with all manner of accountability and calls for educating all children to proficiency, superintendents must become active interventionists in leading school improvement" (p. 196). Stanton (2004) says superintendents "need to be focused on measurable outcomes...be constantly looking at their performance data and feeding it back into a process of continuous improvement" (p. 1). Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2005) assert, "the reality of educational accountability requires considerable knowledge of testing, data analysis, and interpretation to successfully sustain enduring efforts to improve schooling" (p. 16). Therefore according to Lunenburg (2003), superintendents must work with "principals, curriculum specialist/instructional coaches, and researchers to observe current practices, discuss student performance data with the staff, and assist in the development and implementation" of school improvement plans" (p. 40).

NCLB mandates the use of "scientifically based research to guide their decisions about which interventions to implement" (U.S.D.O.E., 2003, p. iii). Fleischman, Kohlmoos, and Rotherham (2003) assert scientific research "can yield reliable and replicable findings that build confidence in the effectiveness (or failure) of the many alternatives advocated or practiced in education" and that, "These findings should increase the willingness of policymakers and educators to make required changes or stick with proven, albeit often

difficult reforms” (paragraph 13). In the era of reform and data based decision making, Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) conclude, “To flourish in this era, superintendents will need to create an environment that values evidence-based educational practices and work to better prepare school district employees to participate in research and evaluation and apply research-based school improvement techniques” (p. 196).

Preparation and Social Justice

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) state, “As state and federal policymakers undertake reforms to ensure that no children are left behind, a host of academic and professional associations are placing renewed emphasis on narrowing the achievement gap and enhancing equity for all students” (pp. 196-197). They contend there is evidence that external pressure from such groups as the National Council for the Accreditation of Colleges of Teacher Education (NCATE) “have helped to increase preparation programs’ attention to diversity and social justice issues” (p. 197). Several researchers (Berg, Gaynor, Grogan, & McGrevin, 1999; Kochan, Jackson, & Duke, 1999; Prestine, 1997) believe the problems school leaders face are rooted in societal problems; problems such as poverty, racism, unemployment, drugs, and violence to name a few. Kochan, Jackson, and Duke (1999) believe these problems affect the nature of schools and those who lead them. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) believe many school leaders are not prepared to face issues of social justice. Furthermore, Larson and Ovando (2001) believe many superintendents come to believe social injustice in society and schools is natural and unavoidable.

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) continue, “Changing demographics, especially when coupled with the push for high-stakes standardized testing and the resulting racial and socioeconomic status (SES) achievement gap, necessitate a rethinking of the way universities prepare school leaders” (pp. 197-198). Rusch (1999) found superintendents are well aware of the increased complexity of the sociology of schools. Because of this Bjork, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2005) argue “superintendents must draw upon the social sciences to understand differing needs and values, expertly disaggregate student test data, are proficient in analysis the causes of social and learning problems, and are proactive in building political coalitions in support of socially just organizational policies and practices” (p. 11).

Another area of change over the past two decades is a re-centering of educational leadership from what Bjork (2003) asserts is a “shift in emphasis from school management to transformational leadership” (p. 23). A key component of this re-centering according to Furman (2003) is the emergence of moral purpose of educational leadership. Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) reviewed criticisms of preparation programs for administrators and reported Murphy and Hawley (2003) “asserted that the profession had drifted from concerns over ethical and moral dimensions of schooling and had lost its heart and soul in the process” (p. 198). In response, Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) report, “several administrator-preparation programs have incorporated or integrated ethics and servant leadership (through both formal coursework and practical applications of case studies) into their master’s and doctoral coursework” (p. 198).

School leadership is a moral enterprise (Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 1991) and ethics and social justice form the core of what superintendents do in their role as applied social scientist and in their efforts to improve policies and educational outcomes for children (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2005) conclude superintendents must become social activists and:

A social justice perspective, with the superintendent acting in their role as applied social scientist and social activist, would enable superintendents to go beyond noting differences and discrimination, and provide them with the skills to take action and to proactively implement socially just policies and practices, to be leaders for social justice. (p. 198)

Communicator

Raymond Callahan's (1962, 1964) work on superintendent role conceptualizations has shaped much of the literature on this important school position. Callahan (1962) did not identify communication as a standalone role conceptualization of the superintendency. Callahan (1962) addressed communication as a normative communication behavior implicit to each of his four identified role conceptualizations (Kowalski & Keedy, 2005). However, since the 1980's there has been mounting evidence that communication has become a core competency for all school administrators (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Gousha & Mannan, 1991). There is also evidence communication practices used by administrators have influenced school culture and productivity (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Petersen & Short, 2002).

Kowalski (2006) reports that, “Historically, communication in school administration has been treated as a skill, that is, something one does well when assuming a role” (p. 47).

Kowalski (2006) points out skills are usually role specific and the nature of the skill is shaped by the role characterization. Because of this, roles have different acceptable behavior. Today however, “administrators are expected to communicate in the same manner regardless of the functions being addressed” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 47). Kowalski (2001) reports that the view of a superintendent as communicator emerged during America’s transition from a manufacturing society.

According to Kowalski and Keedy (2005), “Current communicative expectations reflect a confluence of reform initiatives and the social environment in which they are being pursued” (p. 210). Current reform efforts have centered around state deregulation and district decentralization which has required superintendents to collaborate with internal and external groups to build visions and strategic plans (Kowalski, 2003). Superintendents are being called upon to lead these reform efforts at the district level. Kowalski (2006) believes the school improvement process encourages superintendents to collaborate with principals, teachers, and parents to build a collective vision. Henkin (1993) and Murphy (1994) believe school improvement needs to begin locally and the superintendent is the key factor in the process (Kowalski, 2006). Some superintendents find this responsibility threatening (Carlson, 1996; Kowalski & Keedy, 2005) and intimidating because some topics can produce conflict which must be discussed openly (Carlson, 1996), superintendents believe conflict is bad or they do not have the skills to manage it (Kowalski, 2003b), and superintendents have

experienced failed reform efforts in the past and view current reform efforts with skepticism (Sarason, 1996).

School culture can also be influenced by communication. Scholars such as Conrad (1994) are now showing that culture and communication are linked, “Cultures are communicative creations. They emerge and are sustained by the communicative acts of all employees” (p. 27). Kowalski (1998) pointed out that “culture influences communicative behavior and communicative behavior is instrumental to building, maintaining, and changing culture” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 49).

Kowalski and Keedy (2005) contend accepting the superintendent as a communicator requires a new mindset. One in which “relational communication [is] a pervasive expectation” and the need for “revised preparation programs that groom practitioners to be effective communicators” (p. 221).

Superintendent-School Board Relations

Through reviewing the literature on superintendent role conceptualizations the importance of the relationship between the superintendent and the local board of education became evident. Because of the importance of this relationship and the impact it could have upon my findings, I have chosen to expand my review of literature to the area of superintendent school board relations. There is a great abundance of research on the superintendent and school board relations. This research deals with ways to have a positive relationship with the school board as well as those things which negatively impact superintendent school board relations such as high stakes accountability, community

structure, motivation of board members, and political motives to name a few. The relationship between superintendents and school boards as highlighted in the literature can be very political as well as adversarial in nature and not very positive (Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998; Fusarelli, 2006; Mountford, 2004; Tallerico, 1989). According to Mountford (2008) as cited by Alsbury (2008) this relationship between superintendents and school boards has been fraught with controversy since their inception in the mid-1800s (p. 81). By the Civil War superintendents were agitated with their lack of authority and not being able to implement change without the approval of large diverse boards of education (Mountford, 2008).

Change in school structure complaints continued for the next sixty years (Mountford, 2008). One such conclusion was school boards were not representative of the stakeholders they represented by being largely composed of affluent citizens (Callahan, 1975). Superintendents engaged in heated debates over who should have final authority in decisions regarding school operations (Cuban, 1988). Superintendents' objectives were to gain the power and prestige they thought they deserved (Callahan, 1975). In 1895 after years of debate school boards were reduced in size and superintendents were give control over instructional programs as school boards were to decide policy and daily operation of schools was given to administrators (Mountford, 2008). Even with the 1950s onward governmental involvement began to increase in public schools (Mountford, 2008).

As math and science scores began to drop and with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the federal government began to take away many policy decisions from local school

boards and their power diminished even more (Mountford, 2008). Because of high stakes accountability measures like No Child Left Behind, present day school boards make fewer and fewer decisions but are held responsible for the academic performance of their students and for this purpose school boards are more dependent on the superintendent to keep them informed of changes in state and federal mandates (Mountford, 2008). Hence, the current climate has produced a strong incentive for better relations and collaboration between school boards and superintendents. Recent reports such as Goodman and Zimmerman's (2000) stated:

Strong, collaborative leadership by local school boards and school superintendents is a key cornerstone of the foundation for student achievement. If this country is serious about improving student achievement and maximizing the development of all its children, then local educational leadership teams, superintendents and school board members, must work cooperatively and collaboratively to mobilize their communities to get the job done. (cited in Mountford, 2008, p. 85)

Bird (2010) views today's superintendents as having to operate in a highly charged political area. Mountford (2004) reported the relationship between the superintendent and school boards is often viewed as arduous and challenging, yet researchers have not been able to agree on the causes of these difficulties in the school board superintendent relationship (Kowalski, 1995; McCurdy, 1992; Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974). Fusarelli (2006) through her case study research showed superintendents must be able to accurately read the

culture of the board and community and be willing to build positive relationships with these individuals to be successful as a leader. Those who are unwilling to do this are unable to lead because no one will follow them (Fusarelli, 2006). Bjork and Lindle (2001, p. 80) reported the means of sustaining office as a superintendent are tied to understanding the nature of the community (Boyd, 1976; Iannacone & Lutz, 1995; McCarty & Ramsey, 1971).

Community Factors in School Board Superintendent Relations

Education is a very public process with many participants. How a superintendent manages the intellectual capital of these participants is very important (Bird, 2010, p. 47). McCarty and Ramsey (1971) were two of the first researchers to look into the relationship between superintendents and school boards. Their study approached the understanding of superintendent board relations by an analysis of community political structures (Bjork & Lindle, 2001). McCarty and Ramsey (1971) hypothesized that superintendents would adapt their leadership style to fit community and board types. They divided the community power structure into four types: Dominant, Factional, Pluralistic, and Inert. Fractional communities produced fractional boards and led superintendents to adopt a political strategist role.

Several researchers (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Johnson, 1996; Malen, 1995; Murphy, 1990) have concluded most communities are fractional because of increasing community diversity including economic, religious, racial, and ethnic interests. According to McCarty and Ramsey (1971), in these communities a superintendent must be a political strategist and find ways to meet and balance the needs of each community group. Pluralistic communities produce status congruent boards and professional advisor superintendents

where they offer expert advice on the immediate issue at hand which threatens to galvanize the divisions within the community (Bjork & Lindle, 2001). McCarty and Ramsey (1971) found that inert communities were inactive. In these communities the board would go along with the superintendent's decisions as long as those decisions did not disturb the status quo (McCarty & Ramsey, 1971).

Bjork and Lindle (2001) found through the review of American Association of School Administrator data for 2001, superintendents reported most communities were either pluralistic or inert. This data was aligned with McCarty and Ramsey's 1971 study except in the area of perception where the majority of superintendents perceived their board as inert or fractional. This provided evidence most superintendents are having to practice politically savvy decision making to balance the needs of all stakeholders or not make proposals which challenge the status quo. Bjork and Lindle (2001) pointed out there is a rising influence of interest group politics on the work of superintendents.

The research of Iannacone and Lutz (1995) as well as McCarty and Ramsey (1971) did point out that communities go through transitions from time to time and the community power structure will not always remain the same.

Conflict Between School Boards and Superintendents

Mountford (2008) presented an interesting historical perspective in her research on the relationship between superintendents and school boards, along with the most cited reasons in the literature for controversy and conflict between the two. Massachusetts passed the first legislation giving towns authority to create committees designed to supervise schools

(Mountford, 2008). This administrative structure came in the form of superintendents who were given assigned duties but the majority of control remained in the hands of the school boards with formal control over local schools by the state or federal government being nonexistent (Callahan, 1975; Campbell et al., 1985). While visiting Prussia, former Massachusetts state superintendent Horace Mann was impressed with their school governance structure where the kingdoms were divided into districts with each having a commissioner (Mountford, 2008). Mann believed Prussia's success came from its high level of supervision within each district (Mountford, 2008). He also believed this high level of supervision increased student achievement scores (Callahan, 1975; Campbell et al., 1985). Mann, through the creation of a commission to study the issue and through the arguing of his case, successfully lobbied the state of Massachusetts to divide itself by geographical regions and district superintendents were appointed (Callahan, 1975).

Role Confusion

Mountford (2008) went on in her work giving a brief synopsis of the historical sources as well as the most widely cited reasons for tension between superintendents and school boards. According to Mountford (2008) the most commonly cited reason for poor relations between a superintendent and a school board is role confusion (ECS, 1999; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kaplan, 1989; National School Boards Association, 1996). School boards had total governance authority over the daily operations of schools several years ago, but today their role has shifted to policy making (Mountford, 2008). But, as pointed out by Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) school boards rarely initiate policy because it is most often

formulated by the state or the superintendent and brought to the board only after its formulation. Zeigler and Jennings (1974, p. 85) conducted a comprehensive study on school boards and concluded:

School boards have largely ceased to exercise their representative and policy making functions; for the most part they do not govern, but merely legitimate the policy recommendations of school superintendents. Thus, according to this view, the public, democratic control of education has been reduced to little more than a sham. (as cited in Mountford, 2008, p. 86)

As school boards' policy making functions have been bypassed by superintendents, state, and federal initiatives (Carver, 1997), school board members have become confused as to their role (Mountford, 2008). This, as reported by Mountford (2008), has led to micromanagement by board members and has caused controversy, which has caused mistrust and damaged collaboration between superintendents and school boards.

Power Struggles

In addition to role confusion, power struggles cause problems for superintendent-school board relations. Researchers have pointed out school board members who try to exert control over others as well as not seeking input from others before coming to a consensus on an issue can create poor intra-board relations (Danzberger, 1987; Danzberger et al., 1992). Boyd (1975) concluded power struggles emerge between those board members who seek to ensure district accountability versus those who wish to advance their own personal agenda. In some cases power struggles emerge when board members seek to control school personnel

including the superintendent for the purpose of advancing their personal agenda (Mountford, 2008). It is pointed out in the literature school board members do not hold formal power as an individual but only as a collective of individuals (Alsbury, 2008; Mountford, 2008). It is also pointed out that school board members must work as a collective and engage in collaborative decision making, but many have not received any formal training on collaboration and several superintendents have not received any formal training also (Mountford & Ylimaki, 2005). Yet, as Mountford (2008) points out these board members are expected to make group decisions, not individual decisions, and practice group processes the moment they join the board.

Questionable Motives

Questionable motives for service have been cited as a reason for superintendent-school board conflict. Studies suggest many board members run for board seats for reasons which are not altruistic in nature (Mountford, 2008). McCarty and Ramsey (1971) found people were motivated for both personal, altruistic, and a mix of these two types. Alby (1979) conducted a study which found five reasons people were motivated for board service: (a) specific problem needs correcting, (b) civic interest, (c) recognition or prestige, (d) a need to belong, or (e) the member has been recruited. Alby concluded in his study that half of the board members ran for personal reasons and the other half for altruistic reasons (Mountford, 2008).

Equality of Representation

Equality of representation is another cited area of conflict. The lack of representativeness on school boards has been pointed out in several research studies (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Hess, 2002). According to the 2002 State of the Superintendency, “Unrepresentative governing bodies have been long a problem in the United States, with Blacks and women having been the most grossly underrepresented group” (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000, p. 35). Mountford (2008) points out it could be argued school boards should represent the demographics of the community and taxpayers they serve, but the students are directly affected; therefore, governing bodies should represent the demographic of the student population.

New Generation of School Board Members

With the majority of new board members now from the baby boomer generation this has been cited (Mountford, 2008; McCurdy, 1992) to produce the next cause of controversy between superintendents and school board members. This generational gap has produced what Mountford (2008) cites as a change in philosophical orientation. This change in philosophical orientation, according to McCurdy (1992), has added to a lack of cohesion on school boards because this baby boomer generation is more likely to seek change which benefits their own demographic group (Mountford, 2008). The traditional board member saw himself or herself as an institutional trustee (Danzberger et al., 1992), where today’s board members are serving more for personal reasons (Mountford, 2008).

“Beliefs, interests, or agendas can often dictate a particular style of decision making and/or approach to leadership by school board members” (Mountford, 2008, p. 88). A study by Eulau and colleagues (1959) concluded board members have three styles of decision making. These styles include trustee, delegate, and politico. Trustee style is described as following one’s conscience, delegate as following instructions from another or political party, and politico as making decisions using both trustee and delegate styles (Mountford, 2008). Tallericco (1989) found “some board members operate in a political world where compromise and special interests dominate, while others weigh information in relation to community interest” (Mountford, 2008, p. 89). Board members with these different styles of decision making can cause “decision-making processes wrought with disparities” (Mountford, 2008, p. 89). “Kowalski (1995) suggested these disparate beliefs would create muddled expectations for superintendents and likely ensure some type of role conflict between school board members and superintendents” (Mountford, 2008, p. 89).

Increased Accountability

Increasing state and federal accountability systems is another area cited by Mountford (2008) as causing conflict between superintendents and school boards. According to Mountford (2008):

Zeigler et al. (1974), Goodman and Zimmerman (2000), and Education Commission of the States (ECS) (1999) reported that contemporary school board members feel devalued because the state has become increasingly

involved in local district decisions and has simultaneously increased the level of district accountability. (p. 89)

Mountford continues:

In fact, the ECS (1999) maintains that, even though board members are encouraged to be creative in their decision-making processes and advised to play an active role in setting policy that will result in increased student achievement, decisions made outside the parameters of state or federal legislation can wind up getting the district penalized by state or federal government agencies. (Mountford, 2008, p. 89)

Because of this, boards frequently “rubber stamp” the recommendations of the superintendent in order to avoid sanctions or penalties (Mountford, 2008).

Increased Resistance for Board Service and Apathy

The last area covered by Mountford (2008) as an area for controversy or strife between superintendents and school boards is increased resistance for board service and apathy. Mountford (2008) points out that many of these areas for tension that have been mentioned above causes board members to be reluctant to run for school board seats and for those sitting members it cause them to be apathetic to their job and the responsibilities which they have. Several researchers (ECS, 1999; Lutz & Merz, 1992; Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974) point out:

Low numbers of school board candidates, low voter turnout at school board elections, and the short tenures of board members due to frequent and rapid

resignations by school board members is indicative of the apathy toward school board service and the public's general disinterest in improving American education. (cited in Mountford, 2008, p. 90)

Mountford (2008) goes on citing the research of Goodman and Zimmerman (2000) and McCurdy (1992) to show even those citizens who would still like to run in an effort to induce change become discouraged by simply rubber stamping superintendents' decisions. Apathetic reactions can add additional stress to superintendents' school board relations (Mountford, 2008).

A Political Climate for Reform

Petersen and Fusarelli (2008), in their work "Systemic Leadership amidst Turbulence: Superintendent-School Board Relations under Pressure", note that "local boards of education are evidence of the fundamental relationship between schools and local communities" (p. 115). According to Petersen and Fusarelli (2008), school boards are entrusted by the public to work with the superintendents to do what is in the best interest of students and this form of decision making mirrors the long tradition of democratic decision making within the United States. Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) stress that the "press for reform has changed the landscape of district politics and decision making" (p. 115). Johnson (2003), as cited by Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) notes that *A Nation at Risk* and other reports launched the most intense and sustained effort to reform education in American history. This reform effort has produced questions about the functions of school boards, their relationship with the district superintendent, and their role in policy making, as well as issues of power, effectiveness, and

compatibility with modern reforms (Kowalski, 2006 as cited by Petersen and Fusarelli, 2008).

Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) also point out in their work that there are those who support lay governance by a school board because it provides access for all citizens at a local level to democratic government and at the grassroots level this form of government is responsive to the needs of its stakeholders. There are also critics who question the usefulness of school boards given the current climate of political reform that has been mandated on schools (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008). Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) note the importance of school board governance by adding:

Whether effective or ineffective, school board governance plays a significant role in public education. The task of school boards in determining the general control and direction of the district, ensuring accountability, establishing process for the articulation and adoption of policies, and providing community leadership are the building blocks of effective district leadership (p. 116).

Importance of Successful School Board Superintendent Relations

Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) note there has been a substantial amount of research indicating the superintendent's success is dependent on the relationship he or she has with the board president or chair (Allison, Allison, & McHenry, 1995; Campbell & Greene, 1994; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996; Peterson & Short, 2001; 2002) and that of the board of education (Berg, 1996; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Danzberger, 1994; Feuerstein & Opfer, 1998; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998; Kowalski, 2006; McCurdy, 1992; Norton et al., 1996;

Tallerico, 1989). “A poor relationship between the superintendent and the board of education can affect the district’s ability to meet its goals and to engage in systemic reform” (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008, pp. 116-117).

Poor superintendent-school board relations deter school improvement (Danzberger, Kirst, and Usdan, 1992), affect the quality of educational programs (Boyd, 1976; Nygren, 1992), increase conflict over district instructional goals and objectives (Morgan and Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999), weaken district stability and morale (Renchler, 1992), negatively influence the superintendent’s credibility and trustworthiness with board members (Petersen and Short, 2001; 2002; Peterson and Williams, 2005), impede critical reform efforts, such as district restructuring (Konnert and Augenstein, 1995), collaborative visioning, and long-range planning (Kowalski, 2006), and eventually result in an increase in the “revolving door syndrome” of district superintendents (Carter and Cunningham, 1997; Renchler, 1992). (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008, p. 117)

As Petersen and Short (2001, 2002) report it is also important for a superintendent to have credibility, social attractiveness, assertiveness, and emotiveness as part of their leadership style as these better enable the superintendent to gain board support (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008). Superintendents must also be able to engage with multiple policy makers. Fusarelli (2005) believes this skill to be essential to their success. Superintendents must also

be able to engage in the political arena and adopt political strategies when dealing with board members as well as staff and community members (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008).

The politics of the relationship between a superintendent and school board has become even more important in an increasingly diverse educational community. Grogan and Sherman (2003) as cited by Petersen and Fusarelli (2008), “note that superintendents, even those who are successful, lack enough personal power to single-handedly achieve their goals; they must work with and through others to operate effectively” (p. 117). When superintendents are building relationships and alliances with multiple actors this is not a political maneuver but a vital part of their job and leadership skill (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008). Several researchers (Blumberg, 1985; Crowson, 1987; Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974) have shown that although the relationship between superintendents and school board members is very important the more critical area is the ability of the superintendent to influence a school board’s policy decisions.

Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) state that “systemic reform is dependent upon a good working relationship between a superintendent and the school board; therefore, how school boards make decisions is a critical factor impacting that relationship” (p. 118). School boards still have considerable power at the local level when it comes to school governance. This power can be used to move school systems forward or produce gridlock and strife. Several studies (Bullard & Taylor, 1993; Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Wirt & Kirst, 2005) have emphasized the importance of school boards in the educational process of a school district. Cuban (1976) points out school boards are unpaid

and work part time. School boards are often untrained and the training they have, they may have received from the superintendent (Cuban, 1976). Because of this, school boards rely on the professional judgment of the superintendent (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008).

Several studies have been conducted which attempt to classify the orientations of school boards in relation to their influence on decision making and school governance (Bjork & Lindle, 2001; Greene, 1992; Lutz and Gresson, 1980; Tucker & Zeigler, 1980). Other studies (Hentges, 1986; McCarty & Ramsey, 1971; Nowakowski & Frist, 1989; Scribner & Englert, 1977; Zeigler, Jennings, & Peak, 1974) have addressed the conflicts between board members, expectations, and responsibilities and have also addressed board members willingness to defer to the expertise of the superintendent with policy decisions (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008). Greene (1992), as cited by Petersen and Fusarelli (2008), showed the role of school boards in district governance depends on their acceptance of the superintendent's claims to expertise on specific issues.

Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) point out that in the current political climate and dynamics of a school reform movement several authors have concluded school boards may no longer be pragmatic or a necessity. Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) cite Glass (2001) who found only 30 percent of superintendents felt the current school governance model should remain in place in its current form, with 68 percent indicating there needed to be serious restructuring or it should be completely replaced.

According to Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) criticism of school boards is centered around three issues: local representation, instability, and incompatibility with school reform.

Local representation according to Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) is at the heart of the democratic ideal. Some citizens feel boards no longer communicate or represent them (Danzberger, Krist, & Usdan, 1992). Others feel membership often consists of powerful elites (Wirt & Kirst, 2005). People also feel boards are easily influenced and under the control of teachers unions and political organizations (Moe, 2005).

Kowalski (2006) as cited by Petersen and Fusarelli (2008) reported the political nature of the superintendent-school board relationship has been identified as a barrier to school reform. Limited tenure of many superintendents and district leadership teams reduces their effectiveness in implementing needed changes (Kowalski, 2006). Glass (2002) found 64 percent of board presidents reported a turnover of three or more superintendents in the previous 10 years and Hess (2002) found 56 percent of sitting board presidents would not seek reelection or were undecided about reelection. Bjork and Lindle (2001) as well as Kowalski (2006) found “turnover in a district creates an environment where political and philosophical differences become more commonplace, often dividing communities and boards into competing factions and leveraging against substantive educational reform” (Petersen & Fusarelli, 2008, p. 120).

Alsbury (2008, p. 261) reported that politically attuned superintendents were able to stay in their position longer than predicted because they were aware of forthcoming politically motivated board turnover and were able to disassociate themselves from those board members before the storm. For a superintendent the relationship they have established with the school board is important as this relationship will also dictate their ability to manage

and implement change (Fusarelli & Petersen, 2001; Kowalski, 1995, 1999; Petersen & Short, 2001). This relationship from what I have gleaned from the literature is dependent on having a solid foundation of trust and openness (Bird, 2010). According to Fusarelli (2006, p. 52),

a precarious relationship [between a superintendent and his or her school board] deters school improvement (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992), affects the quality of educational programs (Boyd, 1976; Nygren, 1992), increases conflict over district instructional goals and objectives (Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999), weakens district stability and morale (Renchler, 1992), negatively influences the superintendent's credibility and trustworthiness with board members (Petersen & Short, 2001), impedes critical reform efforts such as district restructuring (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995), and collaborative visioning and long-range planning (Kowalski, 1999), as well as eventually resulting in an increase in the "revolving door syndrome" of district superintendents (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Rencher, 1992). (p. 283)

Summary

The review of the literature has expounded upon the role conceptualizations of the superintendent. The review looked at both the historical and current role conceptualizations of superintendents as well as the most commonly cited sources of conflict between superintendents and school board members. The literature is important to my research as I will use Kowalski's historical role conceptualizations as

a theoretical framework to identify the roles current superintendents in North Carolina are operating from. I will dig deeper into the lived experiences of selected individual superintendents to pull out sources of conflicts within those roles. I hope to paint a picture of what a highly successful superintendent looks like in North Carolina. In Chapter Three I will discuss the methods I will use to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts are doing today. Through qualitative methods informed by the research, the researcher conducted a case study of selected superintendents from low wealth districts in North Carolina to develop a clear picture of how these low wealth district superintendents compare to the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent today. The researcher endeavored to understand how much time superintendents spent operating from each role, what factors influenced the roles they operated from, and did a new role conceptualization emerge for this group of superintendents.

Research Design

Being able to compare the historical role conceptualizations of superintendents to what active low wealth district superintendents do within the state of North Carolina was a complex and highly detailed research ambition. Because of this a qualitative research approach was best. According to Creswell (2007) “qualitative research is used when quantitative measures and the statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem” (p. 40). I believed in this case the previous to be true. Only qualitative research methods could be used to compare the historical superintendent role conceptualizations with what current superintendents of low wealth school districts in North Carolina do today, and dig even

deeper by trying to understand where these superintendents spend their time as well as what current factors influence this.

Qualitative Research Defined

Before I move further, let me briefly explain a little about qualitative research and when is the best time to use qualitative research methods. According to Creswell (2007) researchers (Morse & Richards, 2002, 2007; Weis & Fine, 2000) have written books about qualitative research but their definition of qualitative research is hard to locate. According to Creswell (2007), “Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 37). Creswell (2007) continues, “To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes” (p. 37). The writings of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) support qualitative research being conducted in a natural setting; “This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Creswell (2007) examined three introductory qualitative research books and listed the qualitative research characteristics they had in common. Qualitative research is conducted in the natural setting where the participants experience the issue being studied (Creswell, 2007;

Hatch, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). According to Creswell (2007), “This up close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research” (p. 37).

In qualitative research the researcher is the key instrument and collects data themselves (Hatch, 2002) by studying documents, observing behavior, or conducting interviews (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers use multiple sources of data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2006) which could include interviews, observations, and documents; they do not rely on a single data source (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers use inductive data analysis (Hatch, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). According to Creswell (2007) this involves working from the bottom up where data is organized into abstract units of information. The researchers then work with the database to establish a comprehensive set of themes (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007) the process “may also involve collaborating with the participants interactively, so that they have a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerge from the process” (p. 39).

In the qualitative research process the focus is on the participants’ meanings (Hatch, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) and “not the meaning the researcher brings to the research or writers from the literature” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). Qualitative research is an emergent design (Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). “This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or

shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). According to Creswell (2007) qualitative researchers often use a theoretical lens to view their studies. Qualitative research is interpretive inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Creswell (2007) describes this as researchers making an interpretation about what they see, hear and understand but the research cannot separate out their own background and history. Even a reader of a report will interpret it and apply their own meaning to the study so we see how multiple views of a problem could emerge (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, qualitative research involves presenting a holistic account (Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). According to Creswell (2007), “This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges” (p. 39).

When to Use Qualitative Research

According to Creswell (2007) we use qualitative research “because a problem or issue needs to be explored” (p. 39). We use it “because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40).

Creswell (2007) continues:

We also conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature. (p. 40)

Qualitative research is used when the researcher wishes to empower the individual (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research can give the individual a voice and encourages them to share their story (Creswell, 2007). It allows for collaboration between the participants and the researcher by having the participants review the research questions, and participate in the analysis of data collected (Creswell, 2007). In short it is used when quantitative measures do not fit (Creswell, 2007) and for the purpose of this research study quantitative measures will not fit the problem.

Study Design and Data Collection

In this study the researcher sought to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compared to what superintendents in low wealth districts are doing today. Through qualitative methods informed by the research of Raymond Callahan (1966) and Theodore Kowalski (2006), the researcher conducted this case study of selected superintendents from low wealth districts in North Carolina to develop a clear picture of how these low wealth district superintendents compared to the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent. The researcher also endeavored to understand how much time they spent operating from each role, what factors influenced the roles they operated from, and did a new role conceptualization emerging for this group of superintendents. For this study the researcher has chosen to use qualitative research methods which are viewed to be appropriate in an educational setting (Merriam, 1998; Hatch, 2002) where participants will be studied in their natural setting and because quantitative research methods do not fit the problem.

More specifically the researcher used a collective case study approach. “Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). In a collective case study approach the researcher selects multiple cases to illustrate the issue and to show different perspectives on the issue (Creswell, 2007). The first need in a case study research is to identify the cases (Stake, 1995) or in this case the participants. In this study seven subjects who were current superintendents of a low wealth school district in North Carolina were selected as the cases. The research selected these superintendents from the 10 poorest low wealth public school districts in the state. Qualitative research focuses in depth on relatively small samples (Patton, 2002).

To be selected for this study subjects had to be a current superintendent of a low wealth public school district in North Carolina. The researcher looked at the poorest districts which have superintendents who had served in their district for at least two years. These individuals were identified with the help of the president of the North Carolina State Superintendents’ Association, Dr. Jack Hoke and Dr. Edward Croom, former superintendent of Johnston County Schools and Chair of the Leandro Low Wealth Consortium. Dr. Hoke and Dr. Croom collaborated with the researcher to select the best seven superintendents for this study. The researcher then compared the candidates’ qualifications for eligibility in the research study. As qualitative research involves emergent design where the initial plan cannot be tightly prescribed (Creswell, 2007), the local and state level accomplishments of the candidates were not known to the researcher until he had the list of selected candidates from which to review. Geographic proximity to the researcher was not a factor in

determining the participants. The names of the selected subjects were also shared with the researcher's Chair for approval.

Once the seven potential research candidates were selected the researcher approached Dr. Ed Croom for assistance in securing the subjects participation in the study. Dr. Croom sent a group email to the potential research subjects informing them that they would be contacted by the researcher asking them to participate in this research study. Dr. Croom gave the potential subjects some background details about the researcher and the study and asked for them to participate. The researcher then followed up Dr. Croom's email with an individual email to each research subject giving brief details about the study and asking for their participation. All subjects either responded via email or phone call to the researcher to agree to participate.

The researcher then worked with the superintendent's' administrative professional to provide additional details about the student and schedule dates and times for the interviews. With two of the superintendents the researcher was able to speak with them directly to schedule the interviews.

This research study required interviews to be scheduled with each participant over the course of a school semester. Conducting a study which involves interviews took time so a researcher must be committed to extensive time in the field (Creswell, 2007). Each participant was interviewed in their natural setting using a semi-structured technique. Semi-structured interviews offered the participants an opportunity to elaborate on their answers as

well as share stories and examples which shed more light on their lived experiences (Seidman, 2006). The interviews were scheduled for no more than thirty-five to forty five minutes in length where possible. Superintendents have very busy schedules and have many responsibilities so the researcher had to be very flexible. Interviews were scheduled a month in advance with the possibility of scheduling a second date in the event something arose where a participant may have had to cancel. Interview questions were derived from the research on superintendent's historical role conceptualizations.

Data Analysis

Once the first interview had been completed the data analysis began. Because the five historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent were the clear beginning categories for data analysis, the researcher analysed the data with a typological approach. Hatch (2002) describes this approach to data analysis as being used when the researcher has a clear understanding of the topics being addressed by the data. Merriam (2009) believes that the data analysis should begin right after the first interview as qualitative research is an emergent design and the data collected can inform the structure and questions asked in the preceding interviews. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. When looking at the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent the researcher was able to identify certain traits or characteristics specific to each historical role. These traits or characteristics, specific to each role, were then assigned a color code. The researcher then carefully reviewed the data from each interview focusing on the subjects' responses to the semi-structured interview questions. As the researcher came across data matching the identified trait or

characteristic, it was highlighted with the corresponding color code. Once all cases had been carefully reviewed and analysed the researcher next conducted a cross case analysis. The researcher carefully analysed the color coded data for each historical role conceptualization to develop overarching themes. These overarching themes are presented as the findings from this research study in Chapter Four. Also, the direct quotes of the subjects in this study are given in Chapter Four to support the themes. In some quotes a (...) is used to remove the verbal noise such as ums or pauses. The researcher also kept a research journal to record field observations and notes made during the interviews. The journal was used to help develop and support themes in conjunction with the interview transcription data.

Limitations of the Study

The participants represented a population of superintendents from low wealth school districts from across North Carolina. Because of the selected population, all the districts selected happen to be in rural counties located in eastern North Carolina. A superintendent from an urban district or from the western part of the state may view the historical role conceptualizations different or operate differently than those within this study. Larger urban districts may have additional personnel to assist the superintendent when compared to those superintendents from rural, smaller in size districts. This could potentially affect where or from which historical role conceptualization the superintendent operated from.

Additional limitations include focusing on superintendents from low wealth districts, the variance in student population size within the selected districts, as well as the professional experience of each superintendent within the study. All of these factors could

affect the data. Low wealth districts and those with smaller student numbers tend to have fewer resources which could mean the superintendent has to perform different daily tasks when compared to those of a superintendent from a wealthier district. The researcher lists student population size and the experience level of the superintendent as a potential limitation. These two factors did not appear to influence the results of the study but if this study was expanded to a larger sample size across the state the researcher would advise an awareness that these two factors possibly could affect the data gathered.

The additional factor of superintendent effectiveness was not taken into account by the researcher. Accounting for this factor could have involved developing a measure of superintendents' effectiveness by using information such as student test data, teacher retention data, or survey data from those individuals working directly with or under the superintendents in this study. This factor could have potentially been including as a factor which affected the researcher's findings or in the selection process of selected the research subjects. It is plausible that an effective superintendent could provide richer data which could have affected the researcher's findings.

An additional limitation would be the total reliance on the interview data and the anecdotal notes of the researcher and the absence of data against which the participants' statements might be triangulated are also acknowledged as limitations of this case study.

A final limitation is the researcher's lack of experience as an interviewer as well as his own bias derived from his twenty years of experience as a public school, teacher,

administrator, and district level administrator that the researcher heard all the data shared with him and did not unfairly focus on one subject or one theme.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Chapter Four discusses findings of this case study which is to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts within North Carolina are doing today. For this study the researcher used a collective case study approach. “Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). In a collective case study approach the researcher selects multiple cases to illustrate the issue and to show different perspectives on the issue (Creswell, 2007). Participants’ collective perspectives of the historical role conceptualizations along with individual statements that further illustrate perceptions and current roles were examined. Superintendents’ individual responses and direct quotes helped to capture superintendents’ perceptions on current and historical roles of superintendents. Interviews were analyzed and emerging themes or patterns from the interviews will be discussed. Data analysis for this study involved two steps. The first step was a within-case analysis and the second step was a cross-case analysis of the data. According to Creswell (2007), data analysis involves working from the bottom up where data is organized into abstract units of information. The researchers then work with the database to establish a comprehensive set of themes (Creswell, 2007). This study looked for emerging themes to help explain the meaning of the collected data.

Participants

This study placed a focus on the historical role perceptions of current superintendents within North Carolina who are currently working within a low wealth district. To have knowledge of their current role, participants had to have a minimum of two years' experience in their current superintendent position. Having a minimum of two years' experience ensures the participants have a competent level of understanding of the expectations of their position.

The process for selecting participants who were willing to become part of this study involved contacting the president of the North Carolina State Superintendents' Association, Dr. Jack Hoke, and Dr. Edward Croom, superintendent of Johnston County Schools and Chair of the Leandro Low Wealth Consortium. Dr. Hoke and Dr. Croom collaborated with the researcher to select the best five to seven superintendents from low wealth districts for this study. With the assistance of Dr. Croom who emailed each selected participant asked for their participation in the study, the researcher also emailed and called the administrative assistants of each potential participant to make contact and give a brief outline of the study. The researcher then emailed the selected superintendents and their administrative assistants a detailed description of the study and the requirements for participation. Seven superintendents agreed to participate in the study. Participants selected were from the 10 poorest counties within North Carolina. Their experienced ranged from 2 to 8 years on the job. The participants consisted of 6 men and 1 woman, 4 were white and 3 African-American. Their school districts ranged in size from 3,200 students to over 24,000 students. Once they agreed to participate, the researcher worked with each superintendent's

administrative assistant via email or direct phone calls to schedule a date and time for the face-to-face interviews. Interviews were scheduled over a three month period. The researcher travelled to each school system to conduct the interview with the selected superintendent. The researcher traveled a total of 764 miles covering districts from Northeastern North Carolina to Southeastern North Carolina. All the districts were located east of Interstate 95. Interviews were conducted either in the superintendent's office or conference room. Interviews ranged from 35 to 45 minutes and were recorded with a digital recorder. All participants agreed to being recorded. All interviews were conducted within one scheduled appointment without interruption.

Themes

After a thorough examination of the data that included transcribing the interviews, carefully reviewing the transcriptions, reviewing the researcher's handwritten field notes, and coding the transcribed data, three major themes emerged:

1. Superintendents spend a large amount of time operating in the Organizational Manager role, more specifically worried about financial matters.
2. Contrary to Callahan (1966) who said the historical roles of superintendents are bound by time as the superintendent moves out of one role and into the next without intermingling, excluding Organizational Manager from which he said the superintendent is always a manager. This group of superintendents operated from 2 to 3 role conceptualizations at a time at some point during the execution of their duties.

3. A new role conceptualization emerged, the superintendent as the Promoter.

These themes were recurring responses throughout the interviews with participants. Participants may have used different words but they conveyed the same meaning in their answers. These themes were lifted from the data after reviewing and carefully studying the responses to the interview questions developed by the researcher based on each identified historical role of the superintendent. To better understand the major themes and how they were identified we need to first examine the findings for each identified historical role from the data collected.

Teacher-Scholar Findings

Teacher-Scholar is a role of the superintendent first defined by Raymond Callahan (1966) and described as the superintendent being viewed as the “master teacher” or the “teacher of teachers”. This was the first historical role when the position was first established in 1837 in Buffalo, New York, where the superintendent had to ensure a standard level of education for all (Springs, 1994). By the late 1860’s, teachers were asked to emulate their behavior as the “master teacher” (Callahan, 1962).

Current superintendents within this study are no longer “teachers of teachers” or the individual who has all the pedagogical knowledge. When it comes to ensuring a high standard of education within their schools, they see the principal as the most important individual in the process. When speaking about working to turn around his low performing school district, one superintendent stated:

I could tweak a few things but my strategy has always been, I can identify people that have the knowledge and surround myself with those people. Equip them to do what they need to do and trust them to do the work. But it required me to gain some specific knowledge as well so my first several years I had to spend learning, with my sleeves rolled up.

He continued:

Well, I am working with the central office staff and the principals so that they turn it around, and really the principals are the most important folks in the process.

All the superintendents expressed views on the importance of leading by example when asked about improving their scholarly ability or teaching a group of educators or public something on a specific topic. Some read professional journals and are members of their professional organization, The North Carolina Superintendents' Association. With respect to teaching educators, their efforts were focused upon the principal and looking at lots of data as shown by their responses.

I am a big believer in being upfront about the issues and challenges that we have. We always sit down. I lead professional development for our principals on a monthly basis, and with our assistant principals whenever we have leadership academy. We have done that a couple of different ways. The first year I was superintendent here, we had about 200 state employees who came in. We did a week-long academy based upon building a new strategic plan for the district, new school improvement plans, and that was kind of [pause] you know you take a chance when you have 200

strangers looking at you like, “who is this guy?”. We also need to do a lot of listening, looking at data, looking at counterpoints that we have, get a sense of the customers [costs] surrounding. I think that we also do teaching on a one-on-one basis obviously working with our principals.

Another superintendent stated,

I am continually striving to improve my scholarly ability as a leader. Education is an ever changing field, so it is important for a superintendent to keep abreast of changing methodology, legal issues, and pedagogy. There are always opportunities for teaching. I do a monthly book study with my principals.

Another superintendent shared,

I will do little workshops with principals on budget so they understand the budget from the perspective as I see it because it’s different. The other thing I am doing is preparing just right now, we’re doing a study group with the principals because I’m not satisfied with the amount of community engagement, family and community engagement that we have in the schools.

Another superintendent offered his insight into his role as Teacher-Scholar:

When I became superintendent, what we did was, I went back and looked at the test data from every angle and every way you could look at the test data down to individual schools, individual teachers, and individual kids. What I was looking for, first of all, was to see if there were any patterns and of course any particular areas that we were doing extremely poor in, and of course to see if there were any areas that the

principals maybe hadn't done as good a job as they should have. I brought each principal in individually and went over the test data with them. Then we broke it down to a point where we were talking about an individual child, from there to teachers, and then on up to the principal. So to me that was good teaching time in showing them that I was knowledgeable and I had a lot of knowledge of their data to a point where I could even tell them what teachers were showing weakness in certain areas, that if a teacher was showing weakness in probability, math.

The participants also mentioned educating or teaching their community as well as the school board in some cases about educational issues or concerns their respective school district faced. All examples shared were not pedagogical in nature. Rather, superintendents were seeking to educate community stakeholders or share their position on potential concerns their district faced, head off a potential problem, or rally their community for increased support potentially for a new district initiative. This is most evident in one superintendent's response to their efforts to turn around their low performing school district, the Common Core transition within the state, and how North Carolina's letter grades for school performance affect their district.

But even with the work that we put in and made some massive improvements we were judged by our 2009 results which was after my first year, as there are no silver bullets, but we went into district transformation. But basically, I sold it to the public and the board as saying okay, we're in this, now let's be the best transformation district of however many there were and turns out that's what we did. We were the

number one most improving transformation district, exited transformation and have continued to make gains. I spent a lot of time teaching the community, teaching I guess about the fallacy of the school performance grades. You see the stacks of brochures, (pointing to a small table in the office) last year I spent several thousand dollars creating these colorful brochures that extol the virtues of our school system that are not captured in the school performance grade. Luckily we didn't have any F's, but we didn't really have that many great grades that I'd want to take home to my mom on the report card either so I had to spend a lot of time. I did it in a proactive way preemptively before the grades were released, and I said based on my calculations this is what I think we're going to get, and here is why this is misleading, and I out in the community, the churches and civic groups and whatever. The chamber has these brochures and I presented to the chamber. I did a lot of work to try and get ahead of that and mitigate the damage and really when the grades came out we didn't have any issues.

Still another superintendent was seeking to educate his community on the pros and cons of year rounds schools as he sought for one or more of his elementary schools to transition to a year round calendar. He stated:

We have been talking about going year round for a couple of our schools. I was a year round principal for four years. So, I am really leading that initiative becoming a year round school. Talking about the benefits, talking about the drawbacks to it, talking about what could be the negative perceptions from the public, what could be the

positive perceptions from the public. So I am really leading the initiative of us looking at [a] year round calendar for one of our elementary schools.

The superintendent went on to share that he is educating his stakeholders through community meetings, talking to parent teacher groups, as well as forming a committee to lead the year round school effort.

Based on the data gained and presented from the research, the researcher would conclude that while this group of superintendents is leading professional development activities for their principals and conducting informative sessions for their stakeholder groups, they do not fit the Teacher-Scholar role defined by Callahan (1966). Their activities are limited when it comes to interaction with actual classroom teachers. Only one reported actually conducting staff development with teachers and it was focused on district topics, not classroom pedagogy. The finding is consistent with Callahan's (1966) finding that the Teacher-Scholar role is bound by time and superintendents no longer operate from this role.

Organizational Manager Findings

The Organizational Manager role was defined by Callahan (1966) where the superintendent is viewed as running a business where they must increase operational efficiency pertaining to fiscal policy, facility management, etc. During the industrial revolution when schools began to resemble the factory model, scientific management theory began to be used in school administration (Callahan, 1962). These business principles greatly influenced the superintendency (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002) and during the 1920's many superintendents pushed for administrative work to be seen as more important than

being an instructional leader (Thomas & Moran, 1992). Superintendents now took on the role of “organizational manager”. This role happens to be the one role Callahan (1966) concludes is not bound by time. His view was a superintendent was and is always an organizational manager.

Within the cases studied the researcher found clear evidence the superintendents operate from the Organizational Manager role daily. This became evident when fiscal issues were discussed. When asked by the researcher how often do they think about or are concerned about a fiscal issue several laughed and responded, “Every day”. Some had lengthy examples of the concerns they were facing.

One superintendent was very concerned about funding. He described the following scenario where he had to elicit the help of his local legislatures to have his district's small county supplemental funding (PRC 19) restored.

Every day (thinks about finances), I will tell you I've got a big one going right now this year. You know about low wealth consortium, there is also one for small schools called the small county supplemental fund and it is PRC 19. For years that was given to districts that had a certain number (of students) and I don't remember (the number); it was a very esoteric number of students in the district, like 3,319. I don't know how you get to that, that's not the number. But if you had a certain tax rate above the state average you could go up to 4,001 students and be protected. Well in 2012 I think it was, the General Assembly in their infinite wisdom took out all the language about the tax base which is what protected us, because we are right on the

border and they put a hard number of students, 3,200. So we finished last year with 3,146 students. I felt like we were going to be ok but you know we got our projections late and they projected us to have 3,240 some students. Well, we have never grown a hundred students while I have been superintendent; anyway, we average anywhere from around 2% (student growth) but since the recession even that has slowed a little bit. We get one and a half million dollars from the small county supplemental fund and if you go over the 3,200 mark you go into what is called phase out so you could lose 20% a year for five years. So of course I'm wound up. Because that's phase 20% is 310,000 or 320,000 dollars for us. So I call Raleigh and they say oh don't worry after the first school month if you are under then your money will be restored just like your other allotments. So I had my legislators and lobbyists all ready to try to pass some language to try to protect us but I said don't worry about it guys we're going to be under just wait and see and they'll restore it. Well after the first school month we had 3,160 some kids. So I said we are good. Call up to Raleigh; oops we told you something wrong it's after the second school month and we look at the better of first and second school month (the month with the lowest student number). Okay, I will wait another month. End of October, still under, 3,160 some kids. Call Raleigh; oops we told you something wrong you won't get that money until your number at the end of the school year is under 3,200. I said enough of this BS here. So I got my legislators, lobbyists back involved; finally got them into the Chief Financial Officer's office. One of our representatives is the majority whip of the

house and I was going to use him because he was the most powerful and the only Republican who can get something done. My other representative and senator are both Democrats and they want to do things and help but realistically they can't get anything done right now because of the way the leadership is. So you ride the horse that will get you the farthest. So the Chief Financial Officer was going to meet with these two guys in December. He called my lobbyist, who is my county's lobbyist and he also happens to represent the small county fund. He (Chief Financial Officer) asked for a courtesy meeting with my lobbyist and my lobbyist finally got [us] in the Tuesday before Christmas which was like the 22nd or something like that, I don't remember exactly the day but it was a Tuesday. They went round and round and finally the Chief Financial Officer outlined a path that we could get our money returned to us which was for June Atkinson and Bill Colby the State Board Chair to write letters to the director of the Office of State Budget Management which has changed since then. That guy quit and another one has come on and gets the Governor to release the funds for us. They have over a billion dollars sitting out there, 300,000 won't even make them blink. So, from what I understand we have been given, the office of State Budget Management has verbally approved it but they won't give me anything in writing. I was supposed to get the money in an allotment transfer a month ago but haven't gotten it. I got an allotment revision in an email over the weekend, 19 was not in it, so I have emailed my lobbyist again over the weekend and he is supposed to be working on it but I cannot balance my budget this year without that

300,000 dollars and that's how tight and close in a small district things can get. You know if I can put 15,000 dollars a year, which is not even a salary, toward the fund balance we've done a good day's work. We spend everything we possibly can; we push the resources toward the classroom and I'm not going to worry a whole lot about holding money back because that means somebody suffering or not getting everything and still we don't get everything we need and the philosophy of the board is in line with that.

When this superintendent was asked whether he thinks he is running a business, he responded:

Well that's funny that I ..., yes and my auditor who audits several school systems in this area tells my board every year that I am way more involved in the budget than any other superintendent with whom he works and that's because of necessity. When you're working toward a number as tightly as we are I've got to know. I have spreadsheet sheets; I've got stacks and stacks of documents here where I calculate down to the penny every salary, what funding source it is coming from, how much money we're going to have left over. I have chart paper all over the wall, people in and out, so I have to stay involved. I don't like it. I couldn't be a CPA but I know it is part of my job and at the end of the day I'm responsible for those numbers working out. So I want to know myself, reasonably well that they're going to work out. So once I get the budget then I give it to the finance officer and it's her job to monitor it. I set it up

and make sure it works out now she's supposed to let me know when we're having problems.

One superintendent expressed a concern related to his fund balance and staff reductions in force to make ends meet. He stated:

I am worrying about one right now (financial issue). Our fund balance has been shrinking. So that is really at the forefront of my mind and that is what I am spending most of my days working with now. Working with our fund balance. We need to reduce some personnel. We have been doing it through attrition because that is the cleanest way to do it. We are still living like it's 1999 and all the money is flowing from the state and that is simply not the case anymore. We don't have the local money coming in like a Johnston, or a Durham, or a Wake. So, we have had to scale some things back. We have really had to scale some things back. That fund balance ... it really worries me, and concerns me and keeps me up at night. Because if you get to a certain level, where it lowers to a certain level, I know people are going to start panicking and I don't want that to happen. I don't want that to happen. So we are being very strategic. We are going to keep investing in our kids and our students. We are going to be very strategic in our personal hires. We have consolidated some positions. We have gone to some schools and as people retire we have eliminated some positions. We have transferred some people. Where there are vacancies here and we thought we didn't need it there. We have done that as well. Things like that don't make you popular, because people get to living a certain way at a certain

school. But you gotta do what you gotta do when you sit in this chair. Honestly, I didn't think about that when I was a principal. When I was a teacher, I had no concern. I knew what I was supposed to get paid per month. I'd look and say ok, that is right, that is fine. But as you look deep and you see budget codes on your paycheck stubs and that money is coming from somewhere, and when you sit in this chair, you got the whole 40,000 foot view of the financial situation. You realize, you better get it right and you better get it right the first time, cause you may not have a second time. He also lamented on some mistakes he made when feeling like he was running a business and not remembering the human factor.

One of the mistakes I made with school merger, I kept talking about money and the parents didn't want to hear that. Some didn't want to hear anything. They just wanted to keep the schools separate, but some wanted to hear how this merger is going to help my child academically. I gave them some of that, but the thing I kept saying is financially we can't do this. It goes back to when I was a teacher, people don't concern themselves with your financial situation. That is your problem to figure out. You have my child every day. How is this merger going to be beneficial to them when they are going from two high schools to one? And then the light sort of clicked on and we started talking about increased course offerings, more advanced placement offerings, closing achievement gaps, things like that.

Two superintendents expressed concerns about staff reductions as well as charter school competition when discussing their involvement with finances.

Finance is always a worry, especially during these times of budget cuts locally, state and federal. Our most pressing financial issue currently is that caused by a new charter school, which has pulled over 200 students from our elementary schools. With an already dwindling population, this has put additional stress on our district. Additionally, the late budget approval by the state causes many problems, especially hiring of teachers. School districts are businesses and must be run as a business; however, I never lose sight of what the priority is---the education of our children. With the increasing need for superintendents to attend to “business”, it is easy to devote less time to student learning.

Another superintendent stated,

I just came from a faculty meeting where obviously how much reduction in force in 4.7 million dollars in the last five years is a concern. So what matters to me was that it is a responsibility that you do have to know all the details. You don't need to know every single line in the Title I budget, but you got to know what you can spend out of there. What the aims are in Title I budget, Title II, and so on. So to me, that is one where you have to invest the amount of time to know your facts and figures because you're talking about pretty big decisions when it comes to money.

Reflecting on increased competition for students a superintendent noted,

That (charter school) has been a tremendous challenge here. The year before I became superintendent, the charter school picked up a former administrator who left on not such good terms, said I am going to get you Mr. & Mrs. Board Member. I am going

to open a charter school. One thousand kids left the school system before I came, and with that, was another 2.4 million dollars. So it has been a constant battle. The best year, we had relatively three million dollars or so, we had to put up front from our fund balance in order to maintain the staff that we had. That was a roll of the dice also to take that tremendous leap. Fortunately when you are in the superintendent's role, the one person that you have to count on is your finance officer. You don't sleep at night if you don't have a good finance officer.

The superintendents also worried about efficiency within their system and making every dollar work for their students. One expressed concerns over funding to many professional development activities for his teachers and scaling back to focus on just a few district wide activities. He also expressed a concern over using funds to acquire needed technology for their low performing school districts and planning in advance on the best way to use their funds. He shared:

I think finance is always having a pulse of where you are at and what your direction is going to be. We spent a year and a half with studying what we would do with that and explore with a Digital Ready Initiative.

The superintendents' concerns over finances extended to school facilities and board involvement as well, demonstrated by this response:

I say that and the reason why is because being an assistant in this school district over the last seven to eight years with the cuts we lost about 48 million dollars. We have worried about the finances from day one as an assistant, even up until the beginning

date that I became superintendent. We are still worrying about the finances. When you have decisions on whether you will be able to hire assistants, teacher assistants, those are all problems that you are faced with as a superintendent. When you got a board saying, I need you to keep them, and you're saying, I don't have the money. Financial problems have been an issue with me from day one. Trying to keep everything going, trying to keep it at a level that our kids are going to receive the education they need and everything else that goes along with that, including staffing. Then trying to keep the board happy with the finances for our district. We just happen to go through a five year study of needs for our district and you are talking about 110,000,000 dollars' worth of needs. You have a little bit of money; you try to balance how I am going to spend this money. Is it going to be in this district, or this district? What is the biggest need? Who has the most need? How are we going to get the bang for our buck? All of that has been a headache since day one.

Based on the data collected and presented from the research, the researcher has concluded the superintendents within this study do operate from the Organizational Manager role. Within this role their time is mainly occupied with financial concerns. They spend time every day discussing fiscal issues. As evident by the group's responses, fiscal concerns affect many aspects of the school system's operation. Superintendents touched upon hiring of personnel, professional development for staff, technology needs of students, facility needs, as well as lobbying for continued funding for their system. It is evident fiscal concerns touch many areas within the daily operations of a school system. With school boards in North

Carolina not possession taxing authority superintendents have to work with local county commissioners to develop yearly school budgets. Beyond developing the budget the superintendent depends greatly upon the financial officer to oversee the daily execution of the budget. When asked about other manager type activities such as daily facility maintenance items, all the superintendents have individuals designated to handle those items and rarely get involved. This finding is consistent with Callahan's (1966) conclusion that superintendents are still Organizational Managers, albeit with a strong focus upon fiscal issues.

Democratic Leader Findings

The Democratic Leader role of a superintendent first defined by Raymond Callahan (1966) is where the superintendent is viewed as balancing many voices and including stakeholders within the process of running a school system. Callahan (1966) identified this role as being common between 1930 and 1950 as the economic crisis of the 1930's caused Americans to discard the ideal of business efficiency. Because of this event, superintendents shifted their role to meet the needs of the communities and school boards (Callahan, 1966). This role has evolved based on the research of others to be named political strategist (Boyd, 1974).

The superintendents within the study expressed a desire to inform and seek community input with some school system decisions when trying to address an educational problem their system faced. One superintendent faced a monumental problem when in 2011;

his school district's only middle school was destroyed by a tornado while school was out for break in April of that year. He explained:

One that really rallied our community and school system together was the tornadoes of 2011. Where it started over just beyond here and destroyed the shopping center that you passed on the way, went through the ball fields, destroyed the houses next to the elementary school. If it had been probably 100 feet farther toward us, this school would have been damaged (school beside county office building). Then, it went over our high school, ripped the roof off the gym, two hundred and fifty thousand [dollars] damage at the high school. Then, totally destroyed, eighteen million dollars' worth of damage at the middle school. That was like April 11th. Spring break was late that April. We had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (off); we were supposed to be in school that Friday. Saturday was the 16th. Friday was Good Friday. We were out and out the following week. The Governor allowed us to miss those four days and got us a waiver from the legislature. We had to have two weeks essentially to figure out how the kids were going to finish the year. Where we were going to put them because all of our schools were at capacity at that point. The new intermediate school had not been opened yet. So what we ended up doing was running a split day at our high school. The middle school went from 7:30 in the morning until 12:00. High school went from 12:15 until 5:00. We finished the year that way, the last seven weeks of school. Then we installed a modular campus for over forty three thousand square feet of trailers behind the existing middle school. The rebuild was a two year

process. We got back in the middle school at the beginning of school in 2013. Well, it was awful. I didn't realize that we were having all this bad weather. It was a weekend and I don't monitor the weather as much on the weekends. Went out to eat with my next door neighbors and toddler. My director of operations called and said that you no longer have a middle school! I said check please! Trying to head back, meanwhile the tornadoes are coming towards us and I didn't realize it. We got to Farmville five minutes after the tornado went through Farmville. We couldn't get out of Farmville. The roads were blocked and we had to weave through all these neighborhoods. Finally, we got around and got to the school just at dark and could see somewhat. It was really Sunday morning before I could really see. Then the media, EMS, the governor flew in in a helicopter. It was just crazy. We had an emergency administrative team meeting that afternoon. I heard all kinds of stories from parents, kids riding by the school crying. That was the only middle school and it serves this entire county. Lots of things were inconvenient, to be sure, to finish the year. We had to cancel sports schedules with the middle school; their school day was all messed up, and throughout all that, no complaints from parents. Everybody just knew we were doing what we had to do and everybody rallied around. I was really proud of this community in the face of that tragedy. Luckily, nobody was killed but a lot of people were displaced.

Two superintendents involved their community stakeholders in school calendar discussions or efforts to develop strategic plans to improve academic performance. They shared:

Well, we just had one at the last board meeting. Our calendar that our committee put together was not approved so now I have got to, based on the board's directive, I have to meet now instead of meeting with ten to twelve people to fix the calendar, I have to meet with about 100 people, which would include teachers, community people, and anything else to come up with a calendar with the understanding with all the restrictions that we have from the state guidelines with what you can and can't do and what you must have. I guess probably, the most recent is now trying to put together a calendar with a large facet of folks. In my opinion, we have one of the strongest parent organizations in the state. The reason I say that is that we have been asked to speak at several functions statewide and national about our parents and parent knowledge about the school and those types of things.

We have a priority school in our district. We recently had to develop a strategic plan for that school. We involved all stakeholders in the plan. Also, we opened a year-round school to address, in part, parental choice. This was a collaboration project from feasibility study to opening.

Another superintendent explained his efforts to eliminate student grade span transition within his school system and his effort to involve his stakeholders in the discussion.

One of the things that I walked into here was, we had 14 schools and we had a K-3, then they went to 4-6, then they went to a 7-8, then they went to a 9-12. Way too much transition. We also, the 4-6 and 7-8, besides race, they were 90% of the reason why people were jumping and leaving the public school system and going to charter schools. Because those schools were not on fire. You talk about staying up at night, particularly with that middle school. Horrible leadership. A lot of horrible teachers, a lot of issues. The educational problem there was two-fold. One is we had too much transition which we did a research study, and you know that as an educator. We brought parents in; we brought teachers in and we just kind of walked through data and research to say, this is not good for kids. It's not good for kids in our county, it's not good for kids in other counties, and it's not good for kids on the other side of the state in some suburban high flying district. So that was something that we started some conversation about. That also led to just being upfront with people, core groups in talking about what issues that we have especially in these schools, leadership, safety concerns, and so on. The public had an opportunity to come in and have a microphone, voice concerns about instructional programs, being educated by transition.

Another superintendent elaborated on his involvement in a school merger process and how it exposed him to being political.

Yea that school merger, it was stakeholders, it was board, and it was everybody. I wish I could have just came out and said are we going do it? That's it! But I would have gotten killed on that. It took a couple of years. The only reason it happened when it happened is because this board member was going off the board and he didn't care anymore if people were mad at him. He sort of helped me get that initiative through the board and out in the public eye. Man that was a bear! I learned a lot through that process. I learned that people who know you are doing the right thing ...; I had a woman tell me "you are doing the right thing. I am happy that you are doing this. It should have been done twenty years ago, but I can't vote for it." I said, "I don't like it, but I respect you for telling me that." "Because I will get killed in my district if I vote for this, I am rooting for you. But I can't publicly vote for this." That's when I learned the political thing.

When asked about involving parents, teachers, students, and community stakeholders in school decision making all the superintendents sought involvement from these groups as supported by the data.

I think it is important. I think you need to have input from everybody. Even involving people out there in the community that might deal with businesses or other types of organizations. Your teachers, administrators. I think it is important to have all those. Again, we are all trying to do one thing-that is to educate children. We need all the

pieces to be able to be successful. Now you can work hard as we can but if you don't have parental support, parental backing, parental pushing of that child at home, you are fighting a battle every day at school. If you don't have a teacher that is concerned, caring, or willing to go the extra mile for a kid that needs that support, if you don't have that, then you have lost a child. The community as far as outside, there are things that we can't do because of financial restraints, but those folks can step up to the plate and do for us. There are a lot of organizations and things that come in and help at different schools, not necessarily as a whole district, but at different schools and support their schools.

Another superintendent stated:

I wholeheartedly support involving stakeholders in school decision making. In the counsel of many is strength. When we involve our stakeholders, they tend to be more supportive of what you are doing.

One superintendent shared how he works to get out into the community and talk with his parents and community stakeholders to seek their involvement:

I think there is a million ways that you can go about doing that. So many people say that "we are going to involve the community", etc. ... and then you ruin that. Then I think you got to extend yourself. For example, I rotate churches. We have our own church that we go to. But, all along ... much more so than I did the first couple of years, I volunteer at churches in the community, the places where people never see

the superintendent, let alone a Caucasian with 450 African Americans in the congregation. So it sends a message to people that you care, that you want to be there. Even though it is clear in the data superintendents seek stakeholder involvement, they were quick to express apprehension with involving stakeholders in every school system decision.

That one can be tricky because, one of the first questions you asked me was about educating teaching the public and there's a line where, you take a corporation for example; they are going to bring in focus groups from the community to be stakeholders but they're not going to let people from the outside with very limited knowledge make a decision that could affect the financial bottom line of that corporation. At the same time, due to the nature of our work, we have to let parents and community stakeholders in and we want them to come in because we want them to feel some sense of ownership of the schools, be proud and rally that community support. So we do with being very strategic with communities.

Another superintendent commented:

I am fine with that, depending on what the decision is. They like to be involved whatever the decisions. You get emails from parents about whether or hope you will take this into consideration. I take everything into consideration is what you want to say. You don't say that, but you want to say that. I am taking everything into consideration. Like this year round thing, obviously you get parent, stakeholder input on that.

The one decision superintendents expressed the most concern over seeking stakeholder involvement in was budget decisions. One superintendent shared:

Some school based budget decisions I don't let those in when I am creating a budget at this level. We have never done that before. There has never been a group in the community that has asked to do that. I would probably meet with them and get their feedback if they wanted to tell me that, but nobody has ever expressed a desire to do that. So, yes, family and community engagement is important but to me it is more about supporting their children academically more so than it is running the district as a business.

Based on the data collected, the superintendents within this study do seek the involvement of stakeholder groups when making some decisions that affect their school system. The solicitation of input is focused more on academic concerns where support from parental groups is sought, than operation input such as budgetary decisions. All superintendents expressed the need for stakeholder involvement and support but the need to be strategic in the approach. The researcher has concluded that the superintendents within this study are operating at times from the Democratic Leader role. This role is not bound by time as Callahan (1966) reported but more like Cuban's (1976) findings that, the role of negotiator-statesman "was never a distinct, time-bound conceptualization; it was an abiding, if steadily increasing, reality of the position" (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167).

Applied Social Scientist Findings

Applied Social Scientist role was first defined by Callahan (1966) and later expanded upon by other researchers where the superintendent is viewed as being able to understand how their actions can affect and influence social justice issues (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005). This role conceptualization came about in part due to the growing dissatisfaction with democratic leadership after World War II, the rapid development of the social sciences in the late 1940s and early 1950s, grants provided by the Kellogg Foundation to universities in the 1950s to research school administration, and the resurgence of criticisms of public education in the 1950s. As time has moved forward to the modern school reform era of accountability, the focus has been upon school leaders and school reform.

With several of the superintendents involved in this study being the leader of a low performing school district, it was evident they felt the pressure to produce change within their district. This pressure was focused on producing better academic performance within their district. One superintendent shared:

When I took over, we had twenty-five low performing schools. I was basically told you got to get these schools up. I think that is pressure within itself that you have got twenty-five low performing schools and you have got to figure out what in the world is going on. Why are we in the condition that we are in? Because we did not get there overnight and there is not an overnight solution to the problem. We have got to find areas that we can work on, and as some people say, the quick fix. But then within that quick fix, there is a longer range quick fix and then there is a long range fix. We have

come up with what we think is a plan to do that, but there is no quick, quick fix. There are some things you can clean up quickly. That is dealing with your administration and staff and making sure folks are on task and doing what they are supposed to. But this is a long range thing because again we did not get here overnight and we are not going to come out of it overnight. We are talking about twenty-five schools that are low performing. I feel the pressure from the board; I feel the pressure from myself. Also, I look at the state. Again, I don't want our district to be looked at as a low performing district because we love these schools. We have good teachers, we have good administrators. They are busting their tails, for the most part, trying to do a good job for their kids. When the state enforced these A, B, C, D, and F's, it was one of the worst things we could have done. It puts a lot of pressure on everybody, because nobody wants to be identified as an F school, nobody wants to be identified as a D school. When you are saying that, you are saying that if you have got a district that is identified as an F district, then that means you have an F superintendent, you got an F cabinet, you have F teachers, all the way down the line and that is not true.... But this is an F district. It does put a lot of pressure on you to try to get your district from underneath those categories of being low performing, or being identified as being a D or F school. Absolutely.

Another superintendent knew when he took over his low performing district he did not have the knowledge to turn it around so he sought to improve his ability. He stated:

When I took over the district as superintendent we were fairly low performing. They hadn't really defined that very well then. Like I told you earlier I became superintendent in 2008 and I taught high school music for ten years. That does not lend itself very well to teaching reading and elementary grades and things, but as a principal at an elementary school I did immerse myself to some degree in that, guided reading groups and those types of things. I knew that I needed to have some knowledge in order to move the district forward academically. One of the things that I learned in my program at ECU through those self-assessment activities that they do, is one of the most important attributes a leader can have is knowledge of self. I knew that I did not at that time have the knowledge necessary to turn the district around.

The superintendents in the study also sought to influence educational policy but what the researcher found interesting was their efforts appeared to be focused upon influencing policy at the state level more so than the local level. One superintendent sought to influence the state school calendar law. He shared:

Well, we are fighting; our organization is fighting right now and that is the calendar. We are fighting that right now as a group, as an organization of superintendents that we are dead against the calendar. The other piece that just came up here recently was the survey for students. Our RESA (superintendent professional organization) took a stand against doing the survey. There were multiple reasons why. Then, there were also some reasons that we felt like would be detrimental to our school districts. So just here recently we have been involved with our RESA.

Another superintendent sought to influence teacher assistant flexibility at the state level:

I tried this summer, with the teacher assistants when they took away our flexibility.

That really bothered me. I tried to influence policy on the state level with that. But it didn't work. But I tried. I just thought that if you want us to do our jobs, every district is different; Johnston is different than Sampson. Perhaps another superintendent didn't need the flexibility. I needed it here. It really messed us up because we accepted some things based on that flexibility. Then, it was snatched away from us. I tried to influence policy on that.

Two superintendents talked about being called upon to speak with legislators with one elaborating on the amount of time he spends trying to influence policy at the state level and how it was an unexpected part of the job. He stated:

Superintendents are frequently asked to call legislators about educational policy. We also meet as a group with our local legislators.

Another superintendent agreed and pointed out that:

We do that so much.... That is such a large part of my job, working with the general assembly, trying to run interference with DPI. I got into a ..., I am the chairman of CCRESA (Central Carolina Regional Educational Service Alliance). We met Friday and someone from DPI came to present and I got wound up and let my opinions be known. Basically, then I got more wound up and said this is a fantastic example of the disconnect between DPI and districts, as you all have no idea how your decisions impact districts and that's why there is such distrust and we are always at loggerhead

and I just.... The president of the superintendents' association called me immediately when the meeting was over and said the superintendents were tweeting me and you were just wearing this guy out, and I said, I tried to be as professional as I could but letting them know that they are not meeting our needs. In fact, they are making our jobs entirely way more difficult than they need to be. I think this piece consumes a very large ...this, that piece, and what I consider building bridges for my district whether relationships that I make, whether they circle back around to benefit us. Those are the two of the resource findings, is what I call it, are probably the largest part of my job, and it was unexpected.

One superintendent did speak about influencing local school board policy with relation to workforce reduction. He stated:

Influence. We do it all the time in certain ways. I would say, in both counties, there were policies that were very weak. And knowing the landscape that we have been in North Carolina for several years with our state, federal, and local cuts, in both situations, I was dealing with reduction in force in classified and certified personnel where the policies were basically ad hoc and there was no criteria involved in making those decisions. We tried to persuade the board to say, "Here are six or seven different areas that we need to consider so that we can make as objective and educated decision as possible." So that kind of sticks out.

The superintendents in the study were also aware that some educational practices can potentially increase inequity among different subgroups of students. Some mentioned their

efforts to level the playing field or close the achievement gap between these students. Their efforts focused upon ensuring funding was used appropriately to impact student needs.

I spend a lot of time thinking about that. In a lot of inequities we deal with here are poverty inequities. But from my role, I can make a difference in there by looking at how we do the poverty bands as far as Title I schools and Title I funding is concerned. What we do here is tier our schools, Tier I, Tier II, Tier III. That has been a paradigm shift because previously here they had a Title I school with 58 percent free and reduced lunch. They are getting funding at the same poverty level as a school with 85 percent free/reduced. I just didn't think that was fair. So I adjusted the PPA on that and gave that school with more poverty more Title I funding per student. I just thought that was fair. That is a huge paradigm shift. People don't like that because it affects their bottom line. But let's be honest, you don't have the poverty in your building that principal A may have in his/her building. But people still want what they want. And when they don't get what they want, they call their friendly board member. Then I got to work through that and it takes me half a day.

Another superintendent stated:

I don't spend a lot, a lot of time on it. And I will tell you the reason why is because there are folks that are within my cabinet or within my organization that are responsible for those things. There are pieces that I will make sure that we are doing the things that we need to do. For example, if there is funding for ESL, immigrant, migrant children, we make sure that funding is going directly to those children. If we

are looking at funding of EC we make sure that those funds and those things are going directly to the exceptional children's department. So as far as hands on so much, not. But with my cabinet and my directors, and supervisors, I make sure that I hold them accountable for making sure that things are done the way that are supposed to be.

Another superintendent focused on admittance policies in upper level programs. She stated:

Recently, we studied and changed our admittance practices at our STEM and Early College High School. We found that neither school reflected the racial makeup of our district. I am watchful over equal student access to CTE and honor courses, although I don't spend a lot of time on this.

Another superintendent talked about the economic disparity within his county and the difference in educational opportunities offered between each of his schools and finding a balance for each community:

There is no economic development there, there are no stores. The schools are in a bunch of trailers and low income housing. Some people don't understand the allocation of resources, personnel, and so on. When you only have sixteen members on a high school staff you are obviously not going to offer every course. Their choices are much different than another school. So there is a balance that we have to make decisions.

As identified in the previous role findings, the superintendents ought to improve the academic performance of their schools by providing professional development for their principals such as book studies and data sessions. They also manage the budget to ensure needed funds are there to support the principals and the instruction within the building. They also seek to influence educational policy but more so at the state level than the local level. The policies which they seek to influence do have some level of impact upon the schools and students within their school systems. Only one gave an example of a local level policy he sought to influence and none gave examples of influencing policy which could directly impact teacher pedagogy. Superintendents in the study are aware of policy effects upon student groups. Their efforts to mitigate disadvantages between student subgroups focus upon things they can do at a district level such as ensure funds go to those with the greatest need or the correct group as evident by the data. The researcher does not conclude superintendents are not concerned or seek to influence local policy, but the researcher can conclude with a high level of certainty based on the findings that state level policy influencing occupies the majority of the superintendent's' time within the Applied Social Scientist role. The researcher also concludes based on the data, the superintendents within this study are operating from the Applied Social Scientist role as defined by the literature. This is a contradiction to Callahan (1966) who bounded this role to a specific period of time.

Communicator Findings

The role of Communicator of the superintendent was defined by Theodore Kowalski (2006) where the superintendent is viewed as having to collaborate with stakeholders to build

visions, strategic plans, lead change initiatives within the school system and community, and be able to effectively manage conflict. Callahan (1966) reported communication was simply part of the job of a superintendent but Kowalski (2006) was the first to identify Communicator as a separate role of the superintendent.

Superintendents within the study felt communication was key to their success in the position. Some felt effective communication was a skill. This view supports Kowalski's (2006) position; skills are usually role specific and the nature of the skill is shaped by the role characterization. This would lead us to conclude and support Kowalski's (2006) view as Communicator as a role of the superintendent. This is supported by the superintendents' statements. Some superintendents came out and directly stated it was a role while discussing the importance of communication.

I think you have to have some skill at it but it is like weight lifting, If you are not as strong as you want to be to play in the game you go in the weight room and fix it. There are certainly some things you can do to become better, but I think you also have to have some innate ability as a communicator to start with. I have seen people that I think are poor communicators; I can't think of an example. Yes, you have to have some innate ability.

Another superintendent stated:

Effective communication is key to everything that a superintendent does. What we say is highly scrutinized by our stakeholders; therefore, one must be highly skilled in

communicating. I see effective communication as a skill that must be learned and practiced.

One superintendent viewed communication as both a skill and a role. She asserted:

I see it as both. It is a skill. It is a role. You have to balance it. I think in my role the key to communicating is with the board. Sometimes, I forget that they are not educators. But sometimes I assume they already know this, this, this. But they don't. They really don't. It is important for my role, as far as communicating with the board, that the chair and I are on the same page.

Another superintendent stressed the importance of the role of communicator:

It is one of the most important things that a superintendent can do is to be able to communicate throughout the whole district to all the stakeholders. I think it is a role. I am going to tell you the reason why. It's because I think everybody can communicate. Now, it doesn't mean that everybody wants to or they see it as important. But I don't think you have to have a lot of skill to do that. I think you have to have a desire within yourself and realize that it is important that you do that. I see it more maybe as a role. Again, it differs from superintendent to superintendent. Some may not see it as being a role. But I do. Because I think it is part of being a good superintendent is communication.

Another superintendent emphasized nuance in communication strategies:

There are ways that we communicate, whether it is electronically, face to face, I think taking a positive approach, it's kind of like a teacher conference, you come in with

three or four things that are positives on that particular child and then you get into what some of the challenges are. You got to be careful of the vernacular that you are using in what your approach is and use that common sense approach, but it has got to be proactive. It kind of goes back to that situation on leadership and responsibilities that you have. You got a pulse on your communities, you got a pulse on your schools and then that way, they can take off at any time but then you stand a much better chance of tackling issues in a positive manner if you try.

The researcher has concluded based on the data presented, not only in the area of Communicator but in the aforementioned historical role conceptualizations, that effective communication is a key to superintendent success. As Kowalski (2003) found, superintendents are having to collaborate with principals, teachers, and parents to build a collective vision and strategic plans. To be successful, superintendents must be effective in this role.

Summary of Major Themes

The purpose of this case study was to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts are doing today. Through qualitative methods informed by the research, the researcher conducted a case study of selected superintendents from low wealth districts in North Carolina to develop a clear picture of how these low wealth district superintendents compare to the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent. The researcher endeavored to understand how much time they spend operating in each role, what factors

influence the roles they operate from, and whether a new role conceptualization is emerging for superintendents.

After a thorough analysis of the data, three major themes emerged. While each role conceptualization of the superintendency had themes to emerge within themselves, the following themes emerged as the cornerstone in this case study analysis.

- 1. Superintendents spend a large amount of time operating from the Organizational Manager role, more specifically worried about financial matters.*

It became clear to the researcher the superintendents in this study worry and think daily about the financial matters of their school system. For some, this keeps them up at night. Finances affect every aspect of the school system's operation. Budget cuts caused the superintendents to worry about their fund balance, staff reduction, professional development opportunities, and facility needs within their district. It also has brought about the need for superintendents to be involved in more political activities with legislators to ensure funding for their district. One superintendent reported spending most of his time in finance. He stated:

But finance is where I spend most of my time. We sit in here every Monday morning and the quietest I ever see this group is when I start talking budget. Nobody wants to touch that. Nobody wants to touch that. But everybody wants to be the person that sends the email out saying we are having Fridays off this summer. Everybody wants to send that email. That's big boy stuff when you are doing budget, and you are cutting and things like that.

Other superintendents within the study reported other roles as where they spend the majority of time but all superintendents had concerns about finances as a major issue they think about daily.

2. Historical role conceptualizations are not bound by time.

It became evident to the researcher the superintendents within this study are operating from multiple role conceptualizations as they perform the responsibilities of their job. Four of the five historical roles are most evident within their work. It could be argued based on the data collected, the role of Teacher-Scholar is no longer applicable depending upon the lens used by the researcher as superintendents have very little interaction with classroom teachers and pedagogical practice their teachers use. This finding supports Cuban's (1976) interpretation which differed from Callahan's (1966) as he stated "each [role] waxed and waned as time passed, yet none disappeared" (p. 21). Cuban pointed out that multiple roles of the superintendency existed at the same time and "superintendents donned each role as the individual contexts dictated" (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167). Based on the context of the situation presenting itself to the superintendent, the superintendent picks up the skills of the required role to successfully navigate the situation at hand.

3. The superintendent as the Promoter..

While collecting interview data from the superintendents on the role of Democratic Leader, and asking them how their job has changed over time, the superintendents made some key statements which led the researcher to conclude a new role conceptualization of the superintendent has emerged. The researcher has defined this role as the Promoter. This role

began to emerge from the data when topics such as political involvement of the superintendent came up as well as when the researcher asked the superintendents how their job has changed over time. One superintendent responded:

The Advocate. We never, prior to four or five years ago, had to advertise and extol the virtues of public schools and compete and thump our chests. It makes me feel like we are bragging. But we have too, because there are so many other entities competing for your child's education. Vouchers, charters, virtuals, whatever those couple things are. That has only evolved recently. Advocate might not be the right word for that. But we are also, since the great recession, we have lost millions and millions of dollars. We really have to be strategic in forming partnerships and alliances and seeking grants that can provide resources where the general assembly, and the federal government, and the commissioners are not able or not willing to do so.

Another superintendent said:

I have considered hiring someone to be the promoter of our school district. We are in competition now with so many outside groups. It is a new game in town and we have to promote the goods of our school system

When asked directly about being called an "advocate" one superintendent seemed unsure about using the word as a noun but it was very evident from his response, he felt strongly about being able to advocate for and sell the product of his school system. He shared:

I think part of it depends on the areas that you are coming from as far as being a superintendent, the district that you are coming from. Now with me, I think it is

important that there are times when you do have to be a politician. When I say be a politician, I am simply saying like anything else, you have got to sell your product. You have got to advocate for your product. Just like when you go into legislators and there are advocacy teams there and everything they are pushing for their agenda. As a superintendent, I think you have to push, whether you want to call that political push or whatever, but you have to sell, I think you have to sell your product and our product is educating children and we have to sell that product as far as what we are doing to help to educate that child. Does that mean sometimes you have to go to political gatherings, for example, a chamber meeting, or speak at a chamber meeting? Because sometimes the positive things that are happening in your district, that community doesn't know. So you have to go out, if you want to call it a politician, you got to give the good things about what's happening at your school or at your district. You got to let folks know that these are things that are happening here and this is the direction that we are headed and things are going well. Also, solicit their support. In some ways as far as that, I would say yes there are times that we have to act like politicians. But not maybe in a sense that people think you are running for an office or you have been into this kind of pressure from a political group, nothing like that. It is the fact that you are going out and presenting your school and your district to the folks out in the community and let them know and advocate for what you are trying to do. What I am saying is that you got to be able to sell yourself on topics and

issues that are important to different communities within your district. You got to be able to do that or you are going to be in trouble.

When describing how their job has changed over time one superintendent described himself as an advocate for public education and another indicated the superintendent needed to be a salesman:

I am more of an advocate now for public schools than I have ever been. I used to didn't have to be because we had a general assembly who was very pro public schools. I don't think we have a general assembly now that is pro public schools at all. Now I just feel the need to advocate more so than I ever have before. Since this general assembly is not advocating for public schools, the resources have began to shrink. And I spend more time than ever in finance.

Another stated:

The political aspect of our role has evolved for me over time. There is also... depending on the circumstances. I think the size of the school system dictates a lot of where you're responsibilities and your energy goes. I had to learn that but there is great value in it now. In that you almost have to be a salesman in some ways. Particularly when you are in communities that are critical in so many ways. Situational awareness... those are two things that I would say are two strengths that... I have are: situational awareness.

Several of the superintendents in this study discussed the need to advocate, sell, or promote their school system due to the competition of charter schools, virtual schools,

vouchers, and loss of funding. With them describing this as happening within the last few years and being something that they have never had to do, the researcher concludes that a new role conceptualization of the superintendent has indeed emerged, the superintendent as the Promoter.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study that were the result of interviews with participants and the researcher's field notes. Chapter Five will compare the findings to Callahan's (1966) role conceptualizations and to other research on superintendent role conceptualizations. Implications for further research and practice will be offered as well.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this case study was to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts within North Carolina are doing today. This study was guided by the research of Raymond Callahan (1966) and Theodore Kowalski (2006) who first identified the five historical role conceptualizations of the superintendency.

Through this research process it became evident to the researcher the role of the superintendent is still evolving. “Since the inception of the role, the demands on the superintendent have changed as a result of numerous social, political, and economic trends in our society” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 107). Over the course of time superintendents’ roles have changed based on the needs around them (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011). With the creation of the position in 1837 in Buffalo, New York, superintendents took on the role of teacher-scholar or instructional leader to ensure a standard level of education for all students (Springs, 1994). After the Civil War superintendents were labeled “master teachers” and teachers were asked to emulate their behavior (Callahan, 1962). In the 1920’s with the influence of the Industrial Revolution many superintendents pushed for administrative work to be seen as more important than being an instructional leader (Thomas & Moran, 1992). Superintendents now took on the role of “organizational manager”. In the 1940’s superintendents began to take on the role of “applied social scientist”. This role conceptualization came about in part due to the growing dissatisfaction with democratic

leadership after World War II, the rapid development of social sciences in the late 1940s and early 1950s. With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, confidence in public education and in those leading schools began to wane (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002; Carter & Cunningham, 1997). In the early 1990's, those intent on educational reform focused on several issues but none more intently than public school governance and leadership (Barnett & Petersen, 2005). The modern era of accountability began and the focus has been high on school leaders and school reform. Callahan (1966) identified the role of political statesman developing between 1930 and 1950. He makes a connection with the Great Depression and superintendents having to be more involved in community activities. Bjork and Gurley (2005) concluded superintendents of today need "higher levels of political acuity to succeed than their predecessors" (p. 167). Johnson (1996) noted that superintendents' work in a politically charged environment characterized by demands for greater participation, patronage, and partisan power struggle. Evidence began to emerge in the 1980's that communication was a core competency for all school administrators (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Gousha & Mannan, 1991). Kowalski (2006) believed that historically communication was treated as a skill and was role specific, but in modern times superintendents are expected to communicate the same way regardless of the role they take on. Superintendents now have to lead school improvement reforms and lead groups such as school administrators and community stakeholders in this process.

It also was important to the researcher to focus on low wealth superintendents. The researcher believed low wealth superintendents may in fact view the historical role

conceptualizations differently or operate from them differently than their counterparts in wealthier school districts within North Carolina. While there are some studies focusing upon the superintendency, the researcher found there was little current data looking at superintendency role conceptualizations and no studies within the state of North Carolina on low wealth superintendents. This study placed a focus on the historical role perceptions of current superintendents within North Carolina who are currently working within a low wealth district. To have knowledge of their current role, participants had to have a minimum of two years' experience in their current superintendent position. Having a minimum of two years' experience ensured the participants had a competent level of understand for the expectations of their position.

Using qualitative methods, the researcher used a collective case study approach. "Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). The researcher interviewed seven current superintendents within North Carolina. The superintendents were selected from the ten poorest school districts within the state. The interviews were scheduled over a period of several months and were conducted face to face in the office of the superintendent. The interview questions were semi-structured and consistent with the historical role conceptualizations identified by Callahan (1966) and Kowalski (2006). Data was recorded and interviews were transcribed after the interviews as soon as possible. The data was carefully and thoroughly examined by the researcher within each case and across each case to reveal key emerging themes.

This chapter summarizes the major conclusions of the study as well as the implications for superintendent practice and future research.

Summary of Findings

Through the review of the literature, it became very apparent to the researcher that the superintendent position has been ever changing and evolving over time. “Since the inception of the role, the demands on the superintendent have changed as a result of numerous social, political, and economic trends in our society” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 107). Several researchers agree the role of the superintendent has evolved over time (Bjork, Brunner, & Glass, 2000; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011). Through the data collection process it became apparent to the researcher that this phenomenon of an every changing role based on the demands placed upon those individuals within the position is still happening to some degree.

A major theme which emerged from this study is that superintendents operate from more than one role conceptualization at a time. Or, they can also move from one role to the other as the situation dictates. This is contrary to Callahan’s (1966) belief that the historical roles developed at a fixed point in time based upon the demands of that time upon the superintendent. The roles were bound by time and the only role a superintendent could carry with them was the Organizational Manager. The data in this study clearly contradicts those findings. Superintendents reported spending various amounts of time within roles but they did report operating from more than one historical role conceptualization. Superintendents were very aware of the impact of the Applied Social Scientist role but reported spending

smaller amounts of time addressing educational policy within their district. Within the Applied Social Scientist role they spent most of their time trying to influence state level educational policy to affect change. While at the local level, they sought to equitably manage and distribute resources to mitigate educational disparities between student groups.

Superintendents reported spending the majority of their time within the Organization Manager role. Within this role finance took up most of their time. All reported thinking about a financial issue daily. One superintendent reported he knew his budget numbers just as good as his finance officer. Superintendents spent many hours talking with commissioners and state level representatives to work through budget short falls and plan for future initiatives and programs. When asked if they felt they were running a business, several answered “yes” and one superintendent did speak to the need to be efficient with resources provided to the school district. Operation from this role is consistent with Callahan (1966) and the role not being bound by time. The superintendent needs to be aware of sound business practices.

The researcher found superintendents do still operate for the Democratic Statesman role when seeking to include stakeholders in educational decision making for the school district. A key finding here was that all wanted parent involvement with respect to their children's education but none wanted involvement in big operational decisions of their district. Superintendents would conduct parents meetings and one event rotated churches each Sunday to visit his parents and interact with them on a more personal level. Discussion revolved around those educational programs or opportunities for children. All the superintendents did not wish to have outside influence upon things like budget. One

superintendent shared parents had never asked to get involved at that level but if they did he would listen to their input. So this group of superintendents still operated from the traditional role conceptualization defined by Callahan (1966). What was interesting was the researcher did find evidence to support the transition of this role into the politician strategist as proposed by Boyd (1974). Boyd concluded in his research “superintendents who were both politically sensitive and proactive in their management approaches met with greater success in addressing multiple and often conflicting interests within a community” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167). Bjork and Gurley (2005) report, “There is broad agreement among policy makers, professors, and practitioners that the nature of schooling is becoming increasingly complex and decidedly political” (p. 167). Bjork and Gurley (2005) go further concluding superintendents of today need “higher levels of political acuity to succeed than their predecessors” (p. 167). The superintendents in this study shared with the researcher several examples of how they had to engage in what they called the “political” process to get the resources their district needed. The superintendent had to have the skills necessary to navigate local as well as state level political processes. It also became apparent the superintendent had to build support groups or network connections such as with lobbyist and local officials to influence needed resources or policy changes. This finding is supported by Cuban (1988a) who summed up the superintendent’s political leadership as having “...a need to build coalitions, to negotiate the distribution of resources among multiple and diverse interest groups to gain their support for district initiatives” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 168). The overall conclusion with the role of Democratic Leader as first defined by Callahan

(1966) is the role is still present for current superintendents within North Carolina but it has evolved from ensuring stakeholders such as parents can have transparency between them and the district with respect to their child's education, to a competition for scarce resources.

Laswell (1958) called the political process "who gets, what, where, when and how" (p. 187). Thus, Bjork and Gurley (2005) conclude "...superintendents faced with negotiating demands from multiple and diverse community interest groups are engaged in politics viewed as practicing the art of the possible" (p. 168).

With respect to the Teacher Scholar role conceptualization, the researcher found very little evidence superintendents are viewed as the "master teacher" or have classroom level engagement with their teachers. The superintendents within this study viewed the building level principal as the most important person when trying to effect educational change for students. To that end, the superintendents did lead professional development activities for their principals which included activities such as book studies. One superintendent met individually with his principals to review their school's performance data. He drilled down to the student level when analyzing the data. His intent was to make sure the principal knew how to interpret the data and use it to target instructional improvements within their building to affect change for students. It was important to the superintendents that they be seen as an instructional leader. To that end one superintendent made it a point to participate in professional development activities alongside his principals. He made an effort to be involved and engaged in the same activity so his principals would see he valued what they were learning from the professional development activity. But even within these activities

there was not a focus upon pedagogical practices within the teacher's classroom. That level of instructional improvement was delegate to the principal or to other district personnel to affect change. The data within this study supports that the superintendent does not operate from the historical Teacher Scholar role conceptualization. Because of the evolution of the position itself, it could be argued this position is bounded by time as Callahan (1966) first reported and will not reappear at a point in the future. Carter and Cunningham (1997) suggest superintendents must fully grasp the conditions within which they find themselves and what direction they will need to lead their organization before they can provide the leadership needed for their schools. It was clear that some superintendents realized they had to improve their curriculum skills to lead their district effectively and all were aware they had to improve their district's academic performance. But again, their efforts were focused at the district or principal level and not at the teacher/student level so defined by Callahan (1966) when the role first emerged.

The role of Communicator of the superintendent was defined by Theodore Kowalski (2006) where the superintendent is viewed as having to collaborate with stakeholders to build visions, strategic plans, lead change initiatives within the school system and community, and be able to effectively manage conflict. Callahan (1966) reported communication was simply part of the job of a superintendent but Kowalski (2006) was the first to identify Communicator as a separate role of the superintendent. Since the 1980's there has been mounting evidence that communication has become a core competency for all school administrators (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Gousha & Mannan, 1991). There is also

evidence communication practices used by administrators have influenced school culture and productivity (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Petersen & Short, 2002). It was clear in the data that all superintendents felt communication was very important to what they do. One stated:

Effective communication is key to everything that a superintendent does. What we say is highly scrutinized by our stakeholders; therefore, one must be highly skilled in communicating. I see effective communication as a skill that must be learned and practiced.

Kowalski (2006) points out skills are usually role specific and the nature of the skill is shaped by the role characterization. Because of this, roles have different acceptable behavior. Today however, “administrators are expected to communicate in the same manner regardless of the functions being addressed” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 47). Because skills of communication was not addressed or came out in the data the researcher did not see enough evidence within the data to point to communication being a role as Kowalski (2006) defined it. This is not to support a position either one way or the other, but simple not enough data was gathered to clearly define communication as a role or a skill. Some superintendents in the study pointed to both. Saying communication was a role but it was a skill that someone could improve upon with additional practice.

From the data gathered from the research subjects it did become clear that a new role conceptualization has emerged for the superintendent. Superintendents made some key statements which has led the researcher to conclude a new role conceptualization of the superintendent has emerged. The researcher has defined this role as the Promoter. This term

best fits what this group of superintendents described that they now have to do. This role began to emerge from the data when topics such as political involvement of the superintendent came up as well as when the researcher asked the superintendents how their job has changed over time. One superintendent responded:

The Advocate. We never, prior to four or five years ago, had to advertise and extol the virtues of public schools and compete and thump our chests. It makes me feel like we are bragging. But we have too, because there are so many other entities competing for your child's education. Vouchers, charters, virtuals, whatever those couple things are. That has only evolved recently. Advocate might not be the right word for that. But we are also, since the great recession, we have lost millions and millions of dollars. We really have to be strategic in forming partnerships and alliances and seeking grants that can provide resources where the general assembly, and the federal government, and the commissioners are not able or not willing to do so.

This theme of having to “advocate” or “sell” or “promote” public education repeatedly came up in conversation with the research subjects. Many of them now have promotional material they can distribute to stakeholders within their district. Some were theorizing how they could attract students back to their district who have left. One superintendent approved a research group to collect market share data on the percentage of students served by his district versus served by home school or charter school. He did this to help him conceive ways to attract the students back who were living in his county but not being served by his district. One also helped to push and develop media opportunities with other school districts to promote the

positives of public schools to parents. This has grown into a statewide website that reports on K-12 educational issues. This same superintendent shared the “promoter” role has become so important he was considering hiring someone just to do this job for his school district. The evolution of the superintendency is supported by several researchers in the literature. The position has evolved over time. Cuban (1976) pointed out that multiple roles of the superintendency existed at the same time and “superintendents donned each role as the individual contexts dictated” (Bjork & Gurley, 2005, p. 167). Superintendents indicated that the context of public education has indeed changed. They pointed to things like competition from nonpublic school opportunities as a major reason they now have to “advocate” or become the “salesperson” and promote public education. It was also evident all superintendents in this research study believed in the good of public education and fighting for their students to have opportunity.

One factor of influence upon these superintendents in this study that has not been addressed is that of being from a low wealth school district. All of the superintendents in this study worked in districts located in Eastern North Carolina. Their school districts were located in rural counties with little local tax base. Size ranged from 3,120 students to 22,000 students. When thinking about what these individuals have to do on a daily bases, it is possible that with fewer resources these superintendents have to take on more roles than their counterparts located in a more urban wealthy school district. Depending upon the specific needs of their district they may have to operate from a particular role conceptualization for a longer period of time than their counterparts from wealthier districts. This may be seen in the

large amounts of time these superintendents report being involved in financial issues or concerns. They reported thinking about this daily and knowing their budget numbers better than their financial officer. One reported looking at his numbers so closely that he set up the budget and then passed it along to his financial officer. He accounted for every dollar spent. It is possible that in a larger district with more resources a superintendent is involved in the budget process but not to the extent of those in a small low wealth district. Another superintendent was very engaged in the Democratic Leader role with his stakeholders. He made an effort to be visibility seen and out in his communities. He and his wife rotated churches on Sundays to mingle and converse with parents. In some instances he reported parents would ask him to speak while he was visiting their church. This gave him an opportunity to build rapport and trust with parents which he unturned used to rally support for instructional changes he felt was needed for his students. It is very possible that a superintendent from a large wealthy district would not allocate the time for these types of activities on Sundays. It is possible that additional research needs to be conducted comparing low wealth district superintendents to their counterparts from wealthier districts to see if they operate from the same historical role conceptualizations as the group of superintendents within this study.

Implications for Practice

This study involved interviewing seven superintendents from the ten poorest public school districts within North Carolina. This represented a small sample of superintendents

from across the state but from their responses as well as data gained from the interviews, the researcher can address some implications for the superintendency.

When looking at the historical role conceptualizations from the lenses of what current superintendents are doing today in their practice it becomes very important for superintendent preparation programs to review the findings. Superintendents reported spending large amounts of time operating from the Organizational Manager role, more specifically within finance and budget. Preparation programs need to have a finance component to give superintendents the needed business skills to understand and manage a large budget. Superintendents in this study talked about specific budget codes such as PRC 19 which is the small district supplemental fund. Finance courses should cover North Carolina's standard chart of accounts. This could be valuable information to a superintendent when addressing funding concerns within their district. It is also suggested preparation programs developed components to support communication skill development as superintendents reported this to be a key factor for their success. The superintendents in this study spoke to written communication as well as verbal. One superintendent felt everything he said and did was scrutinized so he made every effort to choose his words wisely. Preparation programs should have courses to promote interpersonal communication skills to include things like body language. Supporting personal communication skills development could be a key to superintendent longevity. Programs should also have a focus on equipping future superintendents with skills to assist them in navigating the political waters of the job. How to network and build partnerships within communities to support and enact change for

children. An additional suggestion would be to also include additional support in the area of Applied Social Scientist. Superintendents within this study were aware of affecting change through policy but seemed to focus more of their effort at the state level. Some additional support on what they can do within their local districts to advocate for change may be beneficial.

The research also brings about some implications for school boards when interviewing potential superintendent candidates. With the role of the superintendent evolving and a new role conceptualization emerging, school boards should be aware they need a superintendent with effective communication skills. An individual who is willing to become the “Promoter”. An individual who is willing to spend the time and extra effort building community support and coalitions to influence political support for the district. An individual who is willing to become the face of the district and campaign to promote and sale the positives of the district to parents, community members, commissioners, and politicians at all levels. A candidate also needs to have knowledge of finance due to the large amount of time the superintendents spends in this area. Possession of these skills or experiences will go a long way to ensure the superintendent will be successful in implementing a vision and leading the district.

By far, this study has implications for the individual aspiring to obtain a superintendent position within North Carolina. To increase the odds of being successful in leading a school district the individual seeking a position should seek ways to gain experience or improve their skills within several of the historical role conceptualizations.

They should most assuredly seek ways to improve their communication skills and budget awareness before they are in the position. They should have an understanding that the role is evolving and “advocating” or being the Salesperson is a part of the job. What promotional skills does every salesperson need? What communication skills do salespersons need? These could be future questions that need to be answered by those seeking a superintendent position to help them become successful in the position. “Since the inception of the role, the demands on the superintendent have changed as a result of numerous social, political, and economic trends in our society” (Barnett & Petersen, 2005, p. 107). Because of the changing landscape around the superintendency, one who can recognize the change and embrace it may have a higher probability of success in the position.

Implications for Future Research

This study adds to the body of literature as it relates to historical and emerging role conceptualizations of superintendents within low wealth school districts and which role conceptualizations they are operating from while performing the job of superintendent. This study is important because superintendents are key leaders within North Carolina public schools. They lead both large and small districts with an overarching goal of provided a quality education to children. The data gained from this study can help them to focus upon improving their skills within the historical role conceptualizations where they operate from the most as well as now focusing upon skills to improve their practice in emerging roles such as the Advocate/Salesperson.

It is imperative the research on this topic continue. As pointed out by several researchers (Bjork, Brunner, & Glass, 2000; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011;) the superintendent has evolved over time. The lack of current research on superintendent role conceptualization is alarming to the researcher. This study should be expanded to a larger population size across North Carolina to provide richer data on current role conceptualizations and emerging roles superintendents are operating from. It is alarming that such an important position to the success of a school district has not warranted deeper and richer exploration in this area.

With respect to the new emerging role of Promoter more research is needed. More research is needed to narrow the definition of this role to clearly identify the skills needed to be effective when operating from this role. It is clear from the data these research subjects are now spending time promoting the good of their public school system. Additional research in this area could reveal greater detail as to when this role emerged. What caused it to emerge? What does a superintendents need to be able to do to operate effectively from within this role? For the researcher this is an exciting opportunity for additional researcher to be done and to firmly establish the sixth historical role conceptualization of the superintendent, the Promoter.

Although this study focused on seven superintendents from the ten poorest public school districts within North Carolina several of the districts were not small when viewed from student population size. They ranged from just over 3,000 students to well over 22,000

students. The researcher believes this study could be replicated with districts of similar sizes across North Carolina to gain comparative data to add to this study very easily.

This study also has implications for the researcher when seeking access to research subjects. The researcher in this study had a professional relationship with a well-respected superintendent within North Carolina. The researcher used his connection with the respected superintendent to have him to contact and encourage the subjects to participate. Not only did this relationship open doors for access to the research subjects, but it also encouraged a level of trust between the researcher and the subjects because they both had a mutual relationship with the respected superintendent who asked them to participate. This made the interview process more open and the subjects provided richer and more candid data to the researcher.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to understand how the identified role conceptualizations of the superintendency compare to what superintendents in low wealth districts are doing today and reveal emerging role conceptualizations of the superintendency if any. In Chapter One, the researcher presented the purpose for this study. Background information was given and presented to demonstrate why it was important to conduct this research study. In Chapter Two, the researcher looked at the literature around the historical role conceptualizations of the superintendent as well as influencing factors upon the superintendent. Chapter Three established the methods and procedures that would be used in the collection of data for the study. Chapter Four presented the findings through quotes of the

participants. This chapter has discussed the findings in relation to existing research, conclusions, and implications for practice and future research.

As a case study, this research seeks to potentially apply the finds to other superintendent cases across the state of North Carolina. The role of the superintendent is very important. The literature and the findings of this study support that the position has evolved over time and that it is continuing to evolve as influence is pressed upon the position from outside forces. Over the course of time superintendents' roles have changed based on the needs around them (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011). In this modern era of school reform, student school choice movements, scarcity of resources, and stakeholder engagement it is even more imperative school districts have leaders with the needed skills to navigate these waters. The role of the superintendent needs to be looked upon from a fresh lens. The position and the influence exerted by the individuals who hold it upon the lives and futures of children, warrant additional research. The keys to student current and future academic success as well as overall school district success may be in their hands.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions

General Background

1. How did you become superintendent of your current district?
2. How many years have you been a superintendent (Overall, LEA)?

Scholarly Leaders 1865-1910

1. Give me an example of when you sought to improve your scholarly ability as a leader.
2. Tell me about a time when you wanted others to see you as the chief learner for your district.
3. Tell me about a time in your current role when you taught a group of educators or members of the public something.

Business Executive 1910-1929

1. Tell me about a time when you worried about a school finance issue?.
2. Can you tell me about a time when you worried about efficiency within your school system?
3. Tell me about a time you thought you were the head of a business and not a school system?
4. Can you elaborate on who handles the financial, organizational, and mechanical problems of your system?

Democratic Educational Statesman 1930-1954 (Collective thought, Leadership) A PLC**Model?**

1. Tell me about a time when you worked together with school staff and community stakeholders to address an educational problem.
2. How do you feel about involving parents, teachers, students, and community stakeholders in school decision making?
3. Do you use experts from within the field of education to help you solve policy problems or problems in general ed?

Applied Social Scientist 1954-1966 (Studying their communities)

1. Tell me about a time you were under pressure to produce change in your district.
2. When have you tried to influence educational policy?
3. We know that some educational practices can potentially increase inequity. How do you address these and how much time do you spend focusing on inequities among different subgroups of students?

Communicator

1. Tell me about your communication skills.
2. How important is communication to what you do? Do you see it as a skill or a role?
Why?

Factors Affecting Job

1. How has your job changed over time?
2. Can you describe to me what your main job is as superintendent of your district?

3. Can you give me an example as to how state or federal mandates have affected your job?
4. Out of the 5 role conceptualizations where do you feel you spend the most time operating from?
5. Is there a role not identified you operate from? Politician?
6. Have you been a superintendent of a non-low wealth district? If so how does the job differ?