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Understanding and Negotiating the Secondary Vice-Principal Role: Perspectives of Secondary Principals

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Graduate Program in Education

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. The principal assigns vice-principal duties so there is no standard description for the vice-principal role (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990). My conceptual framework, based on the notions of role and work, informed the study. Using an interpretive basic, generic qualitative study approach, I conducted single 60 to 90 minute semi-structured interviews with 13 secondary principals from four Ontario district school boards. Data analysis was on-going and used a modified version of the constant comparative method for themes to emerge.

Findings indicated that secondary principals expect their vice-principals to perform both operational and instructional tasks, although the school day remains dominated by operational duties related to supporting students and staff. Duties are determined collaboratively and are based on strengths, interests, and areas of growth. The secondary principals provide their vice-principals with short-term supports through mentoring and consulting for collaborative problem solving and decision making, and long-term supports through cognitive coaching conversations and opportunities to perform the full spectrum of vice-principal duties. According to the secondary principals, challenges include the composition of the school administrative team and increased workload. Using a neoliberal approach to education as a context, I identified three tensions: (1) secondary principal and vice-principal roles are similar, (2) vice-principals find it difficult to prioritize or balance their operational and instructional duties, and (3) the composition of the administrative team.

Implications include revisiting the number of vice-principals assigned to high schools and exploring a reconfiguration of the secondary vice-principal role so there can be better a balance between operational and instructional tasks.

Keywords: principal; vice-principal; role; work; duties; responsibilities; operations; instructional leadership

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late godmother, **Mrs. Lillian Ross**. Godmother Lillian passed away a week before I started my first year of teaching in 1996. My godmother understood the importance of education. She bought a math workbook for me in grade one, which would lay my foundation for elementary and high school mathematics and to pursue an undergraduate mathematics degree.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Principals are both leaders and managers. Principals have chosen to become school administrators to make a positive difference for students, staff, and parents (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2008; Wallace, 2001). They need a combination of leadership (to challenge the status quo), management (regarding school operations), and authority (shared between principals, vice-principals, staff, students, and parents) to fulfill their role (Leithwood, 2012). The importance of principal leadership cannot be overstated as it is only second to teachers as the greatest school factor affecting student learning (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). Principals' influence on student learning is indirect and occurs through articulating a shared vision, creating working conditions conducive for student learning through professional learning communities, supporting and motivating staff to improve their instructional and assessment practices, providing specific and timely feedback from informal classroom visits, and allocating time and resources (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Principals need to perform timely managerial duties to effectively run a safe and supportive school conducive for student learning. Leadership and management can be distinguished as follows:

Management is about the status quo while leadership is about change; management focuses on the short term while leadership focuses on the longer term; management is about keeping “the ship” running smoothly while leadership is about disrupting the status quo; management is about doing things right while leadership is about doing the right things. (Leithwood, 2012, p. 6)

However, many principals find it challenging to perform instructional leadership. There are many reasons why demonstrated instructional leadership may be difficult for principals. Principals must create collaborative professional learning communities within existing bureaucratic school structures (Bolman & Deal, 2009). Also, they must develop relational trust, and motivate staff within existing, deeply held school cultures (Bolman & Deal, 2009; Reeves, 2009). Numerous urgent operational duties take time away from principals observing classroom instruction and providing feedback to teachers (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014a; Citty, 2010; Hall, Berg, & Barnett, 2003; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; The Institute for Education Leadership, 2008). An average of five to seven years is required to sustain school improvement (Colwell, 2015; Louis et al., 2010); yet, principals in a Minnesota and Toronto study stayed at their schools on average of only 3.6 years (Louis et al., 2010). Not only do principals find it difficult to demonstrate instructional leadership, they may not be at their schools long enough to sustain a change initiative. To assist with the numerous duties and responsibilities, principals rely on the support of their vice-principals.

Vice-principals may be assigned to schools to support principals. The vice-principal role is duties as assigned by the principal (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990). There is no standard duties list for vice-principals, and the role is based on school and principal needs (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Nieuwenhuizen, 2011). The number of vice-principals assigned to a school is determined by each district school board (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990). The vice-principal is also known as *assistant principal* in the United States, as *deputy principal* in Australia, and as *deputy head* in the United Kingdom (Cranston, Tromans, & Reugebrink, 2004; Harris; Muijs, & Crawford, 2003).

Statement of Problem

In Ontario, the principal's role has become increasingly complex. Having to meet the increasingly diverse academic, social, and emotional needs of students, be accountable in terms of province-wide large-scale assessments, respond to daily e-mails and phone messages, develop staff's capacity to implement a school improvement plan, contend with the political education agenda of the government, the political nature of teacher unions, and comply with occupational health and safety regulations amongst other pressures have complicated principals' roles greatly (Leithwood, Azah, Harris, Slater, & Jantzi, 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015; Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2014, 2015). Principals' work has intensified and become multifaceted as a result of having to comply with education policies such as Regulation 274 on the hiring practices of occasional, long-term, and contract teachers; the *Growing Success* assessment and evaluation document; and Bill 212, the *Safe School Act* (Leithwood et al., 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015; Pollock et al., 2014, 2015). In particular, an Ontario study found that principals work an average of 58.7 hours a week, with only 5 hours spent working on curriculum and instruction and 3 hours on classroom walkthroughs (Pollock et al., 2014). The study revealed that the top two duties performed by principals are managerial: student discipline and attendance, 7.6 hours; and internal school management, 7.5 hours (Pollock et al., 2014, 2015). Principals' work needs to be supported by high performing teachers, office staff, and vice-principals (Leithwood et al., 2014).

Due to the changing nature of the principal's role and increased workload, my study seeks to explore how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. The demands increasingly placed on principals have resulted in

challenges in terms of fulfilling managerial and leadership responsibilities (Reagan, 2015; Whitaker, 2002). Principals throughout Canada (and the United States, e.g., Horng & Loeb, 2010) lack the time to demonstrate instructional leadership as they are preoccupied with managerial duties (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014a, 2014b; Cattonar et al., 2007), a challenge described as the "managerial imperative" (Cuban, 1988). The principal role has been portrayed as a paradox since the demands required to comply with the Ministry of Education and district school board policies seem unreasonable to the workload, and yet principals do their best to fulfill the role by performing a multitude of duties (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014a). Principals are reminded they need to focus their time and energy on instructional leadership:

High-performing principals focus more on instructional leadership and developing teachers. They see their biggest challenges as improving teaching and curriculum, and they believe that their ability to coach others and support their development is the most important skill of a good school leader. (Barber, Whelan, & Clark, 2011, p. 7)

As a result, the more principals are able to demonstrate instructional leadership, the more satisfied they are as principals (Cattonar et al., 2007; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Kwan, 2011; Reagan, 2015). For my study I ask, from secondary principals' perspectives, how do secondary vice-principals support their principals with leading and managing schools in light of the increased role complexity and increased workload of the principal? Such perspectives will help explore how secondary principals can effectively utilize their vice-principals as a part of the administrative team to instructionally lead and manage the school.

Problem of Practice

My Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) thesis, based on professional practice and applied research, consists of an examination of a problem of practice. A “problem of practice” is a challenge or problem identified and explored within one’s professional practice with actionable implications to the local and broader contexts (Belzer & Ryan, 2013; City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Tietel, 2009). Problems of practice explore complex and multilayered problems using inquiry (Belzer & Ryan, 2013).

My problem of practice arose when as a new vice-principal I experienced disconnect between what my district school board sought in teachers appointed as vice-principals (i.e., demonstrated instructional leadership) and the actual work I perform in the vice-principal role (i.e., operations and management). Questions I continue to have of my role include: (1) How do I perform instructional duties when operational duties preoccupy the school day? (2) How do I prioritize or balance my operational and instructional duties? (3) How should I be spending my time during the school day? and (4) What is my principal’s expectation of me in the vice-principal role?

As a fifth year secondary vice-principal, my time is spent reacting to incidents and fulfilling responsibilities to ensure smooth school operations, rather than leading or facilitating whole staff professional learning. I have numerous meetings with students, parents, and staff to support students’ diverse academic, social, and emotional needs. Of immediate concern is addressing student behaviour that can lead to suspension or recommendation for expulsion. I can spend days on an investigation; interviewing and re-interviewing the victim, witnesses, and the perpetrator; consulting with my school administrative team, school superintendent, and the police; and communicating with

parents/guardians. My prompt attention is also required to address and resolve parent complaints; I strive for a win-win resolution for the parent, teacher, and student involved.

Also, I must perform other operational and managerial duties. Daily tasks include approving teacher absences and field trips/sporting events, and assisting my secretary each morning to ensure all classes are covered. On-going tasks include contending with health and safety responsibilities and updating emergency preparedness. Tasks that occur at certain times of the school year include supporting my data quality management secretary with accurate school data for reporting purposes to the board and Ministry of Education, and overseeing implementation of the provincial large-scale grade nine mathematics assessments. Tasks that require several consecutive months include creating the master school timetable and graduation.

It took me three years to gain comfort and confidence in the vice-principal role. I perform the role as a strong advocate for at-risk and vulnerable students. Further, I recognize the vice-principal role is political in nature and that there are norms and behaviours expected of me. Instructional leadership is limited to serving on the school improvement planning committee, collaborating with subject heads on their department marks distribution at reporting periods, conducting teacher and support staff performance appraisals, and supporting individual teachers when concerns arise. Since principals determine the vice-principal role, my problem of practice led me to my research question.

Research Question and Research Sub-Questions

Based on my statement of problem and problem of practice, my research question is: “How do secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role?” My research sub-questions are:

1. What do secondary principals believe their vice-principals' role to be?
2. How do secondary principals determine their vice-principals' role?
3. How do secondary principals support their vice-principals in performing their daily role?
4. How do secondary principals support the long-term growth of their vice-principals in performing their role?
5. What challenges do secondary principals face with working with vice-principals or the vice-principal role?

The data and insight were gained through interviewing a total of 13 secondary principals from four district school boards in Ontario. My participants' experience ranged from 2 to 16 years as secondary principal, they worked with at least one vice-principal, were from schools in urban and rural settings, and from public and Catholic systems. The sample was equally split between male and female gender.

Significance of the Study

My study seeks to explore how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. As the principal role has become more complex and the work required has intensified, principals need to effectively utilize their vice-principals to help them lead and manage schools. For instance, 96% of Canadian principals reported increased workload, with principals in Prince Edward Island averaging 54.6 hours a week and English-speaking principals in Quebec averaging between 55 to 59 hours per week (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b). Consistent with other Canadian and United States studies (e.g., Cattonar et al., 2007; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Pollock et al., 2014), operational duties dominated how principals spent their time, with only 4.7 hours per

week devoted to instructional leadership (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b). It is important to clarify that education in Canada is a provincial and territorial responsibility, so although the particular tasks may look different, what is clear is that principals work long work weeks. Principals' work is bounded by federal and provincial laws, school district and school policies, and teacher-employer collective agreements (Brien, 2004). The results of my study will shed light, from secondary principals' perspectives, on the extent to which their vice-principals are provided with opportunities to perform instructional and operational duties to support their principals in terms of leading and managing schools. Through the secondary principals' perspectives, my study can influence how vice-principals prepare for the role, how vice-principals perform their duties, and how principals can support the short-term and long-term growth of their vice-principals. My study can also affect the course content and structures in principal certification programs, can revise what professional learning opportunities are provided by associations that represent principals and vice-principals, and what learning opportunities are provided by district school boards. My study is timely for school administrator succession planning, since after 2018, 39% of Ontario secondary vice-principals will be eligible for retirement (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2008).

My study will add to the existing literature to gain a deeper understanding of the growing complexity of the vice-principal role. The duties of vice-principals have not been well researched and published (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012; Brien, 2004; Celikten, 2001; Cranston et al., 2004; Di Tillio, 2015; Domel, 2001; Fields, 2002; Gaston, 2005; Glanz, 1994; Hausman, Nebeker, McCreary, & Donaldson, 2002; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002; Wong, 2009). My

study can help address the concern that “the knowledge base remains inadequate to meet the needs in understanding this vital role that the assistant principal plays in educational administration” (Hausman et al., 2002, p. 137). In particular, my study will add to the limited research of principals’ perspectives of the vice-principal role, which is important since principals work closely with their vice-principals and assign their vice-principals the duties to perform (Marcoulides & Heck, 1993; Vladika, 2010).

The Ontario Context

Ontario principals’ and vice-principals’ practices are guided by the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). The Ontario Leadership Framework, a major component of the Ontario Leadership Strategy, is used to prepare, select, professionally develop, and formally appraise Ontario principals and vice-principals (Winton & Pollock, 2016). There are five domains in the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF), based on the research of Ken Leithwood, which describes an integrated approach to Principal/Vice-principal as operations manager to effectively run a school, instructional leader to lead and facilitate staff professional learning to support student learning and achievement, and transformational leader to create the school working conditions for collaborative professional learning communities (Leithwood, 2012). The five domains are: (1) setting directions, (2) building relationships and developing people, (3) developing the organization to support desired practices, (4) improving the instructional program, and (5) securing accountability (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Specific managerial and operational duties include: student discipline, safety, instruction, and supervision; staff supervision, evaluation, cooperation, and safety; special education; school access; ministry reports; building maintenance;

community; school council; and board reports (Ontario Principals' Council, 2012). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2014) continues to focus on student achievement and closing the achievement gap for all students with four renewed goals: (1) achieving excellence, (2) ensuring equity, (3) promoting well-being, and (4) enhancing public confidence.

The roles of principal and vice-principal are influenced by education policies in Ontario. Policies are created by the government to adapt to changes in society (e.g., demographics, economy, technology) (Fullan, 2001), and subsequently may mandate changes at the school level in behaviour, practices, and programs (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014a; Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) guides the school administrator's role and expects administrators to be both leaders and managers (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Other Ontario Ministry of Education policies to which principals must adhere include: *Bill 212: Progressive Discipline and School Safety* (2007), *Equity and Inclusivity Education in Ontario Schools* (2009), and *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010a).

Implementing policies requires school leaders to understand the rationale, intended outcome, and potential benefits of each policy to student learning and achievement (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Policies need to be interpreted and may be implemented differently than intended (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Winton & Pollock, 2016). Policies are “complex, unpredictable, and inherently political rather than a linear process that distinguishes between actors who (ideally) make policies based on a rational model of decision making and others who carry out these decisions” (Winton & Pollock, 2016, p.

22). Since school leaders must comply with education policies and are accountable to achieve the goals and outcomes of the policies, there is limited autonomy for principals to challenge policies or implement them creatively based on school context (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b; Pinto, 2015; Pollock et al., 2014; Ryan, 2012). Thus, the school administrator role and the work performed are influenced by education policy.

Instructional Leadership

In the 1980s, principals' approach to instructional leadership involved *directly* influencing teaching and learning. Instructional leadership comprised the principal, as an authority and expert in teaching and learning, using a top-down approach to work directly with individual teachers to supervise, develop, and improve curriculum and instruction (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Cuban, 1988; Hallinger, 2003; Horng & Loeb, 2010). Such an approach received criticism since it was considered unrealistic for principals in large schools to work directly with each individual teacher. Principals also lacked sufficient curriculum expertise in all subjects to support teachers (Cuban, 1988; Horng & Loeb, 2010). Research also showed that principals, through their top-down approach, conducted classroom observations with or without follow-up, which had no-to-minimal influence on student learning and achievement (Fullan, 2014; Horng & Loeb, 2010).

Due to the growing research in educational leadership, principals now approach instructional leadership by *indirectly* influencing teaching and learning. Since the 1990s, instructional leadership has shifted from the principal directly influencing teaching and learning as “an inspector of teacher competence” to the principal indirectly influencing teaching and learning as a “facilitator of teacher growth” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 374).

A synthesis of 43 research studies conducted from 1980 to 1995 concluded that principals have a relatively small, but statistically significant, indirect effect on teaching and learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Instructional leadership has broadened to include a principal's ability to build teacher leadership capacity and provide teachers with the working conditions such as time, opportunities to collaborate, and resources for professional learning (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Fullan, 2001, 2014; Hallinger, 2003; Hendriks & Scheerens, 2013; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Principals are also expected to be transformational leaders as they create the working conditions, within existing school structures and cultures, for teacher collaboration (Hallinger, 2005; Lynch, 2012). Principals approach instructional leadership with visibility, praise, and autonomy to positively influence teachers holistically (i.e., emotionally, intellectually, and behaviourally), and to motivate them to implement professional learning in their classrooms (Blaise & Blaise, 1999). The broadening of instructional leadership from principal leadership (developing the school mission, gaining school community trust, focusing on instruction) to teacher influence through collaboration and networks about teaching and learning positively affected instruction and student learning (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010).

Since the 1980s, models of instructional leadership have evolved. For instance, in one early model of instructional leadership, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) envisioned the principal using a top-down approach: (1) defining the school's mission through input from staff; (2) managing the instructional program by leading, facilitating, and learning alongside staff in professional learning; and (3) promoting a positive school learning

climate by providing time, resources, and opportunities for professional learning. With evolving research to distribute leadership to teacher leaders, with the principal as both a leader and facilitator (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2008), a later model viewed effective instructional leadership as three interrelated tasks: (1) using deep leadership knowledge of curriculum and instruction, (2) solving complex school-based problems, and (3) using interpersonal skills to build relationships and trust with staff, students, and parents (Robinson, 2010). A criticism of instructional leadership was that it could not occur in isolation from operations and management (Colwell, 2015; Fullan, 2014; Horng & Loeb, 2010). Leithwood, Jantzi, and McElheron-Hopkins (2006) developed four common conditions for effective school leadership, which consisted of both instructional leadership and transformational leadership: (1) developing a vision, (2) managing the teaching and learning program, (3) understanding and developing people, and (4) redesigning the organization. These conditions subsequently evolved into the five leadership domains in the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) to guide school administrators' practices (The Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). Within the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF), an integrated approach of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and operational management are evident.

The benefits of instructional leadership on improving instructional practices are well documented in empirical research. For instance, a meta-analysis of 22 published research studies comparing the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement found instructional leadership had an effect size of 0.42 on student achievement, which is almost four times greater than the effect size of 0.11 for transformational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008). *Effect size* is defined as “a numerical

way of expressing the strength or magnitude of a reported relation, be it causal or not”

(Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012, p. 101). The authors concluded that instructional

leadership focuses on improving student achievement, while transformational leadership

focuses on relationship building and working conditions (Robinson et al., 2008).

However, instructional leadership cannot occur in isolation from principals demonstrating

transformational leadership to create the school and classroom environments for teaching

and learning: “transformational leadership had strong direct effects on school conditions

(0.80) which in turn, had strong direct effects on classroom conditions (0.62). Together,

transformational leadership and school conditions explain 17% of the variation in

classroom conditions” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 467). Leithwood (2012) proposed

an integrated approach of instructional leadership and transformational leadership that:

aims to capture the relatively direct efforts of successful leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools (the primary focus of instructional leadership models), as well as their efforts to create organizational conditions which enable and support those improvement efforts (the primary focus of transformational models). (p. 112)

School context is an important factor to how principals approach instructional and

transformational leadership (Hallinger, 2007). Tension exists when principals find it

challenging to perform their instructional leadership duties as a result of having to spend

an inordinate amount of time dealing with school operations and management, in addition

to lacking the skills for instructional leadership (Jenkins, 2009). According to Neumerski

(2012), additional research is needed to determine how school leaders can improve

instruction, and more studies should be conducted on the interactions between principals (including vice-principals) and teacher leaders.

My Positionality

It is important that I explicitly state my positionality because positionality influences the entire research process. *Positionality* is described as how we, as researchers, position ourselves within a study, and is based on our beliefs as well as our professional and personal backgrounds (England, 1994; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). Positionality affects what research questions are pursued and how we go about data collection, analysis, and interpretation (England, 1994; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015).

Early in my teaching career, a goal has been to become a school administrator. After earning my Master of Education degree, I completed the Principal Qualification Program courses required to become a school administrator in Ontario. I have been fortunate to have effective principal role models who mentored me in the vice-principal role. For instance, in my sixth year of teaching, I was provided with a period release from my duties as mathematics subject head and teacher to work in the main office as an administrative assistant. However, I did not feel ready for the vice-principal role and subsequently chose to remain a classroom teacher. In my 11th year of teaching, my principal proactively sought three teachers to mentor as potential future vice-principals. I expressed interest and for the next three and a half years, we had a mentor-mentee relationship, culminating in my appointment as a secondary vice-principal. During that time, I also had a vice-principal mentor who, on a daily basis, mentored me into the vice-principal role, as we were “co-vice-principals.” Further, I developed a greater perspective

of diverse student needs with part-time teaching assignments in the Personalized Alternative Education, Special Education, and Guidance departments.

My principal mentor had a tremendous influence on how I viewed students and how the role of a school administrator was defined. He conveyed the importance of taking care of the whole child; that is, the academic, social, and emotional needs of an individual. He emphasized student achievement and my responsibility as an administrator to support teachers by encouraging them to differentiate their instruction and assessment practices to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. He also instilled in me the importance of developing strong relationships with staff and students, and of being visible and available to them during the school day.

During my five years as a secondary vice-principal, I have continually reflected on how I could support teachers and advocate for all students. I believe we need to keep the “big picture” in mind in terms of what we want from our high school graduates (e.g., gaining skills as effective communicators, problem solvers, and critical thinkers, and being capable of adapting to rapid changes that come as a result of technology) through a growth (rather than fixed) mindset. Dweck (2006) defined a “growth mindset” as one wherein intelligence develops through dedicated efforts and hard work through learning. I view teaching as complex since school administrators are dealing with people, no two people alike (e.g., students, teachers, principals, vice-principals), and working towards supporting teachers to meet all students’ learning needs.

I also need to state my understanding of school leadership. Principals and vice-principals are both operational and instructional leaders. I believe schools run effectively due to school administrators creating a school environment that is conducive for learning.

School policies need to be in place and understood for students and staff to feel safe and connected to the school, and for learning and teaching to take place. My understanding and belief of instructional leadership is that principals and vice-principals need to lead and facilitate professional learning, by creating the working conditions for professional learning communities, so that teachers know how to differentiate instruction and assessment to meet the diverse learning needs of students; this is particularly true for students identified as Special Education or as English Language Learners. Principals and vice-principals approach instructional leadership as “learning leaders”; they learn alongside teachers to build “collective teacher efficacy” so that staff professional learning makes its way into classrooms to influence student learning and achievement (Fullan, 2014). Thus, principals’ influence on teaching and learning is indirect through creating the working conditions, motivation, and commitment for staff professional learning (Leithwood et al., 2008).

Organization of Chapters

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. This chapter describes my statement of problem, problem of practice, research question and sub-questions, significance of the study, the Ontario context, instructional leadership, and my positionality.

Chapter two will review existing literature on the vice-principal role, and is divided into four sections: (1) vice-principals’ duties and responsibilities, (2) how principals determine their vice-principals’ role, (3) how principals support vice-principals in performing their daily duties and fulfilling their responsibilities, and (4) how principals support their vice-principals in their long-term growth. The chapter concludes with a

discussion of my conceptual framework using the notions of role and work which informed the study.

Chapter three will present the methodology, which is an interpretive qualitative research. I conducted a total of 13 one-time, semi-structured interviews of secondary principals in four Ontario district school boards. I describe how I approached data analysis using a modified version of the constant comparative method and data interpretation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness of my study.

Chapter four will present findings to research sub-question one. Four themes emerged from the perspectives of the secondary principals: (1) secondary vice-principals manage the daily operations of the school, (2) vice-principals build relationships, (3) vice-principals are instructional leaders, and (4) operational duties can be made instructional. The findings are divided into two chapters since my participants spent half of the interview responding to the first research sub-question.

Chapter five will present my findings to research sub-questions two to five. Ten themes emerged from this portion of the research, based on the secondary principals' perspectives. The first eight themes have to do with strategies used by principals to work with their vice-principals: (1) secondary vice-principal duties are assigned collaboratively using a team approach, (2) principal and vice-principal roles are not much different, (3) principals offer short-term supports through collaborative problem solving and decision making, (4) regular communication is important, (5) principals support by modeling, (6) principals provide long-term support for vice-principals by using the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-reflection tool, (7) principals encourage their vice-principals

to perform all the duties, and (8) principals have coaching conversations with their vice-principals. The final two themes have to do with challenges principals face: (9) composition of the administrative team, and (10) increased workload.

Chapter six will present a discussion and interpretation of my findings. I argue that a neoliberal approach to education has influenced how secondary principals understand and negotiate the vice-principal role in Ontario. Three tensions emerged: (1) principal and vice-principal roles are similar, (2) vice-principals find it challenging to prioritize or balance their operational and instructional tasks, and (3) the composition of the school administrative team. The discussion and interpretation refer back to the review of literature and conceptual framework.

Chapter seven will present a summary of my conclusions drawn from the analysis to answer each research sub-question. Limitations to my study are shared. Implications for my own practice, professional practice, educational policy, and research in educational leadership are discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

My literature review is organized around four themes pertaining to the vice-principal role: (1) duties and responsibilities, (2) how principals determine their vice-principals' role, (3) how principals support vice-principals in performing their daily role, and (4) how principals support vice-principals in their long-term growth. My first four research sub-questions correspond with the four themes identified in this literature review. Following the review of existing literature, I describe my conceptual framework, using the notions of role and work, which informed the study. For clarity, I define *position* as one's formal title (such as "principal" or "vice-principal"), *role* as the expected behaviour in the position, *duties* as the assigned tasks to be performed, and *responsibility* as the obligation to fulfill in terms of performing the assigned tasks.

Vice-Principals' Duties and Responsibilities

The first theme, vice-principals' duties and responsibilities, is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on managerial and operational duties. The second section pertains to the vice-principal as an instructional leader. The third section focuses on aligning actual and ideal roles. The fourth section discusses role complexity and increased workload.

Managerial and operational duties. Historically, the vice-principal role focused on managerial and operational tasks. The role was created to support principals in managing their school in the face of growing student enrollment and increasing responsibilities, which freed up time for principals to spend on instruction (Gaston, 2005; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Mertz, 2006; Mertz & McNeely, 1999). Seminal research

conducted in 1970 surveyed 1,270 United States vice-principals and classified the vice-principal role into six categories: (1) school management, (2) staff personnel, (3) community relations, (4) student activities, (5) curriculum and instruction, and (6) pupil personnel items (Austin & Brown, 1970). In the study, the vice-principals identified student discipline and student attendance as the top two duties performed, with the vice-principal “pretty much the person who actually kept things going” (Austin & Brown, 1970, p. 23). The same data collection instrument was used almost two decades later, and indicated that student discipline remained the number one duty performed by vice-principals (Pellicer, Anderson, Keefe, Kelley, & McCleary, 1988).

Today, the vice-principal role remains predominantly managerial and operational. Vice-principals are often described as the *chief disciplinarian* (Bartholomew, Melendez-Delaney, Orta, & White, 2005), and student discipline is consistently found to be the top or a major duty performed by vice-principals (Barnett et al., 2012; Celikten, 2001; Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003; Cranston et al., 2004; Domel, 2001; Glanz, 1994; Harris et al., 2003; Hausman et al., 2002; Lattuca, 2012; Lee, Kwan, & Walker, 2009; Melton, Mallory, Mayes, & Chance, 2012; Mertz, 2000; Militello, Fusarelli, Mattingly, & Warren, 2015; Scott, 2011; Singletary-Dixon, 2011; Sun, 2012; Terosky, 2014; Weller & Weller, 2002). It is important to note that vice-principals felt ill-prepared for the realities of managing student discipline as their principal qualification courses emphasized preparing for the principal role rather than the vice-principal role (Barnett et al., 2012; Chute, 2008; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Rintoul & Kennelly, 2014). Vice-principals also manage conflict resolution between parents and staff (Barnett et al., 2012; Hausman et

al., 2002; Madden, 2008; Scott, 2011). Thus, vice-principals are also known as a school's *operations manager* (Hess, 1985).

In addition to supporting students, staff, and parents, vice-principals perform other managerial, operational, and administrative duties. The vice-principal role is described as fast-paced and requires skills, knowledge, and time to multi-task and prioritize a multitude of duties such as: completing paperwork and reports; responding to e-mails and phone messages; attending meetings in the school and at the district school board office; supporting Special Education students; addressing occupational health and safety concerns; being visible in hallways, cafeterias, and school parking lots; serving on the emergency response team; organizing and supervising school activities, special events, and assemblies; and assuming the role of principal when the principal is away from the building (Armstrong, 2014; Barnett et al., 2012; Chan et al., 2003; Gaston, 2005; Grate, 2005; Hausman et al., 2002; Madden, 2008; Nieuwenhuizen, 2011; Norton, 2015; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). The technical aspects of the operational tasks are often learned and performed through trial-and-error (Domel, 2001; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The complexity and demands of the vice-principal role are shaped by social, political, and legal influences (Barnett et al., 2012; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; National Association for Secondary School Principals, 1991), which makes it very challenging to create a standard list of duties that would pertain to all vice-principals (Lattuca, 2012).

Despite current education policies that hold schools accountable for student achievement through strategies to improve instructional practice, vice-principals' duties and responsibilities have predominantly remained operational and managerial. It can be argued that the current vice-principal role has not changed substantially since the 1930s:

“just an exalted clerk upon parent conferences, behaviour problems, programming students, registering students, pupil attendance, educational and vocational guidance, making the master schedule, curriculum revision, and classroom visitation” (Rice, Conrad, & Fleming, 1933, p. 260). The long-established role is problematic since vice-principals find it difficult to perform their operational duties with the added responsibility of providing instructional leadership to support teachers in meeting the diverse student learning needs (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Vice-principals may become frustrated when their day is dominated by managerial duties rather than providing instructional leadership (Chute, 2008; Daresh, 2004; Melton et al., 2012).

Instructional leadership. Vice-principals are performing increased instructional leadership. Instructional leadership is demonstrated by leading and facilitating professional learning and providing the working conditions for collaborative professional learning communities (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Fullan, 2001, 2014; Hallinger, 2003; Hendriks & Scheerens, 2013; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2008). Sun (2012) replicated Glanz’s (1994) seminal study to determine whether there have been changes in what vice-principals perceive they should do and what they actually do. In both studies, each conducted in New York City, student discipline was ranked the number one duty performed, and parent conferences and administrative duties (paperwork) appeared in the top seven duties. Although vice-principals continue to spend most of their time with operational duties, the role has evolved to include instructional leadership (Sun, 2012). In particular, instructional leadership ranked 20th as an actual duty performed in 1994, increased to rank sixth in 2010 in a high-stakes testing and accountability school system (Sun, 2012). In both

studies, vice-principals ranked instructional leadership, evaluation of teachers, and formulating goals in the top six duties they felt they should perform. Thus, the actual and ideal duties in the 2010 study are more aligned than in the 1994 study (Sun, 2012).

Aligning actual and ideal roles. Vice-principals seek a connection between what they want to do and what they actually do. The vice-principal role serves two purposes: to assist the principal by performing their assigned duties, and to prepare for the principalship (Citty, 2010). Vice-principals' level of job satisfaction can be determined by the extent to which their ideal and actual duties are aligned (Beycioglu, Ozer, & Ugurlu, 2012; Cranston et al., 2004; Domel, 2001; Glanz, 1994; Harris et al., 2003; Kwan & Walker, 2012). Leadership opportunities to engage teachers in professional growth and learning, help set school vision, and attend professional development sessions positively influence vice-principals' level of job satisfaction (Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Kwan, 2011). Also, vice-principals enjoy evaluating teachers, being members of the school improvement plan committee, and helping to develop a shared school vision (Grate, 2005).

Vice-principals can address job satisfaction by how they interpret their role. What vice-principals do is determined by assigned, expected, and assumed roles (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1991). The *assigned* role is determined by the principal; the *expected* role is based on staff, students, parents, and the school community; and the *assumed* role refers to how the vice-principal actually performs the duties based on the assigned and expected roles (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1991). The ambiguity of the role, in the absence of a prescriptive, standardized list of duties, can permit vice-principals to interpret for themselves how to

perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities by taking their school context into account. The vice-principal role has been described as *poorly defined* (Chute, 2008; Melton et al., 2012; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010). Thus, there can be flexibility in terms of how vice-principals spend their day; that could mean they spend more time on tasks they perform well (Hausman et al., 2002). Although vice-principals want to perform instructional leadership (and that is expected of them), they feel frustrated, inadequate, and pressured as they find it challenging to balance their professional and personal lives due to the increased workload (Cattonar et al., 2007; Chute, 2008; Cranston et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2003; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Reagan, 2015; Woods, 2012).

Role complexity and increased workload. The workload of Canadian vice-principals has increased with the expectation to provide instructional leadership. The top three duties performed by Alberta principals are: (1) student affairs (supporting students, parental communication, creating and maintaining safe school environment), 12.7 hours; (2) operations management (building maintenance, budget, resources), 12.4 hours; and (3) documentation/reporting (schedules, student behaviour and absences, field trips), 7.9 hours (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b).

The vice-principal role has also become more complex. For instance, an Ontario study of secondary principals and vice-principals reported that their roles have been more complex by needing to comply with numerous education policies that need to be implemented concurrently in terms of hiring staff, school safety, and occupational health and safety (Leithwood et al., 2014). Some other challenges associated with implementing Ministry of Education policies in schools include finding the time for staff to engage in professional learning, understanding the role of unions, supporting staff resistant to

change initiatives, and keeping up with the numerous board of education memos and policies that demand timely implementation (Leithwood et al., 2014). When vice-principals spend a large amount of time on operational tasks, time is taken away from instructional duties, with the realities of the role being described as *survival* (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011).

The increased complexity of the vice-principals role can be explained by examining neoliberal education policies. A neoliberal agenda focuses on preparing students to be competitive, compliant, and productive in a global economy. In contrast, a liberal approach involves developing students into political, ethical, and aesthetic citizens (Hursh, 2000, 2007). To achieve their desired outcome, governments (such as Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia) have taken greater control of education by mandating standardized curriculum and holding schools accountable for achieving prescribed curriculum expectations through external standardized or large-scale assessments (although extent varies with country and political party approach) (Hursh, 2000, 2007; Ryan, 2012). Unlike the consequences in the United States for low standardized test scores (such as decreased funding, school closures, and teacher firings), Ontario is faced with a combination of external accountability (e.g., Education Quality and Accountability Office provincial large-scale assessments), and internal accountability (e.g., monitoring of school achievement data) (Jafaar & Anderson, 2007). The vice-principal role has evolved to include instructional leadership duties added to existing operational duties as a result of an emphasis on accountability and student achievement, making the role more demanding and complex (Gaston, 2005; Harris et al., 2003; Militello et al., 2015; Scott, 2011; Woods, 2012). Colwell (2015) advocates for vice-

principals to spend at least 50% of their time on instructional leadership (to focus on curriculum, instruction, assessment, student achievement, and professional learning); yet instructional leadership remains a minor part of how vice-principals actually spend their time (Militello et al., 2015).

However, there are certain circumstances in which the vice-principal role can focus predominantly on instructional leadership. In large high schools with six to eight administrators, a vice-principal may be assigned the position of *academic administrator*, providing instructional leadership as well as school visioning, without having to deal with student discipline (Grate, 2005; Norton, 2015; Woods, 2012). Such a position provides instructional support for the principal and offers the vice-principal aspiring for the principalship vital experience (Norton, 2015). Some schools have restructured the vice-principal role to include instructional leadership and community relations by delegating some of the operational and administrative duties to non-classroom teachers (referred to as *key workers* in the United Kingdom and *administrative assistants* or *deans* in the United States) (Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Melton et al., 2012).

This literature review details the vice-principal role as performing predominantly operational duties, preoccupied by student discipline and managing conflict. Although the role does include instructional leadership, it is overshadowed by time-sensitive and urgent managerial, operational, and administrative duties. My study seeks to determine what secondary principals believe the vice-principal role to be, and the rationale for their belief. For instance, do secondary principals view the vice-principal role as predominantly operational? If so, why? Or do secondary principals believe the vice-principal role to be a combination of leadership and management? If so, why?

How Principals Determine their Vice-Principal's Role

The second theme, how principals determine their vice-principals' role, is divided into two sections. My literature review demonstrates that principals assign the vice-principals' duties, and vice-principals view their principals as the "boss."

Assigned duties. Principals assign the vice-principal duties. Vice-principals receive their duties at the beginning of the school year, determined by their principals' specific needs and what principals are willing to delegate (Armstrong, 2012; Brien, 2004; Chute, 2008; Domel, 2001; Flowers, 2014; Gaston, 2005; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Melton et al., 2012; Mertz, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). Vice-principals can also receive duties on a need-to-be-completed basis throughout the school year (Mertz, 2006). Often, assigned duties are transferred identically from the outgoing vice-principal to incoming vice-principal (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011). Further, vice-principals may be assigned duties that their principals do not want to perform (Chirichello, 2003). Vice-principals often fulfill their responsibilities so there is no overlap with other administrators' duties, and complete their obligations with varying autonomy based on the principal's leadership style (Citty, 2010; Mertz, 2000, 2006).

Some vice-principals do have input or are able to negotiate their assigned duties, but with varying degrees of collaboration. Principals may consider their vice-principals' strengths and interests before finalizing each administrator's duties (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011). A democratic approach is to have the administrative team meet and collaboratively divide the duty list (Nieuwenhuizen, 2011). However, experienced vice-principals may use that opportunity to transfer a duty they are not interested in to a new

vice-principal on the administrative team in order to receive duties they would prefer to perform (Domel, 2001; Mertz, 2006; Nieuwenhuizen, 2011).

Principal as “boss.” Vice-principals view their principals as “the boss.” Vice-principals believe their role is strongly influenced by the principal, and their purpose is to serve their supervisor who is the ultimate decision maker (Celikten, 2001; Mertz, 2006; Militello et al., 2015; Wong, 2009). As vice-principals work closely on a daily basis with their principals, there is a need to maintain healthy relationships, for example by aligning to their principals’ style and philosophy, “do as they’re told” (Militello et al., 2015, p. 217), ask for permission if they have an idea or plan they want to implement, and know the boundaries of when to push back (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Mertz, 2000, 2006). When vice-principals seek promotion to the principalship, they must have the full support of the current principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

There is no formal job description for the vice-principal role. In Ontario, the role is legislated as follows:

Perform such duties as are assigned to the vice-principal by the principal. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 298, s. 12 (2). In the absence of the principal of a school, a vice-principal, where a vice-principal has been appointed for the school, shall be in charge of the school and shall perform the duties of the principal. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 298, s. 12 (3). (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990)

The vagueness of the official role of the vice-principal can result in *role conflict* (i.e., incompatible/contradictory expectations), *role ambiguity* (i.e., vague/incomplete expectations), and *role overload* (i.e., endless expectations) (Beycioglu et al., 2012; Getzels & Guba, 1957; Harris et al., 2003; National Association of Secondary School

Principals, 1991; Owens & Valesky, 2011). With a neoliberal approach to education focused on accountability through student achievement, the vice-principalship can be broadened into seven dimensions: (1) external communication and connection; (2) quality assurance and accountability; (3) teaching, learning, and curriculum; (4) staff management; (5) resource management; (6) leaders'/teachers' professional growth and development; and (7) strategic direction and policy environment (Kwan, 2009a, 2009b). However, as my literature review has conveyed, the vice-principal role continues to be predominantly managerial and operational, with many of the same 20 areas of focus outlined by a compilation of 26 studies from two decades ago still pertinent today: (1) discipline, (2) attendance, (3) student activities, (4) co-curricular activities, (5) guidance, (6) athletics, (7) community agencies, (8) master schedules, (9) principal substitute, (10) building supervision, (11) building operations, (12) staff support and evaluation, (13) budget, (14) reports, (15) transportation, (16) curriculum, (17) communication, (18) cafeteria, (19) school calendar, and (20) locks and lockers (Scoggins & Bishop, 1993).

My literature review suggests that the vice-principal role includes duties assigned by the principal, with varying amounts of input from the vice-principal, who must comply with their "boss." One of my research sub-questions explores how secondary principals determine their vice-principals' role. I am interested to know whether secondary principals believe their vice-principals should be allowed to provide input, and why or why not? Also, how can (or should) secondary principals establish a collaborative administrative team to determine each person's duties (as opposed to simply assigning them)?

How Principals Support Vice-Principals with Performing their Daily Role

The third theme of my literature review, how principals support their vice-principals with performing their daily role, is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the importance of strong working relationships. The second section deals with principals as mentors to their vice-principals. The final section focuses on principals helping to develop their vice-principals' personal leadership resources.

Strong working relationships. Principals can support their vice-principals' daily role by ensuring that they have a strong working relationship. Principals need to establish trusting relationships so there is regular communication and collaboration while vice-principals perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities (Chute, 2008; Colwell, 2015; Joseph, 2014; Singletary-Dixon, 2011). Principals and vice-principals need to recognize that their relationship is superordinate/subordinate, as principals have authority over what duties their vice-principals perform (Fields, 2015; Hausman et al., 2002; Wong, 2009). Ideally, principals and vice-principals need to have mutual respect and common philosophies, styles, beliefs, and vision; if not, the vice-principal may need to proactively align with the principal to make the relationship work (Colwell, 2015; Germes, 2010; Hughes & James, 1999; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Wong, 2009).

The complexity of the principal/vice-principal relationship has been documented in the literature. For example, Wong (2009) created a three-dimensional framework to describe the different working relationships of the principal and vice-principal. The first dimension concerned tasks and functions, which Wong described as being technical, structural, human, educational, political, or cultural. The second dimension dealt with roles in terms of being managers or leaders. The third dimension had to do with status,

and described the principal/vice-principal relationship as either chief/assistant, mentor/learner, or partners. The framework can be used to describe and explain why a principal/vice-principal relationship is strong or weak (Wong, 2009). As a result, principals need to develop strong working relationships with their vice-principals so the school administration can function as a collaborative team.

Mentor. Principals and vice-principals can serve in a mentor/mentee relationship in a trusting and safe environment. *Mentoring* is described as a knowledgeable colleague providing support to a less experienced colleague (Daresh, 2004). Principals can mentor their vice-principals on a regular basis to provide descriptive feedback, debrief difficult decisions, listen, engage in reflective discussions, and model how to lead people and perform specific duties (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009; Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Citty, 2010; Joseph, 2014; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Retelle, 2010; Singletary-Dixon, 2011). Mentorship is especially important for new vice-principals to avoid the “sink or swim” and “baptism by fire” analogies (Armstrong, 2010). Through mentoring, principals can build vice-principals’ leadership capacity and confidence by providing counsel concerning a variety of operational and instructional duties (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009; Brien, 2004; Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Joseph, 2014; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Singletary-Dixon, 2011; Vladika, 2010). Vice-principals can collaboratively be co-leaders and co-learners in the school administrative team, rather than perform separate duties from other administrators (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Citty, 2010). Through a mentor/mentee relationship, the vice-principal in Hibert (2000)’s study gained confidence and learned that the vice-principal role can serve others through compassion and equity/inclusivity.

Principals can also mentor their vice-principals to develop the skills to lead and facilitate teacher professional learning. Principals demonstrate commitment to the profession by serving as mentors to vice-principals, and helping them develop and strengthen their instructional leadership (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012; Wong, 2009). We cannot assume that vice-principals have the skills to lead whole staff professional learning; for instance, 32% of novice and 21% of experienced vice-principals in South Texas were uncomfortable in leading curriculum and instruction as they lacked prior opportunities to work with individual teachers and school-wide improvement initiatives (Barnett et al., 2012). Thus, principals can positively influence their vice-principals' growth through mentorship (Daresh, 2004; Gorton, 1987).

Developing personal leadership resources. Principals can support their vice-principals by developing what the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) describes as *personal leadership resources*. In Ontario, personal leadership resources include cognitive resources (problem-solving expertise, knowledge of effective school and classroom practices that directly affect student learning, systems thinking), social resources (perceiving emotions, managing emotions, and acting in emotionally appropriate ways), and psychological resources (optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and proactivity) (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Since vice-principals are involved in numerous managerial and leadership duties, they need to develop and strengthen particular skills to effectively perform their role, such as: ethical decision making, collaboration, delegation, communication, counseling, conflict management, and emotional intelligence (Cranston et al., 2004; Flowers, 2014; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010; Rintoul & Kennelly, 2014). Vice-principals need to develop their personal leadership

resources to effectively perform their role in working with a variety of people (Leithwood, 2012).

My review of the literature suggests that principals provide short-term support to their vice-principals by establishing strong working relationships through mentoring and developing personal leadership resources. My study seeks to determine how secondary principals provide regular supports for vice-principals as they perform their daily role.

How Principals Support Vice-Principals in their Long-Term Growth

The fourth theme, how principals support their vice-principals in their long-term growth, is divided into three sections. The first section discusses principals and vice-principals as co-principals. The second section describes principals and vice-principals as engaged in cognitive coaching conversations. The third section focuses on vice-principals applying for the principalship.

Co-principals. Principals and vice-principals can serve as co-principals and as shared leaders. Although each co-principal is a partner in the shared decision making and in fulfilling managerial and leadership responsibilities, the principal remains ultimately and legally in charge of the school (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). To be effective, there must to be common school vision, values, and beliefs; trust and respect; effective communication; clarity of each other's roles, and shared leadership and managerial duties (Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Rutherford, 2003). As co-principals, vice-principals can remove descriptors such as *daily operations chief* traditionally associated with the role since both principal and vice-principals share their duties (Porter, 1996). The principal role can be redesigned to make duties and responsibilities more manageable as the principal role has become too complex and difficult to perform and

fulfill alone (Cranston et al., 2004; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Hall et al., 2003; Lynch, 2011; Melton et al., 2012; Reagan, 2015). Thus, the principal and vice-principal relationship can be democratic, collaborative, and collegial, and can allow vice-principals to experience non-traditional duties such as budgeting and instructional leadership (Chirichello, 2003; Gaston, 2005).

Cognitive coaching conversations. Principals can use cognitive coaching conversations to support their vice-principals' long-term growth. Cognitive coaching conversations provide focused, intentional, and in-depth learning of specific skills and knowledge (Creasy & Paterson, 2005; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000). The purpose of cognitive coaching conversations is to develop people who are self-directed, self-managing, self-monitoring, and capable of planning, reflecting, problem solving, and making decisions (Costa & Garmston, 2016). Principals can cognitively coach their vice-principals by intentionally reserving blocks of uninterrupted time, asking open-ended questions, listening, and probing to guide their vice-principal to develop an action plan (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). Cognitive coaching is different from mentoring, as the goal is to empower, while remaining non-judgmental and withholding advice (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009; Costa & Garmston, 2016). A particular benefit of cognitive coaching conversations is reflective thinking, which allows the person being coached to deconstruct and construct their own experiences (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Williamson, 2011).

Cognitive coaching conversations can support vice-principals' long-term professional learning. For instance, in Williamson (2011)'s study, vice-principals engaged in coaching sessions that were job-embedded, authentic, learner-directed and

learner-centered, which provided reflective thinking to solve problems. The vice-principals in the study valued the coaching process as they gained confidence in their role as well as learned about themselves both personally and professionally (Williamson, 2011).

Applying for the principalship. As part of their long-term growth, vice-principals may apply to become principals when they feel ready. Vice-principals who experience higher levels of professional commitment, sense of efficacy, self-advocacy, sense of synchrony, personal challenge, community support, support and encouragement from their principal and a superintendent (i.e., are *tapped* for leadership role), and a balance between professional and personal life, are more satisfied and may be more inclined to apply for the principalship (Chan et al., 2003; Ellis & Brown, 2015; Hausman et al., 2002; Kwan, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Oleszewski, 2012; Retelle, 2010; Singletary-Dixon, 2011). Vice-principals are characterized as *upwardly mobile* when they engage in curriculum and instruction, staff personnel (e.g., dealing with grievances), community relations, resource management such as budget and finance, and pursue their own professional learning (Kwan, 2011; Madden, 2008; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Oleszewski et al., 2012).

It should be noted that not all vice-principals want to be principals. Almost one-quarter of the vice-principals surveyed by Chan et al. (2003), 40% of the vice-principals in Cranston et al. (2004), 29% of the vice-principals in Grate (2005), and 24% of the vice-principals in Scott (2011) chose to remain in the position, which they found satisfying. Reasons cited for not pursuing the principalship included: too much stress, responsibility/liability, time commitment, need to balance personal and professional lives,

salary in the principalship, lack of school funds, politics making it challenging to lead change, and enjoying the vice-principal role (Chan et al., 2003; Cranston et al., 2004; Ellis & Brown, 2015; Grate, 2005; Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Current studies portray principals as believing it is their responsibility to provide their vice-principals with long-term growth support and opportunities, whether or not their vice-principals are interested in a future principalship. This study seeks to determine how secondary principals support their vice-principals in terms of long-term growth in performing their duties and fulfilling their responsibilities. For instance, how do secondary principals support their vice-principals' long-term professional growth and learning as leaders and managers?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study explores the notions of *role* and *work*. A conceptual framework “draws upon the concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories of a particular literature base and disciplinary orientation” (Merriam, 2009, p. 67), which guides the entire study from generating the research questions, to data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and conclusion (Merriam, 2009). For clarity, a conceptual framework provides a lens based on related concepts or ideas (Mears, 2009). My conceptual framework provided a “map” to the research question and sub-questions of how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. Based on the research question and sub-questions as well as on the literature review, I determined the choice of methodology and method. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions were then related back to the review of the literature and conceptual

framework. Thus, my conceptual framework, based on the notions of *role* and *work*, was instrumental to the study.

Concept of role. The first part of the conceptual framework is the notion of *role*. Role is defined as “patterned and characteristic social behaviors, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behavior that are understood by all and adhered to by performers” (Biddle, 1986, p. 68). The Getzels/Guba model illustrates the dynamic and complex social system of the individual performing their role and fulfilling their responsibilities with other people within the organization, and describes the observed behaviour as a function of the institutional role and personality of the role incumbent (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Owens & Valesky, 2011). How people perform their role is determined by their own understanding and interpretation of the role, and by others’ expectations for the role (Biddle, 1986; Clouse, 1989). Since institutions are structural with anticipated norms and expectations, roles are assigned to people of varying hierarchal positions and responsibilities, who engage in *social behaviour* to achieve organizational goals (Getzels & Guba, 1957; Owens & Valesky, 2011). *Behavioural variation* should decrease the longer individuals perform their roles as they conform to expected behaviours (Bridges, 1965). Success can be measured by how well people perform their role based on expected norms and behaviour (Mertz, 2000). A contestation of role theory is whether:

to focus attention on the person as an individual or the person as representative of a social position... the former approach leads one to think of roles as the evolving, coping strategies that are adopted by the person, the latter conceives

roles as patterns of behaviour that are typical of persons whose structural positions are similar. (Biddle, 1986, p. 86)

Conforming to one's role has been described as a criticism of role theory since it favours the status quo, rather than acknowledging and addressing any inequitable practices (Ryan, 2007).

Specific to my study, the vice-principal role has evolved from one of operations and management to include instructional leadership. The vice-principal role continues to be defined as *duties assigned by the principal* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990), which can cause tension leading to role conflict (i.e., incompatible/contradictory expectations), role ambiguity (i.e., vague/incomplete expectations), and role overload (i.e., endless expectations) as a result of the expectations of the principal (Beycioglu et al., 2012; Getzels & Guba, 1957; Harris et al., 2003; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1991; Owens & Valesky, 2011). As my literature review conveyed, principals have control over the vice-principal role. As a result, my research problem centers on how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. I am interested in secondary principals' understanding of the vice-principal role, how they assign their vice-principals' role, and how they support their vice-principals in their short- and long-term growth to perform their duties and fulfill the responsibilities of the role.

However, a criticism of role theory is that one's role does not necessarily correspond with the actual work that one does (Ryan, 2007). People with the same role do not perform their duties in an identical manner, since no two people have the exact same understanding and interpretation of their role, belief in terms of the perceptions and

expectations of others, and approach to performing their role (Clouse, 1989; Owens & Valesky, 2011; Ryan, 2007). Also, a person could perform more than one role (Owens & Valesky, 2011). We cannot assume that vice-principals who have the same role perform the exact same work. In addition to the concept of role, I believe we need to discuss the concept of work. For instance, how do principals understand the work that vice-principals actually do?

Concept of work. The second part of my conceptual framework is based on the notion of *work*. Work, which can refer to a job, a career, or a calling, is “an activity through which an individual fits into the world, creates new relations, uses his talents, learns and grows develops his identity and a sense of belonging” (Morin, 2004, p. 3). The actual work that vice-principals do may differ from their assigned role. Specific to my study, work is defined as “the practices and actions in which principals engage to fulfill their responsibilities as school principals” (Pollock & Hauseman, 2015, p. 7). Although work has been defined as duties one gets paid for employment that adds value and contributes to society (England & Harpaz, 1990), we can broaden that definition to work can be performed at or outside of the school location, during or outside of school hours, and may be outside of the formal duties since school administrators are paid an annual salary (Pollock et al., 2015). Work can be classified as behavioural, cognitive, and emotional (Pollock et al., 2015). *Meaningful work* serves others or society, and can be characterized as being driven by social purpose, moral correctness, achievement-related pleasure, autonomy, recognition, and positive relationships (Morin, 2004). *Workload* describes the number of hours worked, the number of interactions, the number of duties performed, and the number of decisions made, which can vary as a result of the

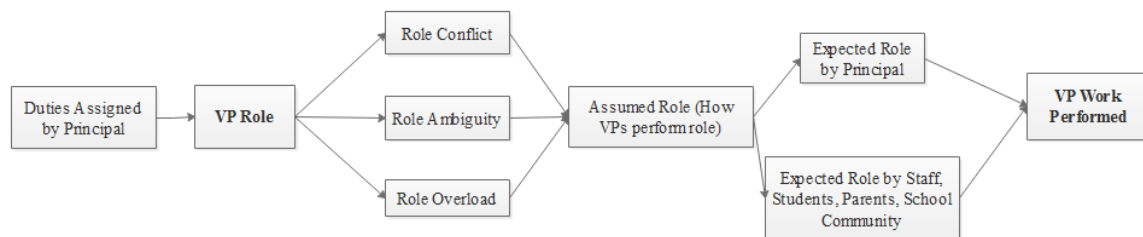
complexity and difficulty of the work in question (Leithwood et al., 2014). With the changing nature of principals' work, my study seeks to understand how secondary principals utilize their vice-principals to help them perform the numerous duties necessary to lead and manage schools, as well as how this work is shared with vice-principals.

My conceptual framework is summarized and illustrated in Figure 1. Creating a visual helped me to formalize my conceptual framework. A visual can be helpful in order to create “[a] picture of the territory you want to study, not of the study itself. It is a visual display of your current working theory – a picture of what you think is going on with the phenomenon you’re studying” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 37). I based my conceptual framework on the notions of role and work, which informed the study. As depicted in Figure 1, the vice-principal role is defined as *duties assigned by the principal* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990). Without a standardized and prescriptive duties list, the vice-principal role leads to the assumed role (i.e., how vice-principals perform their role), which is based on role conflict (i.e., incompatible/contradictory expectations), role ambiguity (i.e., vague/incomplete expectations), and role overload (i.e., endless expectations) (Beycioglu et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2003; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1991; Owens & Valesky, 2011). The actual work performed by vice-principals is based on the expectations of principals, staff, students, parents, and the school community.

Summary

My review of the literature has described the vice-principal role as predominantly managerial, operational, and administrative, and yet there is an expectation of increased

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Notions of Role and Work



instructional leadership. With the expectation to demonstrate instructional leadership, there is a better alignment of ideal and actual roles, however the vice-principal role has become more complex with increased workload. Vice-principals' duties are assigned by the principal with varying degrees of input from the vice-principal. Principals support their vice-principals in performing their role daily through mentorship, consultation, and developing their personal leadership resources. Principals support vice-principals in their long-term professional growth through cognitive coaching conversations and by sharing the principal duties, which may help prepare their vice-principals in pursuing a principalship. From my literature review, my conceptual framework emerged. My conceptual framework is based on the notions of role and work, which informed my study. I created a visual to formalize my thinking about my conceptual framework (see Figure 1). The next chapter discusses the chosen methodology and method for my study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

To answer my research question and research sub-questions, my methodology used an interpretive basic, generic qualitative study approach. Participants were recruited from four Ontario district school boards using purposeful, convenience non-probability sampling. A total of 13 secondary principals consented to participate. Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews. In this chapter, I describe my research approach, how I analyzed and interpreted my data, and how I kept trustworthiness at the forefront of the study.

Interpretive Approach

My study used an interpretive approach. To justify my choice of methodology, I took an epistemological perspective of *interpretivism*, a type of social constructionism, to describe, understand, and interpret my participants' perspectives since there is no objective truth, but shared and multiple meanings or perspectives (Crotty, 1998; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As people construct meanings or perspectives of the same phenomena in different ways, "what is perceived as real is real" (Patton, 2015, p. 121). I used an interpretivist approach to focus on my participants' perspectives: "Individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work... These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). I sought to describe and interpret the multiple realities and perspectives regarding how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. I did not select a positivist approach, since that epistemological approach views reality as objective, stable, and measurable, with the purpose to predict, control, and generalize (Gay et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009). Also, I did

not select a critical approach since my research was not about the distribution of power with the purpose to critique and challenge (Merriam, 2009).

I chose a basic, generic qualitative study approach. *Basic, generic qualitative research* is the most common approach of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009), which is defined as “not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known (or more established) qualitative methodologies” (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). Basic, generic qualitative research is appropriate to understand how participants interpret, construct, and make sense of their lives and experiences without the added dimension required in other qualitative methodological approaches such as phenomenology, ground theory, ethnography, narrative inquiry, life history, and case study (Caelli et al., 2003; Merriam, 2009). Patton (2015) added:

While students writing dissertations and academic scholars will necessarily be concerned with ontology and epistemology, there is a very practical side to qualitative methods that simply involves skillfully asking open-ended questions of people and observing matters of interest in real-world settings to solve problems, improve programs, or develop policies. (p. 154)

My method was one-time semi-structured interviews rather than focus groups, since I wanted to understand individual participants’ perspectives (rather than a group of people) and to probe them individually (Merriam, 2009). As my study consisted of interviewing secondary principals who happened to work in four district school boards, I did not perform a case study approach, since I wanted to identify common themes between participants and their experiences rather than to compare the responses bounded by each district school board (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012). I did not choose an ethnographic

approach since I did not spend time observing my participants in their schools, nor did I make field observational notes (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009). I did, however, maintain a reflective journal during my study to document my thinking (see Appendix E for a journal entry).

Qualitative Research

Based on my research question, my research design was qualitative. I used an interpretive approach to gain in-depth understanding of how secondary principals negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. Qualitative research centers on gathering descriptive (rich and detailed) data of the process, meaning, and understanding of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). As the researcher, I am the primary instrument of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). It is important to note that qualitative research is an emergent and flexible design, as the initial research plan may change during data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). I kept the number of participants small so the focus was on rich and thick descriptions with the goal to reach *data saturation*, in which further participants would not add new data but would verify themes established in the data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I did not elect to perform any quantitative research (e.g., surveys) since that design requires little interaction with participants, collects numerical data, tests a hypothesis, and focuses on generalizing results to a particular context or population (Gay et al., 2012).

Semi-Structured Interviews

My method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. I used prepared, open questions (structured) as well as questions that arose during the interview (unstructured) (Galletta, 2013; Gay et al., 2012). I selected semi-structured interviews, which is consistent with an interpretivist approach to qualitative research, to allow for in-depth understanding and interpretation of participants' perspectives and experiences (Cohen et al., 2011; Galletta, 2013; Gay et al., 2012; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). One advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow the researcher to probe or ask follow-up questions in order to seek further detail, depth, clarification, or examples beyond the prepared questions (Berg, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). The quality of the interview can be determined by comparing the length of participant and interviewer responses on the verbatim transcript: "If the parts labeled 'subject' are long and those designating the interviewer are short, you usually are looking at good, rich interview material" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 100). I allowed time in the interview for participants to think and reflect, and I made notes so as to not interrupt participants while they were speaking (Seidman, 2013); the notes allowed me to record key terms, thoughts, and ask follow-up questions at the opportune time (Patton, 2015).

My interview questions and probes were field-tested in three pilot interviews. The pilot interviews were conducted with my thesis supervisor, an Ed.D. colleague, and a secondary principal. The pilot interviews allowed for me to practice not asking leading, multiple, or closed questions, as well as to ensure the interview questions were clear and concise (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Since interviewing requires skills and techniques that can be learned through practice (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015), the pilot interviews permitted me to listen

attentively, to practice being neutral and non-judgmental, and to avoid providing feedback to my participants' responses. As a result of the pilot interviews, I rewrote one research sub-question for clarity, made minor edits to the other research sub-questions, and revised or removed some of the prepared probes. One of my research sub-questions needed to be rewritten to reflect my conceptual framework, and the emergent and flexible nature of qualitative research design allowed me to do so. My semi-structured interview guide, included in Appendix B, contains the open-ended questions participants were asked, as well as the revised probes.

Each participant was interviewed individually. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone, took place at a mutually agreed upon date and time, and in a quiet and comfortable location (Seidman, 2013). Participants were asked the same set of prepared, open questions, and the interview was a one-time session lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. Before conducting each interview, I went over the purpose of the study, received informed consent, permission to audiotape the interview, answered questions, and spent time developing rapport so each participant could speak comfortably with the interview being audio-recorded (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I strived to remain neutral, authentic, non-judgmental, and avoid sharing my own experiences, as the focus was always on my participants (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). My relationship with participants was a social, two-way interaction, and was equitable (as opposed to equal), which allowed me to ask questions and probes in a way that helped participants to feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and stories (Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). At the end of each interview, I reflected on how the interview went, what changes could occur for the next interview, and documented my thoughts in my journal (Patton, 2015).

Participants

The participants for this study were secondary principals who had been in the role for at least two years, and had been assigned at least one full-time vice-principal at their school. My rationale for choosing participants who had been in the principal role for at least two years was that these principals would be able to speak reflectively, would have already assigned roles to their vice-principals, and would have supported their vice-principals in performing their duties, both in terms of short-term support and long-term growth. One limitation to my study is that secondary vice-principals were not included, since their inclusion would have made my study too large and broad. Also, elementary principals and vice-principals were not included in my study, since elementary and secondary schools are different (Firestone, Herriott, & Wilson, 1984; Louis, Detzke, & Wahlstrom). Firestone et al. (1984) described elementary and secondary schools as “loosely linked,” since secondary schools are less centralized than elementary schools in terms of size, staff, specialization, and gender composition, resulting in more difficulty to arrive at shared goals. Also, elementary and secondary school working conditions are different as elementary school structures – due to their smaller size – allow for greater whole-school collaboration, with principals who are more visible, supportive, hands-on, and able to provide individual feedback to teachers regarding instruction (Leithwood, 2008; Louis et al., 2010).

Sample Size

A total of 13 secondary principals from four Ontario district school boards participated in my study. To solicit diverse views, I selected participants who ranged from 2 to 16 years of principal experience, came from both rural and urban settings, from

public and Catholic high schools, had one to three vice-principals, and selected a similar number of male and female principals.

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling. *Snowball* sampling, a specific type of purposeful sampling, was used to identify additional participants (Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). I asked participants to recommend colleagues who they believed fit the criteria for my study and may be interested to participate (Patton, 2015). In order to keep potential participants from feeling pressured to participate, I asked the interviewees to make the initial contact. However, the key was to identify participants who could share their perspectives in regards to my research question rather than focus on the number of participants for the study (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

Recruitment

My participants were recruited using purposeful, convenience non-probability sampling. Having received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Board of the University of Western Ontario (see Appendix A), I reached out to Dr. Joanne Robinson, Director of Professional Learning at the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), who agreed, through arrangement with my thesis supervisor, to advertise my thesis cohort group's studies to OPC members in their weekly e-bulletin. Through Dr. Robinson, one potential participant contacted me; however, I did not hear back from this principal after I sent her the details of my study. It is important to note that during the fall 2015, principals were working during teacher labour unrest and may have been too busy to participate in my study.

Participants, through my thesis supervisor and pilot participant, contacted me and I replied with an e-mail outlining my study. In the subsequent face-to-face or telephone meeting with each participant, I went over the details of my study, ensured that participants met the inclusion criteria, answered their questions, obtained written informed consent, and then conducted the one-time semi-structured interview. A condition to participate in my study was the willingness to be audiotaped so I could focus on the participant during the interview and be able to analyze the verbatim transcript afterwards. Since I was interested in secondary principals' views of the vice-principal role in general, not necessarily at their current schools, my findings were compiled to reflect each principal's perspectives in one or more district school boards, rather than perspectives from their current district school board. My research study was supported by the OPC, which agreed to advertise my study for potential participants in their weekly e-bulletin. Through my initial participant, four participants were identified and interviewed using the snowball method. A course instructor found me one participant. My thesis supervisor, through another Faculty of Education professor, identified two further participants from a Director of Education. Further, my thesis supervisor contacted a principal colleague who agreed to participate in my study. The remaining two participants were recruited via the snowball method. The 11 secondary principals who participated in the one-time, 60-90 minute interviews were vice-principals for an average of 6.2 years and principals for an average of 5.7 years. The interviews occurred between July 2015 and December 2015. For this thesis, each principal is given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Table 1. Participants

Name	School Description	Years as vice-principal	Years as principal
Gavin	Public; suburban; 1,100 students; two vice-principals	7	8
Wayne	Public; suburban; board office	3	11
Geoff	Public; rural; 1,000 students; three vice-principals	10.5	3
Victor	Public; suburban; 1,400 students, two vice-principals	4.5	6
Denise	Public; suburban; 725 students, two vice-principals	5	6
Marla	Public; urban; 700 students; two vice-principals	6	3
Steven	Catholic; urban; 725 students; one vice-principal	5	8
Melanie	Catholic; rural; 484 students; one vice-principal	7	2
Pauline	Public; suburban; 1,400 students; two vice-principals	5.5	7
Daniel	Public; suburban; 1,021 students; two vice-principals	9	6
Olivia	Public; suburban; 1,187 students; two vice-principals	5.5	3

After writing a first draft of the entire thesis, I recruited an additional two secondary principals using the snowball method. These principals were sought to clarify and strengthen my findings and interpretation. Please see Appendix K for the interview guide for these additional participants.

Table 2. Participants

Name	School Description	Years as vice-principal	Years as principal
Stephanie	Public; suburban; 1,200 student; two vice-principals	7	3
Kyle	Public suburban; 740 student; two vice-principals	9	2

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout data collection using a modified version of the constant comparative method. *Data analysis* encompasses making sense of the data (Gay et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009) and “involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivial from the significant, identifying significant patterns, and communicating the essence of what the data reveal” (Patton, 2015, p. 521). Initial analysis of data followed an inductive approach where themes emerged rather than being imposed upon me (the researcher) (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Due to the recursive nature of data collection and analysis, I began my thematic analysis following the first interview (Merriam, 2009).

I transcribed each interview verbatim shortly after interviewing each participant. I used *Express Scribe* software to replay the interview at a reduced speed for verbatim transcription. Each one-hour interview took approximately four hours to transcribe verbatim and generated 15 pages of text. The interview transcripts and data summary tables were shared with the participants as *member checking* to allow for edits such as additions, deletions, or revisions (Creswell, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Participants were asked to respond within two weeks if they had any revisions to make to the verbatim transcript and data summary table. The *data summary table* (or *matrix*) for each participant consisted of the research sub-questions as the column headings followed by the participant’s key points with quotes (Cohen et al., 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). One participant provided extensive changes. As I did not hear back from the other participants, no other revisions were made.

Organization was important for me to manage and retrieve my data. I maintained electronic and hard copies of the verbatim transcripts (Patton, 2015). I set up a folder for each participant on my computer, which consisted of the raw data, a separate colour-coded version of the transcript with codes, and a data summary table. Transcripts and data analysis were stored securely on my computer using a password, backed-up, dated, and labeled, and participants' identities were protected using a number code (e.g., 01, 02, ...) (Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Hard copies were stored securely in a locked cabinet at home. I also shared the data summary table with each participant and invited their feedback. Appendix G contains the first page of a data summary table for Marla.

The first step of the ongoing data analysis was *reading/memoing*. I wrote notes on the margins of the verbatim transcript during the initial readings to make sense of the data (Gay et al., 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). My memoing notes consisted of key words or phrases to capture each participant's perspectives. For instance, memoing notes written for Victor's transcript included: operational, instructional, admin team meets to determine duties, team (duties not performed in isolation, each duty has key contact, student discipline, attendance) (see appendix F). I also wrote separate notes in my journal to document my reflections, researcher biases, and emerging themes that could answer my research sub-questions (Merriam, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In particular, I was conscious to approach my study as a researcher as opposed to as a practising secondary vice-principal, since I was interested in my participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2014).

The next stage of the ongoing data analysis was *coding*. I read each verbatim transcript several times to code using key words and phrases (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003;

Galletta, 2013; Gay et al., 2012; Patton, 2015). For instance, key words and phrases for Victor's transcript included: prioritize, team, collaboration, whole school approach, and whole school picture (see appendix F). I used *MS Word* software to highlight responses using colours based on my five research sub-questions. It was especially important for me to be upfront and conscious of researcher bias and to use the inductive approach by intentionally allowing the codes to emerge during the initial data analysis process (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012; Patton, 2015); a visual analogy that might be helpful to understand the inductive approach is thinking about moving from a wide to a narrow funnel (Cohen et al., 2011). The initial data analysis, where I read/memoed and coded each interview separately, was a *vertical analysis*, or first phase of the inductive approach (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). An excerpt from Victor's transcript appears in appendix F to illustrate how I wrote margin notes (i.e., memoed), key words or phrases (i.e., coded), and colour-coded based on the research sub-questions.

After I interviewed six secondary principals, I performed a thematic analysis to compare participants' responses. I conducted a *horizontal analysis*, or second phase of the inductive approach (Miles et al., 2014), by grouping and combining similar or related codes into themes, followed by introducing sub-themes (Galletta, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Thematic analysis involved a line-by-line analysis, repeating the reading/memoing and coding stages for each of the first six interviews. Appendix H identifies the themes and sub-themes that emerged after the first six interviews.

For interviews seven to 11, I conducted vertical and horizontal analyses after each interview. First, I conducted a vertical analysis by reading/memoing, followed by coding

each interview separately. Then, I conducted a horizontal analysis to compare the codes for the current interview with the themes and sub-themes emerging from previous interviews (Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam, 2009); this is known as a modified version of the *constant comparative method* (Cohen et al., 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). What I mean by a modified version of the constant comparative method is that I did not develop grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The new data either converged into the existing themes and sub-themes or diverged by refining or creating new themes or sub-themes (Guba, 1978). It is important to note that at a certain point during the semi-structured interviews, I was no longer neutral, since my questioning now focused on understanding the perspectives arising from the emerging themes from previous participants (Miles et al., 2014). Ongoing data analysis was beneficial since I could use the deductive process to probe a participant based on previous participants' responses and emerging themes. Appendix I contains the themes and sub-themes after nine interviews.

The goal of data analysis is to reach saturation. *Data saturation* occurs in qualitative research when further data collection does not add anything new, becomes repetitive, and redundant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specific to conducting semi-structured interviews, data saturation occurs when participants would be sharing the same or similar perspectives and becomes repetitive, with no new themes and sub-themes emerging during on-going data analysis (Cohen et al., 2011; Gay et al., 2012; Patton, 2015). For my study, data saturation was reached after six interviews; however, I continued to interview an additional five participants, seeking varied experiences based on gender, urban/rural/suburban settings, public and Catholic systems, and school population.

After 11 interviews, data collection was complete, and intensive analysis occurred. For each interview, I once again conducted a vertical analysis and a horizontal analysis, and re-read each data summary table. I identified themes and sub-themes between participants, which became answers to my study's research sub-questions (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). I organized the themes and sub-themes in an intensive analysis chart, which consisted of participants' collective views with quotes (Cohen et al., 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In total, 168 pages of verbatim transcription from 11 participants were reduced to 34 pages, which pertained to the themes and sub-themes for each of the research sub-questions. The themes became exhaustive, mutually exclusive, and reduced to a manageable number to answer my research question (Merriam, 2009). Appendix J contains an excerpt from my intensive analysis chart.

My data analysis used a modified version of the constant comparative method. The *modified version of the constant comparative method* is on-going data analysis during data collection to compare new data with existing data to identify and refine themes that emerged (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Cohen et al., 2011; Merriam, 2009). In *naturalistic inquiry*, the beginning stage of data analysis is totally inductive to search for themes; midway in data analysis is both inductive and deductive to search and verify themes; the end of data analysis is mainly deductive to confirm themes (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). For my study, the first six interviews were totally inductive; and interviews 7 to 11 were both inductive and deductive. There was a back-and-forth inductive process between the themes and the data to create a list of emerging themes, followed by a deductive process to confirm the themes or create additional themes (Creswell, 2014). After the intensive data analysis, I

conducted an additional two interviews, which were totally deductive, as I sought further perspectives to support and confirm the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Interpretation

Data interpretation occurred after informal data analysis for each interview and occurred after intensive data analysis in interviews 11 and 13. *Data interpretation* describes as how I, as the researcher, made judgments to interpret the findings, made inferences, and arrived at conclusions (Patton, 2015). Each finding was substantiated by the interview data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I connected my findings back to the literature review and conceptual framework (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Through data interpretation, four questions were answered: What is important in the data? Why is it important? What can be learned from it? So what? (Gay et al., 2012).

Trustworthiness of Study

I now describe the trustworthiness of my study. *Trustworthiness* is addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethics (Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015).

Credibility. One criterion for the trustworthiness of a study is to focus on credibility. To address credibility, I used member checking by sharing my verbatim transcript and data summary table with the participant and invited feedback to identify any inaccuracies or misinterpretations as well as to provide opportunity for additional information (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). My aim was for consistency of findings and interpretations between researcher and participant: “The investigator who has received the agreement of the respondent groups on the credibility of his or her work has established a strong

beachhead towards convincing readers and critics of the authenticity of the work” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 315). In addition to member checking, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued is the best strategy for credibility, I also used data saturation, in which further participants do not add to existing findings (Merriam, 2009).

Triangulation was not used to address credibility. *Triangulation* can occur with using multiple methods, data sources, investigators, or theories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Gay et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009). Mears (2009) argued against using triangulation if the purpose of the research study is to learn about participants’ meanings and experiences. Credibility was sought directly from the participants in the study through member checking (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015), which aligns with the criteria outlined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012):

Criteria for evaluating qualitative research differ from those used in quantitative research, in that the focus is on how well the researcher has provided evidence that her or his descriptions and analysis represent the reality of the situations and persons studied. (p. 112)

Also, triangulation, which is one strategy to address credibility, should only be used if “it can be contribute to understanding the phenomenon; however, they must be able to articulate why the strategy is being used and how it might enhance the study” (Thurmond, 2001, p. 253). For my study, I chose semi-structured interviews as my method since I wanted to learn about secondary principals’ perspectives of the secondary vice-principal role. Credibility was addressed through member checking and data saturation since my focus remained working directly with my participants, namely secondary principals, as I addressed the criteria of Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) for

evaluating qualitative research. Bodgan and Biklen (2003) cautioned us with using the term triangulation, which lacks precision and clarity, simply for the sake of attempting to convince the reader the study is credible.

Dependability. A second way to address trustworthiness is through dependability. To enhance dependability, I left an audit trail so readers can understand the data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Cohen et al., 2011; Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). As stated by Merriam (2009), “a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense – they are consistent and dependable” (p. 221). Through the audit trail, I strived to explain my processes, and included in the appendices excerpts of the interview data transcribed verbatim, discussion of how data was analyzed using an iterative process, and my reflective journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability. A third way to address trustworthiness is through transferability. Using rich, thick, and detailed description, transferability aims for the reader to determine whether or not the findings of the study are applicable to their own context (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). Transferability can also be addressed by ensuring that participants selected for the study have diverse experiences. For my study, I sought secondary principals with varying years as principal, rural and urban settings, school size, and public and catholic schools.

Confirmability. A fourth way to address trustworthiness is through confirmability. As a current secondary vice-principal, my research question resonated with me. I incorporated *reflexivity* so I remained neutral and objective (Gay et al., 2012): “critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases,

theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation” (Merriam, 2009, p. 229). I am aware, as a researcher, that I was the main research instrument (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). I needed to be non-judgmental, non-evaluative, and self-aware of how I could influence the study by maintaining a reflective journal to document my background and experiences in relation to the study, researcher biases, assumptions, values, and beliefs, which I *bracketed* (or set aside) during my study (Berger, 2015; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mears, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). I exercised care when creating my interview guide so that open questions did not lead participants to particular responses. The interview guide was revised using feedback provided by my thesis supervisor and from conducting pilot interviews with my thesis supervisor, a fellow doctoral student, and a secondary principal. During data collection, I remained neutral and non-judgmental so that the focus was on participants’ perspectives rather than on me providing feedback to affirm their responses. During data analysis, I allowed themes to inductively emerge from the data and intentionally bracketed what I predicted could be my findings. I incorporated member checking by sharing my analysis with participants to confirm I accurately captured their perspectives and used thick descriptions to leave an audit trail (Berger, 2015; Creswell, 2014). During data interpretation, I related my findings back to my literature review and conceptual framework to understand what my findings meant in relation to professional practice, educational policy, and research in educational leadership.

Ethics. A fifth way to address trustworthiness is through ethics. My study commenced after receiving approval from the Research Ethics Board of the University of

Western Ontario. My regional study was supported by the Ontario Principals' Council, which included a blurb in their weekly e-mail bulletin to help me recruit secondary principals. In order to participate in my study, participants needed to provide informed consent, have all their questions answered, and be made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and could refuse to answer any interview question (Cohen et al., 2011; Gay et al., 2012; Patton, 2015). There was no anticipated physical, mental, or social harm to participants as a result of participating in my study, and deception was not used (Gay et al., 2012; Patton, 2015). I strived to be ethical at all times, especially during data collection and analysis. Had ethical dilemmas arisen, my thesis supervisor and the university's Research Ethics Board would have been notified. At all times, participants' rights, dignity, and privacy were respected and protected (Cohen et al., 2011). Confidentiality was assured, as electronic data were stored on my computer using a password, participants' identities protected using a number code, and the data made accessible only to my thesis supervisor and myself (Gay et al., 2012; Seidman, 2013). Furthermore, hard copies of the signed informed consent forms, all data, the audio recorders, and my reflective journal were kept securely in a locked cabinet (Seidman, 2013).

Summary

This chapter presented the chosen methodology and method for my study. My methodology was the interpretive basic, generic qualitative study approach and my method was semi-structured interviews. I conducted a total of 13 one-time interviews with secondary principals from four Ontario district school boards. In this chapter, I described my study approach, how I analyzed and interpreted the data, and discussed the

importance of trustworthiness. In the next chapter, I present my findings to the first research sub-question.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS – SECONDARY PRINCIPALS’ PERSPECTIVES OF THE VICE-PRINCIPAL ROLE

Chapter four presents the findings for the first research sub-question: What do secondary principals believe their vice-principals’ role to be? This chapter is divided into four sections, corresponding to the four themes that emerged from the research: (1) secondary vice-principals manage the daily operations of the school, (2) secondary vice-principals build relationships, (3) secondary vice-principals are instructional leaders, and (4) secondary vice-principals perform operational duties that can be made instructional. Each theme is divided into sub-themes to present the perspectives of the secondary principals interviewed.

Vice-Principals Manage the Daily Operations of the School

Secondary principals in my study believed that a vice-principals’ role is to manage the daily operations of a school. According to participants, vice-principals are managers who are responsible for the smooth operation of a school so that student learning can take place in a safe and supportive environment. This section is divided into two sub-themes: (1) the vice-principal role is reactive and time consuming, and (2) vice-principals need to take a proactive and preventive approach.

The secondary principals in the study reported that their vice-principals are responsible for the daily operations and management of the school, which encompasses student discipline, attendance, conflict resolution, and occupational health and safety. As Denise stated: “the general interaction with students, the timetabling, the discipline, the daily needs are the role of the VP, the overall needs of the school, and managing of the staff.” Melanie added that vice-principals deal with urgent matters that involve school

safety, which take priority: “A lot of those duties that have to be done in the day take precedence. If you have a student who comes in your office who has had a violent incident or threatens self-harm, that takes over your day.” Further, Gavin shared how his vice-principals perform their daily operational duties:

Vice-principals play a really huge role of being the glue that keeps the school together... involved in the eyes and ears of the school in terms of problem solving, mediating, as far as setting the right tone in the school, creating a culture that is inclusive and supportive and safe for kids and staff alike... One of my mentors described the vice-principal’s role and the superintendent’s role as the armpit of the system. It’s where the work, the leverage point in the system, if you think of the arms.

Gavin articulated that vice-principals are involved in challenging situations and must address them in a timely and efficient manner for staff and student safety. He used the metaphor “armpit of the system” to convey the importance of the operational duties, which are often reactionary and time-consuming.

Reactive and time consuming. The secondary principals interviewed said that the vice-principal role involves reacting to situations that arise during the school day to keep students safe, which is time consuming. They stated that a main or major duty of the vice-principal, which can occupy 20% to 100% of the school day, is reacting and responding to student discipline, conflict resolution, and attendance. For instance, Victor reported that his vice-principals’ entire day can be spent reacting to student behaviour issues and supporting teachers to more effectively engage their students: “You could go two weeks and just deal with discipline and with supporting teachers to understand how

to support students related to discipline.” Geoff added: “The same kid who skipped today will skip tomorrow and you can’t change the world. You can make small steps and you can work towards it. And you can’t fix kids... but you are making a difference.” Geoff believed his vice-principals may meet multiple times with the same students regarding attendance concerns, and emphasized that changing behaviour may be a slow process. Olivia explained that her vice-principals could spend the majority – if not all – of the school day reacting to situations that arise and supporting students. Olivia noted that at her school, the punitive approach of assigning consequences for negative behaviour has been replaced by a restorative approach:

We have a restorative approach to student discipline... students need to restore the damage they have done through a process that often involves conferencing. They need to understand the influence that their behaviour has on their achievement and their studies... A student is involved in a fight and ends up in the vice-principal’s office and explains what happens. They break down crying... being bullied, or abusing drugs or alcohol, and they really need some support.

Olivia indicated that her vice-principals react to student discipline or incidents and spend a lot of time investigating what occurred. If students are in conflict with other students or staff, her vice-principals resolve the conflict using a restorative approach to mend damaged relationships. However, vice-principals can also be proactive and use a preventive approach.

Proactive and preventive approach. In addition to reacting to situations, the secondary principals in the study stated that vice-principals approach their roles

proactively to support students, which can deter incidents from occurring. As Pauline declared, “an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure.” Olivia stated that by being proactive, a positive school culture can be created through visibility and can prevent issues from escalating: “Working proactively at creating a school culture where their role in the disciplinary aspect would be reduced significantly.” Additionally, Steven expects his vice-principal to be proactive by being visible in the school:

A lot of our time is spent collectively in proactive behaviour. Like when the bell goes, [the vice-principal] and I are in the hallways. During lunch, we have two lunch periods; our time is devoted in being with the kids. You spent 15 minutes in the yard and you save two hours in the afternoon... we sort of have general agreement of visibility of students, staff, and parents.

Steven highlighted the importance of his school administrative team being visible in the school, especially at the beginning and end of the school day, as well as during lunch. He and his vice-principal proactively get to know students by building relationships, which may deter incidents from occurring.

Secondary Vice-Principals Build Working Relationships

The second theme that arose while secondary principals discussed what they believed the vice-principals’ role to be was building strong working relationships. This theme is divided into four sub-themes: (1) relationships with the administrative team, (2) relationships with students, (3) relationships with staff, and (4) relationships with parents.

The secondary principals in the study spoke of the importance for their vice-principals to develop relationships with the administrative team, students, staff, and

parents. The vice-principal role involves supporting a variety of people throughout the school day. Specifically, Daniel perceived the vice-principal role to be about supporting other people's needs: "We are an organization that supports people. You're either supporting the student, the staff member, or staff member to student interactions. That's the majority of how your day is spent." When asked for the top three duties of the vice-principal role, Denise replied:

I would say it's developing relationships with students, it's developing relationships with staff, and it's developing relationships with parents... if you're not respected by any one of those groups you won't be effective. What creates respect is it goes back to trust, it goes back to a sense of fairness, consistency, and reasonableness. They're all character traits as well. If students view you as someone who doesn't listen then they are never going to talk with you. If parents feel you mistreat their children they won't talk with you either. If staff believes that all you do is let kids get away with everything and give into parents' demands they won't feel you value them... if there was anything standing in the way, I would take it back to relationships... it is a relationship piece because there is a lack of trust somewhere.

Denise believes that her vice-principals need to develop positive relationships with staff, students, and parents to enhance their effectiveness to perform their duties and responsibilities. She stated that her vice-principals need to model positive, respectful, and supportive interactions with staff, students, and parents to earn their respect and trust.

Without such positive relationships, Denise believes, vice-principals cannot effectively perform their role.

Relationships with the administrative team. The secondary principals emphasized the importance for their vice-principals to have trusting relationships with their administrative team, consisting of the principal and vice-principal(s), to perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities. For example, Victor expressed that strong working relationships are needed for regular communication and shared decision making: “Our work desks are side-by-side-by-side. We communicate I would say 24 hours a day... we’re communicating multiple times a day... you need to build relationships and support your vice-principals.” Also, Geoff shared that his vice-principals need to work with the various administrator personalities: “Everyone has quirks. They may be learning to work with your quirks. And you are working with them to make the best of it.” Further, Steven shows appreciation for his vice-principal as he “buys him a coffee every morning,” while Pauline, before the December holidays, “took them out to dinner today. I try to say thank you a whole lot.” As a result, principals can develop relationships with their vice-principals through showing kindness.

Wayne discussed the importance for vice-principals to have strong relationships with their principals:

If the vice-principal doesn’t feel they can trust and have open communication and to express some concerns or challenges, you’re not going to find out about it. And therefore you won’t be able to support them as well... you have to develop those relationships and trust which don’t happen just over night and takes effort.

Wayne shared that strong relationships take time to build and he, as principal, is responsible to ensure that his vice-principals are comfortable approaching him for advice, direction, and support. Without such relationships, vice-principals may be hesitant to share their challenges with their principals.

Relationship with students. The secondary principals in the study stated that a major part of the vice-principal role is building working relationships with students to support and advocate for them. Melanie articulated that her vice-principals need to be visible in the school to get to know the students: “It’s being out in the hallways, being visible, knowing a little about them, supporting them in their events, their athletics, it’s having that presence because you have that relationship with kids.” Further, Daniel explained that his vice-principals develop working relationships with students to support them when they experience conflict and to make appropriate decisions in the future:

The relationship piece of the VP is to bring some mediation between those two people so they can get back to a place where they respect each other and work together and/or layer with negative thoughts; that’s a relationship. There is the relationship where our children for whatever reason comes into conflict, and where there may never have been a relationship, has eroded even further. Two of our children let their hormones run away from each other and take a front and bump into each other and get into a physical altercation and that has to be remediated. There are those relationships that break down between kids, relationships that go in negative directions, the fights that happen, mismanagement of

what kids post in social media, and you're having to deal with those challenges.

Daniel stated when a vice-principal deals with student conflict, whether students were originally friends or not, there is a relationship. Once a situation has been dealt with, vice-principals are able to put short-term and long-term plans in place to support students in terms of changing their behaviour. By being supportive and approachable, vice-principals are able to develop relationships with students and to support them with repairing damaged relationships, which can positively influence future behaviours.

Relationships with staff. The secondary principals interviewed said that vice-principals need to develop positive relationships with teachers and support staff to help create the school working conditions conducive for student learning. Daniel shared that when there are trusting relationships between his vice-principals and staff, staff will seek the vice-principals' support regarding their professional and personal needs: "We have staff who are having challenges that may be health reasons, emotional reasons, it may be between staff, it's an ongoing piece we're dealing with relationships... you're giving different supports depending on who they are." Further, Melanie shared the importance of vice-principals having strong working relationships with staff:

You have staff members coming to you about issues with students, issues with parents, maybe issues within their personal life. You have to have those qualities and skills that enable you to dialogue with those individuals. Sometimes move them along, hold them accountable, make them feel supported depending on the situation... If you're always in your office and you don't communicate with people other than by e-mail, you

don't have that relationship with people... I encourage my VP to keep his door open at all times. Teachers need to feel supported. Even when things haven't gone perhaps as they should have gone and the teacher is at fault, you have to have that peer coaching type of communication with that person so you can still move them along and they still feel appreciated and they can still do a good job.

Melanie affirmed that staff are likely to seek out their vice-principal for support if they have a strong relationship. She added that vice-principals need to have the skills to support staff through work and personal challenges. Vice-principals can build relationships with staff through face-to-face conversations and being readily available when staff need them, which includes restoring teacher-student relationships. Staff expect vice-principals to support them, which maintains the positive relationship.

Relationships with parents. The secondary principals in the study stated that vice-principals need to develop working relationships with parents, who are partners to the school, in support of their child's education. For instance, Steven shared that his vice-principal proactively organized an evening event inviting parents to the school and seeking their feedback regarding how to improve and strengthen the school/parent partnership. He emphasized that his vice-principal provides "customer service" to parents as he listens to their input, feedback, and concerns. Kyle articulated that his vice-principals work in partnership with parents to support student success, whether parents come to the school because they are frustrated with their child's lack of success or the school contacts the parents with concerns:

When dealing with parents, it's important that [my vice-principals] treat the parents the way they want to be treated. [Parents] expect their questions to be answered in a respectful manner. If [vice-principals] don't know the answer, they will do their best to find out the answer. Sometimes the vice-principal is acting like a teacher, a social worker, and a police officer.

Kyle emphasized that he expects his vice-principals to treat parents with respect. He described parents as partners with the school, and said that his vice-principals offer support and invite input from parents. Vice-principals can support parents by offering advice or guidance as well as working with parents to change student behaviour.

Secondary Vice-Principals are Instructional Leaders

The third theme that emerged with regards to what secondary principals believed comprises a vice-principal's role is instructional leadership. Within this theme, four sub-themes emerged from the study regarding how vice-principals can demonstrate instructional leadership: they can (1) lead professional learning, (2) facilitate and support professional learning, (3) perform classroom walkthroughs, and (4) conduct teacher performance appraisals.

In addition to performing operations and managerial duties, the secondary principals in the study expect their vice-principals to be instructional leaders. Instructional leadership can be demonstrated by serving as "lead learners" or "learning leaders" to provide the working conditions (e.g., time to collaborate, resources) for professional learning to improve instruction, assessment, and student learning (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Fullan, 2001, 2014; Hallinger, 2003; Horng & Loeb, 2010; Leithwood et

al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010). Instructional leadership can also be demonstrated through organizational management by hiring effective teachers and supporting them to meet students' diverse learning needs (Hornig & Loeb, 2010). Whether leading or facilitating staff professional learning, Victor emphasized that his vice-principals are “making sure everyone has an understanding of what it is they're learning, knowing how to connect to the classroom practices, and also making connections with the actual practicality of their teaching practices.” In particular, Gavin articulated that his vice-principals demonstrate instructional leadership through involvement with creating the school improvement plan: “Vice-principals support the principal whether it be through visioning for the school, the design, implementation, or monitoring of the school improvement plan.” Further, Melanie described how she supports her vice-principal's growth as an instructional leader:

Generally speaking, a vice-principal would support the principal in delivery of professional development. In order to do that, you have to have a good handle on that educational piece. That is something we are working on together to develop his competency in that area. We should be working together on this. It should be a co-learner type of thing with the teachers.

We are working on that and getting there.

Melanie emphasized that the principal is the lead learner in the school, with her vice-principal offering support as an instructional leader. She uses a co-learner model to describe how she and her vice-principal provide staff professional learning. One way she supports her vice-principal as an instructional leader is through co-leading staff professional learning.

Lead professional learning. The secondary principals in the study stated that vice-principals are instructional leaders who help to lead staff professional learning. Specifically, Daniel shared that his vice-principals lead “professional learning at staff meetings, department meetings, and on professional training days... physically in front of the group directing activities, supporting activities, and sharing best practices.” In addition, Steven provided an example of how his vice-principal provides instructional leadership for whole staff: “He always has a part of PD day, he’ll do a chunk. He’s far more acquainted with digital learning. At our last PD day, he introduced a back-channel device he demonstrated to staff.” Further, Victor shared how he supports his vice-principals to lead whole staff professional learning:

It can be intimidating for anybody to stand up in front of 100 people to do that. What I’m working on now is getting them more comfortable standing up in front of staff, talking with staff, being able to respond to questions, being able to think on the fly, think while you’re there. If someone asks you a question that is a little challenging, how do you respond in a timely and effective way? ... I’m trying to build up their comfort level so they want to do it, and are comfortable doing it.

Victor acknowledged that vice-principals leading whole staff professional learning can be challenging. He supports his vice-principals to become more comfortable by providing them with opportunities for whole staff professional learning as well as offering suggestions to avoid potential pitfalls, and talks about how to address them if they do occur. In addition to leading staff professional learning, vice-principals serve as instructional leaders by facilitating and supporting the professional learning.

Facilitate and support professional learning. The secondary principals interviewed stated that their vice-principals facilitate and support teacher leaders to deliver teacher professional learning. Olivia emphasized the importance of building capacity in teacher leaders so “it is the teacher leader who is doing the actual professional learning. The vice-principal has a role in terms of mentoring and supporting the teacher leader to do the professional learning with staff.” Denise described how she and her vice-principals facilitate and support their teacher leaders to deliver professional learning:

As administrators, our role is not necessarily to run those as much as it is to facilitate. If you want it to happen, it needs to happen at the staff level... sometimes supporting the work means you do have to really get it up and running and then we will step back. Other times it’s to be present, to learn with the teachers, to engage in conversations... the key piece as your role as administrator isn’t to deliver PD. You support PD by participating in it... I take my staff who are interested and you will eventually create not just the lead learners but also the train-the-trainer model.

Denise emphasized that she wants her teacher leaders to deliver professional learning. She and her vice-principals support the teacher leaders in the planning process and offer resources. The intent is to build momentum with staff buy-in so change initiatives make their way into the classroom to influence student learning and achievement, which school administrators can monitor through classroom walkthroughs.

Classroom walkthroughs. In addition to leading and facilitating staff professional learning, the secondary principals in the study reported that they expect their

vice-principals to visit classes regularly when they are not in reactive mode to urgent operational situations and to observe the implementation of the school improvement plan priorities and their influence on student learning. Both Stephanie and Kyle stated that they and their vice-principals purposely and simultaneously visit three different classes each to observe the teaching and learning, to have a brief conversation with students, then meet as an administrative team to discuss observations for next steps and follow-up with teachers in terms of positives and areas of concern. Additionally, Olivia emphasized that an important component of classroom walkthroughs is following-up with teachers outside of class to learn more by asking reflective questions such as: “Why did you decide to group your students this way? How did you choose this text to use? How did you choose when the students would be ready to engage in a hands-on lab activity?” Victor articulated the purpose for him and his vice-principals to make regular classroom walkthroughs:

Getting into classrooms is a critical piece and there are multiple layers of it. It’s not always about going in and saying by being there that I am going to improve the instruction. That’s not the case. It’s about being in there enough times to understand what is happening in the instruction. Then it’s about being in there enough times to assess what students are experiencing in the classrooms and to develop an understanding and familiarity that that person is in my classroom all the time.

Victor explained that regular classroom walkthroughs provide a glimpse of teacher instruction and student learning. Classroom walkthroughs hold teachers accountable for

implementing professional learning to enhance their instructional and assessment practices, which provides data for the teacher performance appraisal.

Teacher performance appraisals. A fourth sub-theme regarding how secondary vice-principals demonstrate instructional leadership is through conducting teacher performance appraisals (TPAs). The secondary principals interviewed affirmed that their vice-principals demonstrate instructional leadership when they support teachers through the TPA. In Ontario, teachers are formally appraised every five years. Appraisals consist of a pre-observation meeting, a classroom observation, and a post-observation meeting. Stephanie stated that the TPA process allows her vice-principals to learn about teachers' instructional and assessment practices, and to offer suggestions for improvement and next steps: "The TPA is to further develop and improve teachers' instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation practices, and to have professional dialogue so they can be reflective." In addition to being evaluative, Geoff emphasized that a benefit of the TPA is getting to know the learning needs of the teachers: "a collaborative process that is supposed to be of working together so that we know their professional needs and can support them." In particular, Melanie described how vice-principals demonstrate instructional leadership through TPAs: "When they work on TPAs... it's one-to-one. Things that he's noticed about their instruction in the classroom, their classroom management, etc. Those would be opportunities for the VP to dialogue with those teachers." Melanie explained that her vice-principals engage in professional dialogue with teachers during the TPAs. During the post-observation, vice-principals can share what they observed (for instance, regarding instruction and assessment), and provide suggestions to enhance professional practice. The teacher performance appraisal, as a

formal process, can be used to help shape the teacher's professional learning. A positive and trusting vice-principal and teacher relationship would support the courageous conversation.

Vice-Principals Perform Operational Duties That Can Be Made Instructional

The fourth theme that secondary principals believe to be contained in the vice-principal's role is the obligation to approach operational duties as instructional. As previously mentioned, secondary principals stated that the vice-principal role is predominantly operational, and principals believe that approaching such managerial duties using an instructional lens can improve student learning and achievement. This theme is divided into three sub-themes: (1) student discipline and attendance, (2) timetabling, and (3) provincial large-scale assessments.

The secondary principals interviewed spoke about how operational duties can be made instructional. For instance, Marla shared: "You do it in informal ways whether it is a teacher performance appraisal... whether it is a discussion with a staff member... when working with a student." Specific to students, Steven spoke about how his vice-principal approaches student discipline by being supportive, rather than punitive, to change behaviour: "One of the indicators of an effective VP is they're not clobbering kids, that doesn't work anymore." Also, Victor described how the duties of his vice-principals, who spend over half of the day supporting students and staff, can be considered instructional:

I would hope you would always consider it instructional. It may not be tied directly to ministry documents and curriculum expectations. Rather, what we're doing and why we're doing. We're creating citizens of the future and of today... instructional, you're looking at practice and trying

to change practice in some fashion. Change of the practice of behaviour.

Change practice of assessment and evaluation.

Victor shared that operational tasks can be performed through an instructional lens. He talked about when his vice-principals support students and staff, the goal is to proactively change behaviours or practices to influence student learning and achievement.

Student discipline and attendance. The secondary principals interviewed explained that their vice-principals approach student discipline, conflict resolution, and attendance instructionally with the goal to change behaviour. For instance, Marla does not view student discipline as punitive: “Every time you work with a student, it’s a learning opportunity and you are trying to affect change. It’s a problem solving conflict resolution opportunity.” Denise added that vice-principals need to get at underlying reasons when it comes to student discipline: “Student discipline is typically based on disengagement. That disengagement actually is a curriculum function or an instructional function.” In particular, Steven elaborated on how his vice-principal approaches student discipline and attendance by supporting students and teachers:

The good ones I’ve worked with are capable and convinced that if they have the right conversation with kids they would be able to improve their performance in school through attendance, better attitude, higher levels of commitment to their learning. Instructive to staff that a lot of the feedback that would take place as teacher sends kid to office, VP has conversation with kid, VP follows up with teacher to suggest that perhaps that it is not necessary that you chuck that kid out of class and would like to try this strategy in engagement... you get insights of what’s going on in the

classroom when you're talking to kids. There are really good reasons why they are frustrated. That provides an occasion for assessment and evaluation, instructional practices in general, classroom management with the teacher.

Steven says his vice-principal listens to students' and teachers' concerns, and provides support rather than simply handing out consequences. The goal is to support students so they attend class, are no longer disruptive, and can focus on learning and achievement.

Timetabling. In addition to student discipline and attendance, another sub-theme surrounding how vice-principals' operational duties can be performed instructionally is creating the master school timetable. The secondary principals in the study identified timetabling as a vice-principals' operational duty that can be made instructional to support student success. For instance, Steven shared that his vice-principal puts students at the forefront when creating the timetable, which can influence how students' school year progresses: "He's building the instructional environment. He is not too far removed from kids who would be affected by decisions in the timetable in terms of how their instructional year would develop." In addition, Geoff discussed the benefits of knowing teachers' strengths and interests when assigning them to courses: "Pair the right teachers with the right courses. And you're pairing the right teachers with the right departments... end result teachers are happier, kids are happier, and more credits being attained." Specifically, Marla described how creating the master school timetable can have a positive influence on student learning and achievement:

Research has indicated when students are physically active, when their heart rate achieves a certain level for 20 uninterrupted minutes, it may be

more than 20, and then they are better presented with curriculum that their success rate improves. Things like timetabling physical education period one and this are particularly for students at the applied level. Timetabling some of the core subjects like science, math, English right after can help improve student success.

Marla expects her vice-principal to create the master school timetable for the benefit of students rather than for teachers. Marla's vice-principal can accomplish that by strategically assigning certain courses to certain periods in the day.

Provincial large-scale assessments. A third sub-theme of how secondary vice-principals' operational duties can be made instructional is to provide instructional leadership to prepare students for success on provincial large-scale assessments. The secondary principals in this study stated that organizing and administering the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)'s provincial grade 9 mathematics assessment and the grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) can also be made into an instructional task. For example, Melanie explained that her vice-principal in charge of the OSSLT "should be working collaboratively with teachers to come up with different methods to improve student engagement in the test and performance." Additionally, Olivia shared how her vice-principal in charge of organizing and administering the EQAO assessments can demonstrate instructional leadership by leading data analysis to inform professional practice:

Vice-principals are also instructional leaders through things like the EQAO assessment because they will work with teacher leaders to interpret results. The vice-principal who works on the EQAO math will go with the

math department head and the math teacher leader who organizes the EQAO assessment to training sessions offered by the school board. Part of the purpose of the training sessions is around the organizational logistics. Another part is data analysis and interpretation. The vice-principal is a lead learner, lead analyzer of data, and will work with those people to update the data that's in our school improvement plan around the area of math. The vice-principal will help us set goals around achievement in math and help us plan professional learning for our staff around achievement in math.

Olivia emphasized that there is professional development offered by her district school board regarding how to analyze EQAO school data to inform student improvement, and that she expects her vice-principals to serve as co-learners when they analyze and interpret the data, which can lead to an action plan for next steps aligned with the school improvement plan.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the first research sub-question: What do secondary principals believe their vice-principals' role to be? The secondary principals interviewed articulated the vice-principal role as managing the daily operations of the school, with a significant portion of the day spent supporting students with discipline, attendance, and conflict resolution. The secondary principals also spoke of the vice-principals' role as developing relationships with their administrative team, students, staff, and parents. The secondary principals expect their vice-principals to be instructional leaders, which can occur through leading or facilitating staff professional learning, or

performing operational duties through the lens of instruction. Since my participants spent approximately half of the interview sharing their perspectives on the first research sub-question, I divided my findings into two chapters. In the next chapter, I present the findings for research sub-questions two to five.

**CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS – SECONDARY PRINCIPALS’ PERSPECTIVES
OF ASSIGNING VICE-PRINCIPALS’ DUTIES, SHORT AND LONG TERM
SUPPORTS, AND CHALLENGES**

Chapter five presents interview findings regarding how vice-principals’ duties are assigned, how secondary principals support their vice-principals’ daily and long-term growth, the challenges of the vice-principals’ role, and the challenges secondary principals face when working with vice-principals. This chapter is divided into 10 sections, corresponding to the nine themes that emerged from research sub-questions two through five: (1) vice-principals’ duties are assigned using a team approach, (2) principal and vice-principal roles are not much different, (3) principals provide daily supports through collaborative problem solving and decision making, (4) the importance of regular communication, (5) principals provide short-term support to their vice-principals by modeling, (6) principals support vice-principals’ long-term growth by using the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-assessment tool, (7) principals encourage vice-principals to perform all the duties, (8) principals have cognitive coaching conversations with their vice-principals, and two challenges, which are (9) composition of administrative team, and (10) increased workload. As with the previous chapter, each theme is divided into sub-themes to present the perspectives of the secondary principals interviewed.

Research Sub-Question Two: Determining the Secondary Vice-Principal Role

The findings for research sub-question two, how secondary principals determine their vice-principals’ duties and responsibilities, is organized into two themes: (1) vice-

principals' duties are assigned using an administrative team approach, and (2) principal and vice-principal roles are not much different.

Vice-principals' duties assigned using an administrative team approach. The first theme is divided into three sub-themes: (1) duties are based on strengths, interests, and areas of growth, (2) duties are operational and instructional, and (3) duties are assigned based on consideration of time of the school year performed.

The secondary principals in the study mentioned that their vice-principals' duties and responsibilities are determined collaboratively in an administrative team meeting. As Gavin shared, the administrative team reviews the portfolio duties at the end of each school year to determine opportunities to “voice observations, interests in terms of shuffles, in terms of deletions, in terms of addition of specific dates” for the following year. Additionally, Denise described how she collaborates with her vice-principals to determine each administrator's portfolios:

What has to be done by the principal? Budget has to be done by the principal. What has to be done by a VP? DQM [data quality management] duties have to be done by the VP, that's a [district school] board decision. Okay, there are two for you. How much experience do you have with DQM? I've never done it before. Oh, I've done it for three years at my other school. Alright, you never done this before, are you interested in learning this? Okay, you are now the DQM VP because you have that learning, you need that learning. Transitions... Who's the VP who wants to support, I don't want to say lead, I want to say support the transitions

committee? The transitions committee has a chair who is a teacher. The administrator is there to support it. What else do we have?

Denise facilitated a meeting to determine which administrator would take the lead for each duty. She described what needed to be done, and then she and her vice-principals arrived at a consensus in terms of who would be responsible for each duty. She wanted her vice-principals to have new duties so there would be continual learning and growth, which would cater to their strengths, interests, and areas of growth.

Duties based on strengths, interests, and areas of growth. The secondary principals interviewed stated that their vice-principals' portfolios are determined based on strengths, interests, and areas of growth. Some duties are strategically assigned by the principal. For instance, Daniel acknowledged, "If I get a new VP to the building, I don't mean an inexperienced VP, I mean new to the building, I'll give them the health and safety so they can learn about the building from that lens." Marla added, "My new VP doing staff supervision it's a really good way to get to know the staff." Melanie described how she takes her vice-principal's strengths, interests, and areas of growth into consideration to determine his duties:

When I sat down with my new vice-principal, I asked him what he felt are his strengths, what areas he could make the strongest contributions, and where he saw a good fit. It's done collaboratively and you try to work with people's strengths. There were a couple of areas that I did suggest to him because I thought they were opportunities for personal and professional growth; areas that he needed to know about and would strengthen his abilities... there are duties that the vice-principal must perform so the

duties are not negotiable. He is in charge of fire drill, lock down drill because they are mandated on a schedule and have to be done... safety of all students, student attendance, health and safety piece for the building are non-negotiable... if there is really something that he didn't enjoy doing that he didn't feel he had any competency, we can negotiate those things.

Melanie met with her vice-principal to determine the principal and vice-principal portfolios. Some duties were based on her vice-principal's strengths and interests, while others were what she felt he needed in order to grow as a vice-principal. That said, she believes some duties are the responsibility of the vice-principal (such as take the lead with student discipline and occupational health and safety regulations) are non-negotiable. She wants her vice-principal to have both operational and instructional duties.

Include both operational and instructional duties. In addition to assigned duties based on strengths, interests, and areas of growth, the secondary principals interviewed emphasized that their vice-principals' portfolios contain both operational duties and opportunities for instructional leadership. As daily school operational duties can dominate a vice-principal's day, Wayne explained that he purposely lists the instructional duties first on each school administrator's portfolio, followed by operational duties: "I think we need to think about the instructional piece which is something that can be put to the side when the operational responsibilities do come up." However, Kyle added: "Instructional is great; operational is equally important. You have to know the students, the parents, and their needs...you can have the greatest instructional plan but if you can't lead, nobody is going to follow you." Kyle believes that without effective operational

management, a vice-principal would find it difficult to be an instructional leader. Further, Olivia reiterated the importance for her vice-principals to have both operational and instructional duties:

We would not have a situation where one administrator was doing all the logistical items and another administrator was doing all of the learning and professional learning... Even among the three of us, with myself included as the principal, we tried to balance the operational and the learning leadership items... We would come back and say this is what we decided on. Does it look balanced to us? Do we need to address it?

Olivia strives for a balance of operational and instructional duties for her vice-principals. She recognizes how important it is for her vice-principals to gain both operational and instructional leadership. She stated that portfolios are subject to revision as required by workload during the school year.

Workload during school year. A third sub-theme regarding how secondary principals determined their vice-principal's role is consideration of workload during various times of the school year. The secondary principals interviewed ensure that their vice-principals do not perform several time-consuming duties simultaneously. For instance, Daniel articulated, "You got to look at the calendar year. Is someone's duties balanced throughout the year? Are they balanced within the admin team?" Specifically, Victor explained why a vice-principal should not be responsible for both timetabling and graduation:

The reason is they are both happening at the same time. They are both very time consuming. So the vice-principal, whoever he or she is, doing

timetabling pretty much from March to the end of May, even into June. They can be spending days and weeks after school, sometimes on the weekends, trying to put a timetable together with themselves or with a team of people depending on how they are doing it. Graduation starts up pretty much in February, and meetings with lots of different people.

Victor stated that both graduation and timetabling are time-consuming responsibilities occurring simultaneously, and so would not be delegated to the same vice-principal. Graduation and timetabling would not be the only responsibilities of any vice-principal, however, as there are daily operational duties such as student discipline and attendance to perform, as well as dealing with urgent safety concerns that may arise during the school day.

Secondary principal and vice-principal roles: Not much different. The second theme regarding how secondary principals determine the vice-principal's role concerns the notion that principal and vice-principal roles are not much different. One sub-theme emerged from this theme: the secondary principal delegates the task, not the responsibility.

The secondary principals interviewed reported that they and their vice-principals perform roles that often overlap and are shared. For example, Gavin emphasized the importance of a team approach between principals and vice-principals when dealing with conflict involving students, staff, or parents: "When we're working with a difficult student, or a difficult parent, or a difficult staff member, it's wise not to approach those particular tasks by oneself, so there is overlap." Another example of the principal and vice-principal role being similar is planning for professional activity days or staff

meetings. For instance, Geoff shared that these tasks are best done collaboratively: “The best working teams are sharing information, working whether having meetings, or asking questions all the time. So you’re not running on your own.” Thus, there is fluidity and overlap in the secondary principal and vice-principal roles. Additionally, Steven described how he views the school administrative team functioning as co-managers by performing roles that overlap:

There are administrative duties that we both share... we operate under the general principle of co-management. There are things that I do that would probably be closely acquainted with the role of the VP. There are things that [the vice-principal] does that might be more acquainted with the principal... We seem to work pretty well together... there’s lots of blurred lines... between the two of us, he has never said ‘That is your job’ and I’ve never said ‘That’s your job’... he has his gifts. I have mine. We try to throw them all in the pot and see they work pretty well.

Steven works closely and collaboratively with his vice-principal to ensure that operational and instructional responsibilities are fulfilled. Although there is an administrator attached to each duty on the portfolio, implementation occurs through a team approach, which he describes as “co-managing.” When probed about being co-leaders, Steven stated that co-leadership is implied, although he remains ultimately accountable as the principal.

Principals delegate tasks, not responsibility. The secondary principals interviewed emphasized that when determining the vice-principal’s duties they delegate tasks to their vice-principals, and not responsibility. The principals reiterated that they

remain ultimately responsible and in charge of the school. For instance, Denise stated, “Even though I’ve given tasks to the VPs, I’m still responsible for what they do in the roles.” Also, Daniel emphasized that he is accountable for how his vice-principals perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities:

You’re delegating the task, but you can’t ever lose sense of delegating the responsibility. Bottom line, if anything happens in your building it comes back to the principal... This didn’t work because the VP acts. It didn’t work because the principal didn’t make it happen properly... If things fall apart, [principals] got to take ownership of it... You’re the principal and it’s your problem and it’s not your VP... Your role is to overview and review those pieces. If you didn’t catch it, it’s your problem.

Daniel shared that principals need to oversee how vice-principals perform their duties. Should there be concerns, the principal is ultimately accountable. Thus, principals have a responsibility to monitor how their vice-principals perform their role and support them through collaborative problem solving and decision making.

Research Sub-Question Three: Daily Supports

The findings for research sub-question three, how secondary principals provide daily supports to their vice-principals, are organized into three themes: (1) collaborative problem solving and decision making, (2) the importance of regular communication, and (3) principals support their vice-principals by modeling.

Collaborative problem solving and decision making. The secondary principals in the study affirmed that they support their vice-principals through engaging in regular collaborative problem solving and decision making. This theme includes one sub-theme:

consultation. Marla emphasized that the administration works as a team: “I know in some schools they work as three silos. We don’t do that. We work collaboratively, make decisions together. We meet all the time.” Wayne described how he engages in collaborative problem solving and decision making with his vice-principals to address complicated situations:

If it’s a question that is a really good one, I will constantly take multiple opportunities to pull the whole admin team together. Okay let’s talk this through. You’ve got a scenario that’s come up. Can you describe it for [the vice-principal]? Now we have both heard it. Now let the three of us talk about it. What’s the best way to address this particular issue? What do we think? What are the things we are not thinking about? Possible consequence? The whole system thinking we are making one decision. What’s the ripple effect in other areas? Okay we are comfortable with that. [Vice-principal] you go deal with that now. Just let me know how it goes. Keep me updated on how things are going. If we need to talk about what to do next, we will. That’s the ad-hoc as things occur... working together as a team. Our multiple minds working together is more effective, creative, and efficient.

Wayne brings his entire administrative team together to discuss complicated situations or problems. The team then takes the information and makes a collaborative decision.

Wayne emphasized that challenging situations need collaborative decision making. He stated that multiple perspectives are considered in order to make an informed decision, which can start with vice-principals consulting with their principal.

Consultation. In addition to collaborative decision making as an administrative team, the secondary principals interviewed reported that their vice-principals consult with them on a regular basis. Daniel stated that his vice-principals consult with him for reassurance: “Have they missed something? They may want to bounce it off you... do I have all the right pieces covered?” Additionally, Geoff emphasized being non-judgmental when vice-principals consult with him: “Working together, supporting, and hopefully comfortable with the fact that if they don’t know something you’re not going to make them feel stupid, or why don’t you know this?” Marla shared that her vice-principals consult with her regularly by asking questions:

I just think making sure that they’re checking in and they feel comfortable asking questions. My new VP is great since she asks a lot of questions and is not afraid to ask questions at all, which is really good; my former VP was the same. He always asked a lot of questions; like consulting. Even in suspending of students they would come to me and say ‘So-and-so did this. What do you think?’ We discuss everything. We literally talk about everything. We’re very consultative.

Marla encourages her vice-principals to consult with her when they have questions. Student suspension is one example of a situation wherein her vice-principals would consult with her to ensure nothing was missed and that she would support a decision should there be pushback from the parent. Thus, regular communication is key.

Importance of regular communication. The secondary principals in the study reported supporting their vice-principals through ongoing, regular communication. This theme is divided into one sub-theme, which revolves around principal asking questions.

Steven shared that he has an open-door policy and encourages his vice-principal to come in: “It’s a pretty open door kind of converse-on-the-fly type of situation... we deal with situational matters as we need to.” Victor added that even if his door is closed, his vice-principals can come in to speak with him: “My policy has been if the door is closed, then open it if you want to come in. There are very few times I cannot have a vice-principal in a room.” Specifically, Denise described how she builds in time during the school day to have regular communication with her vice-principals:

There should be discussion between the admin team on a daily basis whether or not you have lunch together or if you take a few minutes at the end of the announcements when you have all the kids in class period one. Let’s take 15 minutes and just sit and talk about what is happening today, or any other challenges, or a follow-up from yesterday.

Denise said that daily conversations help her to know what her vice-principals are dealing with so she can offer support. She also stated that having follow-up conversations to debrief situations is important, as she believes this kind of communication helps her vice-principals learn and grow from experience. She asks questions so her vice-principals are able to think through a given process.

Principals asking questions. The secondary principals in the study reported that they support their vice-principals by asking questions to encourage them to see different perspectives, which may help to avoid pitfalls and potential issues that could arise. For instance, Olivia shared, “the vice-principals have the knowledge and expertise... they need an opportunity to talk it through with me.” Additionally, Wayne described how he supports a vice-principal who wants to implement a new initiative in the school:

Let's sit down and talk it through. Which is really important as although somebody may have a really effective idea, it's important to make sure that we're supporting them in thinking about what are all the different aspects because there's a big chasm between a really good idea and effectively implementing that idea... If we simply mandate that, what's the response going to be? How do we think we should roll this out? What's the most effective timing to do this? How can we make the link to data in this regard? So my responsibility in this is a fantastic idea, but my role is to ask some questions not to say 'No' or to say 'No that will never work,' but 'Have you thought about this? Have you thought about this? Have you thought about this?'

Wayne affirmed that his questions are meant to support the vice-principal in thinking about different perspectives and potential challenges, rather than to discourage his vice-principal from implementing an initiative. Wayne believes that it is his responsibility to ask questions as he believes in modeling and leading by example.

Principals support their vice-principals by modeling. The secondary principals interviewed articulated that they support their vice-principals by modeling their expectations and leading by example. This theme includes one sub-theme: working with the teacher union. Olivia shared that she modeled for her vice-principal how to conduct a difficult parent meeting: "We're going to meet with this parent together. I am going to facilitate and lead this meeting, and I want you to be a part of it. I want [vice-principals] to see me doing the tasks and learn from me." Similarly, Gavin described how he supports his vice-principals through challenging situations by modeling:

It is about learning the nuance, the politics, and ways to manage the very challenging, very difficult situations. So when I am problem solving in conversation with a school partner by phone, often times there is a vice-principal or both vice-principals with me. We do a conference call where they are able to participate in the conversation. And if not to participate, to simply listen, watch, observe, learn from the interaction such that they have a reference point, a base line from which they themselves can springboard to their own growth and development.

By inviting his vice-principals to be present when he conducts a challenging meeting, Gavin hopes his vice-principals will observe him and learn from him. He hopes to provide his vice-principals with skills so they, too, will be able to facilitate a difficult meeting.

Working in a political environment. The secondary principals in the study reported that they model for their vice-principals how to work in a political environment in which teachers must be members of a teacher union (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) for public system and Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) for catholic system). Teacher unions are responsible to advocate for teachers and their working conditions, and to intervene when they feel the teacher-board collective agreement has been violated. Geoff stated that he reminds his vice-principals to exercise care and judgment when in conversations with teachers as "nothing is really off the record." Geoff also said that within a school, implementation of professional learning varies by departments due to the politics to resist change, with teachers often reminding each other, "Can't say that since we're a unionized

environment.” Victor shared when dealing with situations that involve teacher union representation for a teacher, he models for his vice-principal how to work through a potentially challenging meeting:

Some of the more difficult ones is the responsibility of the principal. Working with our union partners when you’re involved in performance and discipline of staff. In some ways those can be the most difficult of meetings because it can be very stressful and there’s a lot riding sometimes.

Victor stated he works with his vice-principal to proactively script what is to be said in a meeting involving a teacher’s performance or involves discipline, with representation from the teacher union. If Victor leads the meeting, then a vice-principal is present, as a school administrator witness, and to record the minutes of the meeting. If a vice-principal leads the meeting, then Victor will support his vice-principal prior to the meeting by modeling how to conduct the meeting, and be present in the meeting.

Research Sub-Question Four: Long-Term Support for Vice-Principal Role

The findings for research sub-question four, how secondary principals support the long-term growth of their vice-principals, is organized into three themes: (1) use of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-assessment tool, (2) performing the spectrum of vice-principal duties, and (3) cognitive coaching conversations.

The Ontario Leadership Framework as a self-assessment tool. The first theme surrounding how secondary principals support the long-term growth of their vice-principals has to do with using the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-assessment tool. One sub-theme emerged: strengthening personal leadership resources.

The secondary principals in the study reported that they provide long-term support for their vice-principals by using the OLF as a self-assessment reflective tool. The OLF has five domains: (1) setting directions, (2) building relationships and developing people, (3) developing the organization to support desired practices, (4) improving the instructional program, and (5) securing accountability (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Denise stated that she uses the OLF as a self-reflection tool to support her vice-principals' long-term growth, whether or not they are interested in pursuing a future principalship: "The reality is we have a responsibility to continue with our learning. Whether or not you are looking at the principal readiness, what are your strengths and needs based on the OLF?" In addition, Stephanie said she uses the OLF with her vice-principals to "track what you're doing in those different categories. You have to talk about what are some of the needs they might have. Talk about some of the things they want to do." As shared by the principals, the OLF is an important tool to support their vice-principals' growth and learning. Specifically, Victor described how he uses the OLF to support his vice-principals' long-term growth:

I think it begins with the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and having an understanding of where they see themselves and where I see them, providing feedback of what I've seen they've demonstrated growth in each of the five areas, some of the experiences I think they need, coaching and mentoring we meet a lot... First thing I want you to do is highlight where you think your strengths are, highlight where you think you have some growth in, and where you think you have the most growth

in some of the most critical areas; and working with that person to develop.

Victor asked each of his vice-principals to self-assess using the OLF to identify their own strengths and areas of growth for each of the five domains. He wanted to know his vice-principals' long-term goals, and whether or not they were interested in a future principalship. The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) can be used to strengthen one's personal leadership resources to support long-term growth.

Personal leadership resources. As per the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF), personal leadership resources are the interpersonal skills that vice-principals need to possess and continuously strengthen as part of their long-term growth as administrators. Personal leadership resources are identified as cognitive resources (problem-solving expertise, knowledge of effective school and classroom practices that directly affect student learning, systems thinking), psychological resources (optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, proactivity), and social resources (perceiving, managing, and appropriate acting emotionally) (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). The secondary principals in the study acknowledged that vice-principals need these skills to enhance their effectiveness as school administrators. For instance, Denise articulated, "The personal leadership resources are an untapped area of support to make the administrators successful leaders. When relationships are going wrong, it's the personal leadership resources that will support those relationships." In particular, Gavin explained how having high emotional intelligence and resiliency are key for vice-principals' long-term effectiveness:

I think vice-principals would do well to come prepared in terms of the emotional intelligence and that they bring a sense of resiliency since the job does take a toll. We need people who are not just knowledgeable but are strong and wise to do the work well. You might see that I am not saying a whole lot about operational things since these may be learned fairly easily and they change over time. What we want is the skill set and mindset that also welcomes change, knowing that change is the only constant. A vice-principal who is resilient, open to change, is process-oriented, emotionally intelligent, student-centered, I think would go a really long way since the job is getting ever bigger, given that there is ambiguity... so having the skill to filter, with emotional intelligence and process orientation.

Gavin believes that while his vice-principals can learn how to perform the operational duties well, it is the personal leadership resources that can enhance their effectiveness. He emphasized that having high emotional intelligence can help to navigate the vice-principal role, which has become increasingly ambiguous.

Performing the spectrum of duties. The second theme regarding how secondary principals support the long-term growth of vice-principals is by encouraging the vice-principal to perform the entire spectrum of duties. One sub-theme emerged: secondary principals share their duties with their vice-principals.

As the secondary principals in the study view the vice-principal role as one of principal-in-training, they expect their vice-principals to eventually perform the full spectrum of the vice-principal duties. Victor cautioned that when vice-principals are

appointed as principals, they “can’t find themselves in the role of principal and not know how to do certain things. They need to provide support to their vice-principals and/or their office staff.” Also, Denise believes that it is her responsibility to support her vice-principals’ long-term growth, which may lead to a future principalship:

You want your VPs to be given opportunities to learn all of the jobs that need to be done. I’ve been the VP who has done the timetable, been the VP who doesn’t do the timetable. What was the end result? I know how to timetable so that when I became a principal I would be able to support whoever was doing that timetable... the person who says ‘I don’t know this job’ needs an opportunity to learn it.

Denise wants her vice-principals to eventually perform all of the vice-principal duties since, should a vice-principal be appointed as principal, they will in turn be able to support the new vice-principal. Denise sees it as her responsibility to ensure her vice-principals are provided with long-growth and learning opportunities. Principals can also support the long-term growth of their vice-principals by sharing their own principal duties.

Principals share their duties with vice-principals. In addition to encouraging secondary vice-principals to perform all the vice-principal duties, the secondary principals in the study stated that they share their principal duties with their vice-principals. In particular, Geoff mentioned that budgeting is the principal’s responsibility, but that vice-principals also need to learn how money is allocated and spent in the building: “If you’re not exposed to budget when you’re a vice-principal, and you don’t know what to do or it’s not shared, how do you expect to know that if you take on the

principal role?” Staffing is a second principal duty that is shared with vice-principals. Denise explained that her vice-principal, who creates the master school timetable, is also involved in the staffing process. Melanie iterated that sharing principal duties with her vice-principals allows her to “sometimes share the task. Sometimes share the philosophy and the practice.” Additionally, Olivia provided a different perspective on sharing her principal role with her vice-principals:

It’s the principal’s role to manage the budget. I want [the vice-principals] to know why I am making the decision I am making... I am always trying to teach them the tasks that are part of my portfolio. If the vice-principals know what I do and why I do it, then it gives them more ownership and empowerment in the decisions that happen in the school, and that they can support me in my leadership as well.

Olivia stated that she shares her principal duties, such as budgeting and staffing, with her vice-principals so they can understand the decision making and influence at the school level. Through transparency, her vice-principals can also better support her as the principal.

Coaching conversations. The third theme regarding how secondary principals support their vice-principals’ long-term growth involves engaging in coaching conversations. The secondary principals in the study articulated that they support the long-term growth of their vice-principals through *cognitive coaching*. Cognitive coaching provides focused, intentional, and in-depth learning of specific skills and knowledge (Creasy & Paterson, 2005; Hopkins-Thompson, 2000) through developing people who are self-directed, self-managing, self-monitoring, and are capable of planning, reflecting,

problem solving, and making decisions (Costa & Garmston, 2016). For example, Melanie coaches her vice-principal by asking open-ended questions “to be reflective thinkers, to really think through the situations, the response to that situation, the consequences... create opportunities for professional growth.” Further, Wayne shared that he has coaching conversations with his vice-principals to support their long-term growth:

A lot of what we do is through the lens of a principal. ‘What is it that you’re doing? What impact is that going to have? How is that going to impact this area, this area, and this area? Have you thought about implications? Wonderful, but what are the resources you are going to need for this? How are you going to use the budget? Are there any budget implications?’ It’s trying to take them and work with them on looking at things through the lens of the whole school and the principal.

Wayne’s statement demonstrates that he engages in cognitive coaching with his vice-principals. He asks challenging questions which require reflective responses and may take his vice-principals out of their comfort zone. His goal is for his vice-principals to think about a situation from a different perspective and anticipate the implications for the rest of the school. Wayne believes such conversations promote his vice-principals’ long-term growth and development, which can serve them well as future principals.

Research Sub-Question Five: Challenges with the Vice-Principal Role or Working with Vice-Principals

The findings for research sub-question five, what challenges secondary principals have with the vice-principal role or with working with vice-principals, are organized into

two themes: (1) composition of the school administrative team, and (2) increased workload.

Composition of school administrative team. This theme is divided into three sub-themes: (1) conflicting personalities and philosophies in the administrative team, (2) constant changeover of school administrators, and (3) vice-principals who have limited skills.

The secondary principals in the study acknowledged that a major challenge in terms of working with vice-principals is the absence or lack of principal input regarding the composition of the school administrative team. Typically, principals are not involved in the decision making regarding the composition of a school's administrative team; rather, superintendents meet as a system administrative team to discuss appointments and transfers of school administrators. Wayne stated that he does not provide input in terms of who his incoming vice-principal will be: "The principal doesn't have a formal structured opportunity to have input in who the vice-principal is, the skill set, the needs of who we will have." However, Melanie stated that she is occasionally asked to share what her needs are in terms of her administrative team: "Sometimes we do, and if we know the individual who would be a good fit for a particular community. Sometimes that decision is just made at the board level and we have nothing to say about it." Thus, the principals interviewed shared that they would like to have input regarding incoming vice-principals based on school needs and compatible personalities.

Conflicting personalities and philosophies in the administrative team. One challenge expressed by the secondary principals interviewed involved instances of conflicting personalities and philosophies within an administrative team. For instance,

Geoff emphasized that principals need to make the administrative team function for the benefit of the school community as “not everyone is going to like each other. Sometimes there is conflict that will arise between the P and VP or between the VPs.” In extreme instances in which principals and their vice-principals cannot get along after interventions, Pauline suggested principals speak with their superintendent: “Can anything be done? Is it possible to have a change that would be better for that person and better for the team? Sometimes it’s possible and sometimes it’s not.” In particular, Daniel described how an administrative team forms and what needs to take place if it does not become a functioning team:

As an administrative team, we work long hours in a close proximity with each other. Sometimes there are some intense situations. If it’s a good team that has stormed, normed to come together it works seamlessly. I use the words ‘stormed’ and ‘normed’ when teams come together. When they don’t work cohesively, there is friction. It could be between the VPs, and you have to monitor them so they can get to the point of a functioning team... my peers, they’ve had to break apart a team since it wasn’t moving through the storming phase to a norming phase to being an expert team, so they were stuck.

Daniel explained that once a team is formed, it will inevitably go through the “storming” phase before reaching the “norming” phase. If an administrative team experiences conflict, he believes it is the principal who needs to work to make the team function. As a last resort, the superintendent can be involved to address the lack of team cohesion, which may result in at least one administrator being transferred, and a new team formed.

Constant changeover of school administrators. In addition to composition of the administrative team, another challenge expressed by the secondary principals working with vice-principals is the constant changeover of school administrators. Daniel explained that school boards transfer school administrators to provide different experiences and growth opportunities:

Principals probably stay in their space for up to five years... VPs stay in their sites for two to three years... if a VP is moving more quickly that would probably tell you that they need a different experience or that their team is not functioning as fully as it should be.

Wayne added: “Should we not be looking for more continuity in terms of leadership teams in schools so that it can start to have more prolonged and deeper effect for improvement and change?” Although school administrators benefit from working with different school communities, the principals interviewed expressed concern regarding the constant changeover. For instance, Victor shared his frustrations with constant school administrative team changeover and its effect on his ability as principal to lead and manage the school:

This is the first time in 12 years that I have had the same admin team... Constant change whether it’s a team of three, whether it’s been one person, or the other person who’s been moved. It’s difficult to gel and to get to know the roles and responsibilities of a school when people are moving.

When the composition of an administrative team changes so frequently, school administrators need to spend time developing relationships and trust. For vice-principals,

who tend to move more often than principals, the challenge is to gain confidence in performing their role, sometimes with limited skills and experiences, only to find themselves transferred shortly after beginning.

Vice-principals with limited skills. A third sub-theme that the secondary principals expressed as a challenge is working with vice-principals who have limited skills and experiences. Wayne articulated what he perceived as the challenge of supporting a vice-principal with limited skills, while simultaneously performing his own duties: “A lot of it is going to fall on the responsibility of the principal to help develop those skills... that becomes a huge issue because there’s enough on our plate to move the school forward with the massive responsibilities.” Additionally, Victor shared his experiences concerning newly appointed vice-principals who lack either operational or instructional skills and experience required for the vice-principal role:

They’ve come out of the teacher role. If they haven’t necessarily been doing very much of the instructional leadership piece it’s a significant challenge because they haven’t got that background, that experience.

Conversely, I’ve had some vice-principals come out of curriculum and instructional services role where they’ve been curriculum consultants.

They’ve had a huge wealth of experience and skill-set developed over a period of years in terms of the instructional leadership. Now that being said, though, the piece that somebody along those lines especially as a vice-principal is really missing is the whole operational piece...

Somebody who comes into the role who has experienced challenges who may not have the skill set or is having some difficulty in the role.

Victor supports the growth of his vice-principals, while simultaneously remaining ultimately accountable for the school. He stated that classroom teachers appointed to the vice-principal role may lack instructional leadership, while curriculum consultants appointed to the vice-principal role may lack operational management. He believes that vice-principals require both operations and instruction experience in order to be successful. It is his responsibility as principal, he feels, to strengthen the area with limited skills, but he is challenged by lack of time during a busy school day.

Increased workload. A theme expressed by the secondary principals regarding challenges with the vice-principal role is the increased workload. This theme is divided into three sub-themes: (1) the need to prioritize operational and instructional duties, (2) lack of time to fulfill responsibilities, and (3) the need for another vice-principal.

The secondary principals in the study declared that the workload involved in the vice-principal role has increased in recent years. Wayne reflected on the vice-principal role during the past 10 to 15 years: “There are more operational pieces that have been added... in addition to greater emphasis and expectations for instructional leadership... things have not been taken off the plate.” Gavin shared that his school has fewer secretaries than it previously did, and that teachers aspiring to become vice-principals are no longer given release time to spend as administrative assistants in order to gain experience. These things combined, reported Gavin, have led to an increase in the vice-principal’s workload at his school. Further, Pauline explained how her vice-principals have experienced increased workload during the past decade:

The operation is a far greater role only because the work is enormous...
the workload has increased for all administrators. I think greater

accountability systems, cutbacks in education, cutbacks in administration, support, EQAO, OSSLT – those are huge pieces that didn't exist ten years ago. There are more demands put on school administrators... the hours are long. Tremendous amount of stress in the role. It's just the workload has proliferated, absolutely proliferated. *Bill 274*, for example, we spend double the amount of time staffing compared to what it was like prior to *Bill 274*... One of my vice-principals spends hours on health and safety. The Ministry's requirement in that one area has doubled if not tripled... the requirements of the job keep going up and yet no supports have been put in place.

Pauline shared how her vice-principals' workloads have increased as a result of accountability for student achievement through preparing students for and organizing the provincial standardized assessments in grade 9 mathematics and grade 10 literacy; the latter being a high school graduation requirement. She also stated that the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy, *Bill 274*, which describes the process for hiring contract teachers and long-term occasional teachers, has increased workload, since the five most senior teachers on the preferred list must be interviewed. She further shared that occupational health and safety has been time consuming for one of her vice-principals since compliance often requires creative problem solving. To fulfill the added responsibilities, vice-principals need to prioritize their duties.

Need to prioritize duties. With work intensification in the vice-principal role, the secondary principals interviewed reported that the vice-principal role could be made more manageable by prioritizing operational and instructional duties. Earlier, Olivia

declared that her vice-principals work in the evenings and on weekends to prioritize what must be done during the school day: “It’s the urgent versus the important. Planning for achievement in mathematics is important. However, if there is a student in a fist fight and is injured that is an urgent operational matter that takes over.” Additionally, Geoff shared that his vice-principals prioritize their duties due to increased workload:

It’s the refocus; it’s the setting back to what we’re here for. So getting into classes. Setting aside 15 minutes every second period so you can not only be out there in classes and between periods, but can get into classes to see what kids are doing... I don’t think the work is ever done... you could work 24 hours a day if you could at this job... are you ever really done? I would say probably not. Have you met the requirement hopefully in terms of being behind in something? In terms of answering the teachers.

Answering the parents. Getting hold of that one kid. I don’t think the work is ever done. And coming to that realization that in this type of work it’s nothing can ever go from imperfect to perfect but you can make strides and improvement. So you have that sense of accomplishment and you are making a difference. But if you are ever done I would say no.

Geoff believes that vice-principals’ work is never complete. Through prioritizing duties, vice-principals can strategically fulfill their responsibilities to the satisfaction of students, staff, parents, and themselves. Geoff iterated that vice-principals need to realize they are making a difference even though they lack the time to fully fulfill their responsibilities.

Lack of time. With the increased workload and a need to prioritize duties, the secondary principals in this study stated that lack of time is a challenge that hinders vice-

principals from performing their duties. Pauline shared that her administrative team performs 60-hour work weeks: “there’s never any free time... the operational pieces are large... you schedule your committees and you have those meetings.” Stephanie added: “We work 12 months... may have aging parents, young parents, a spouse that is not there to support them at home... you have to work on our off-time. That’s what being an administrator is.” Thus, Stephanie described how challenging it is for her vice-principals to balance their professional and personal lives. Further, Kyle articulated that the vice-principal role is very challenging due to the sheer number of operational and instructional duties, the balance of which requires effective use of time:

If you have plans and something happens, you can’t leave. If there’s an incident in the classroom and the police are involved and you have plans at 5:30, you leave when your job is done... There’s not enough minutes in a day to do everything. A lot of vice-principals lose the balance of home life and their professional life. Their professional life takes more and more time. That’s probably one reason why there are fewer and fewer people wanting to go into admin. They see that person comes early, they stay late, and they have to come in on weekends.

Kyle spoke of the challenge for vice-principals to manage and balance the numerous operational and instructional duties required of them. He stated that the work hours are long and vice-principals cannot leave work until they have fulfilled urgent responsibilities, which takes time away from their personal lives. One consequence of an increase in workload is a decrease in the number of teachers wanting to pursue school

administration, since they see their vice-principals work long hours. One way to address the challenges associated with lack of time could be to hire an additional vice-principal.

Need for another vice-principal. To address the challenges of the secondary vice-principal role, the secondary principals in the study recommended hiring an additional vice-principal. For instance, Pauline described how she would benefit from an additional vice-principal as part of her administrative team:

If there was another vice-principal instead of splitting the duties you can divide them by three. Then the job would be a little bit more relaxed. You would feel you would get to those instructional pieces that you want to spend more time on.

Pauline stated earlier that the working conditions for both vice-principals and principals are demanding and unrealistic. She articulated that there is never free time as the day is often spent performing the numerous operational duties required to run the school. Having an additional vice-principal can support the school administrative team by allowing more time for instructional leadership.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings for research sub-questions two through five. The secondary principals interviewed reported that the vice-principal role is determined collaboratively by the administrative team, includes both operational and instructional duties, and is based on strengths, interests, and areas for growth. Secondary principals reported that they support their vice-principals on a daily basis by serving as mentors and consultants, and through collaborative problem solving and decision making. The secondary principals in the study are committed to the long-term growth of their vice-

principals and use the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-assessment reflective tool to help identify areas of growth, and to ensure their vice-principals eventually perform the full spectrum of duties; this helps vice-principals have a deep understanding of the role. One challenge regarding working with vice-principals is composition of the administrative team. One challenge regarding the vice-principal role is the increased workload. In the next chapter, I will discuss and interpret my findings, and connect them back to the literature review and the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, I discuss and interpret my findings regarding how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role. I refer to my conceptual framework and compare my findings with the review of the literature. According to the secondary principals, the secondary vice-principal role has become more complex; the role is about compliance to Ministry of Education policies and district school board initiatives, and the actual work has intensified. I argue that the changing nature of the Ontario secondary vice-principal role is due to neoliberal education reforms. I identify three tensions made apparent in my data: (1) secondary principals and their vice-principals appear to perform similar roles, (2) secondary principals believe their vice-principals find it challenging to prioritize their operational and instructional duties, and (3) composition of the administrative team.

The Changing Nature of the Secondary Vice-Principal Role

The secondary vice-principal role appears to be changing and becoming more complex with a mix of both managerial and instructional duties. The data indicate the secondary principals shared that their vice-principals perform numerous operational duties that can consume most, if not all, of the school day. In addition, secondary principals expect their vice-principals to provide instructional leadership, such as leading and facilitating staff professional learning, observing classes, and conducting staff performance appraisals. The secondary principals reiterated that the secondary vice-principal role has changed as tasks are assigned and performed collaboratively, rather than in isolation. The secondary principals also stated that their vice-principals find it challenging to prioritize their multitude of duties due to work intensification.

Work Intensification

In addition to increased complexity of the secondary vice-principal role, the secondary principals in the study reported vice-principals' work has intensified. Geoff stated that the work of a vice-principal is never finished, and vice-principals can work 24 hours a day and seven days a week without completely fulfilling their responsibilities. This is consistent with my literature review in which it was revealed that vice-principals felt frustrated, pressured, and inadequate in their role due to the increased workload (Cattonar et al., 2007; Cranston et al., 2004; Harris et al., 2003; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Reagan, 2015; Woods, 2012). Long hours are the norm for school administrators; principals and vice-principals work an average of 58.5 hours a week in Alberta (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b), and principals work an average of 58.7 hours a week in Ontario (Pollock et al., 2014).

One concern regarding increased workload is the sustainability of the secondary principal and vice-principal positions. The numerous Ministry of Education policies to implement, the complexity of the role, and the increased accountability, responsibility, and demands, along with decreased autonomy to influence school needs and the possibility of being assigned to a school without input discourages teachers from pursuing school administrative positions (Cranston, 2007; Fink, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2014; Reagan, 2015; Wallace, 2001; Williams, 2001). Earlier, Stephanie added that vice-principals find it challenging to balance their personal and professional lives. Additionally, Kyle stated that teachers are not choosing to pursue the vice-principalship since their vice-principals arrive early and leave late on school days (i.e., work long hours). Aspiring principals would be disheartened to find out that 28.8% of the Canadian

principals in Cattonar et al. (2007)'s study and 21.3% of the principals in Pollock et al. (2014)'s study are dissatisfied with their job. Such findings are consistent with American studies, as almost one-quarter of the vice-principals surveyed by Chan et al. (2003), 40% of the vice-principals in Cranston et al. (2004), 29% of the vice-principals in Grate (2005), and 24% of the vice-principals in Scott (2011) chose not to pursue the principalship, which they believed would be too stressful with the added responsibility/liability, require increased time commitment with lack of substantial increase in salary, and involve the challenge of politics to lead change. Principals have become "managers of systems' agendas rather than serving their schools and students" (Fink & Brayman, 2006, p. 62). Thus, district school boards need to have succession supports in place for interested teachers to develop the skills needed for future principals and vice-principals (Russell & Sabina, 2014).

Neoliberal Education Context in Ontario

The increased complexity of the vice-principal role and work intensification in Ontario can be explained through the neoliberal education reforms that have been in place since the 1990s. Through neoliberalism, principals are required to be compliant with the numerous Ontario Ministry of Education and district school board policies. The principal role has become more complex and has been described as requiring a high degree of responsibility to comply with education policy, but little autonomy and power over how to implement policy (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b; Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Pollock et al., 2014, 2015). Principals are held accountable since school improvement plans must align with board improvement plans, which must align with Ministry of Education goals. Thus, principals find it challenging to focus on school-

specific goals to transform their school practices (Pinto, 2015). Failure to comply with neoliberal education policies can negatively influence principals' career advancement (Pinto, 2015). Specific to Ontario, principals must implement the Ministry of Education policies and the initiatives such as: *Regulation 274* on teaching hiring; the *Growing Success* assessment, evaluation, and reporting document; *Bill 212, Safe Schools Act*; and *Parents in Partnership: Parent Engagement Policy*. Reacting to the numerous mandated change initiatives, Reeves (2009) described the "Law of Initiative Fatigue," which says that if we increase the number of initiatives, then we decrease the available time, resources, and emotional energy to implement the initiatives. Secondary principals are assigned vice-principals, based on school enrolment, with the vice-principal role defined as *duties assigned by the principal* (Ontario Education Act, 1990). Due to Ministry of Education policies, the secondary principals interviewed in this study articulated that both their role and their vice-principals' role have become more complex and has increased in terms of workload; this is consistent with the results of recent principal workload studies (i.e., Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014a, 2014b; Cattonar et al., 2007; Pollock et al., 2014, 2015).

A neoliberal approach to education has influenced Ontario schools since the 1990s. Neoliberalism focuses on preparing students for employment in a competitive global economy using standardized curriculum, an emphasis on outcomes and performance on standardized tests, and increased parental involvement (Hursh, 2000, 2007; Sattler, 2012). Neoliberalism calls for attention to short-term improvements, monitored through standardized tests and by compliance of government policies (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014a; Fink & Brayman, 2006; Hursh, 2000).

The current Ontario Liberal government's neoliberal agenda emphasizes both external and internal accountability. External accountability, through the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)'s grades three, six, and nine literacy and mathematics large-scale provincial assessments, is used to monitor student achievement in elementary and secondary schools. The grade 10 literacy test is a graduation requirement; however, students unsuccessful on that test can subsequently complete a grade 12 literacy course. The Fraser Institute, a Canadian neoliberal think tank, uses the EQAO assessment data to rank each publicly funded school (including public, Catholic, elementary, and secondary schools). The results are available on the Fraser Institute's website and tend to be shared by the media. The EQAO assessments are not used punitively on teachers, principals (including vice-principals) or district school boards as experienced with a neoliberal approach to education in the United States. Internal accountability in Ontario includes each school creating and implementing a school improvement plan aligned with their board's improvement plan. Schools monitor student achievement through marks distribution at reporting periods as well as credit attainment in high school. For students identified as "at-risk," supports are provided by a student success teacher assigned to each high school who works in collaboration with the vice-principal(s). Thus, due to the increased accountability through neoliberalism, secondary principals reported that their vice-principals' role has become more complex and the workload has intensified.

Tension One: Secondary Principals and Vice-Principals Perform Similar Roles

The first tension is that secondary principals and their vice-principals appear to perform similar roles. This tension can be broken down into three themes: (1)

collaborative process to assign duties, (2) overlap between principal and vice-principal roles, and (3) vice-principals are principals-in-training.

Collaborative process to assign duties. Secondary principal and vice-principal duties are assigned using a collaborative approach. Although the Ontario Education Act (1990) defined the vice-principal role as *duties assigned by the principal*, secondary principals in my study articulated that each school administrator's portfolio is determined through a collaborative process based on strengths, interests, and areas of growth. For instance, I stated earlier that Denise facilitated a collaborative meeting with her vice-principals to determine who would lead each duty; she asked who had not performed a particular duty, whether a vice-principal was interested in taking on a particular duty as an area of growth, and whether the vice-principal currently performing that duty would like to continue. Similarly, none of the secondary principals in my study stated that they determine their vice-principal's duties without the vice-principal's input. This contradicts my review of the literature, which indicated that research from the past 15 years shows principals assign their vice-principals' duties based on school needs and what the principal is willing to delegate (Armstrong, 2012; Domel, 2001; Flowers, 2014; Gaston, 2005; Kwan & Walker, 2010; Melton et al., 2012; Mertz, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). However, as indicated in the interviews with the secondary principals, duties may be strategically assigned to a particular vice-principal. For example, Daniel mentioned assigning an incoming vice-principal with the duty related to occupational health and safety, so that the vice-principal could learn about the school physical plant. Interviews also indicated that secondary vice-principals can negotiate duties; Melanie acknowledged

that her vice-principal may request not to have a particular duty due to interest or skill set.

An explanation for the discrepancy between the review of the literature and my findings is the emergence of distributive leadership. *Distributive leadership* is defined as shared, delegated, or team leadership to develop the capacity in others to collectively implement an organization's vision and goals (Lynch, 2011; Northouse, 2013).

Distributive leadership acknowledges that the responsibility to lead and manage a school has become too complex and difficult for a principal, or single "heroic" leader, to fulfill alone (Cranston et al., 2004; Cuban, 1988; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Hall et al., 2003; Lynch, 2011; Melton et al., 2012; Reagan, 2015). With a neoliberal approach to education, the focus is on student achievement, which has made the principal role more demanding and complex as principals need to demonstrate distributive leadership to influence changes in instructional practices so the changes make their way into classrooms to improve student learning and achievement (Castle & Mitchell, 2001; Gardner, 2013; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Reagan, 2015). For instance, principals are required to support their teachers in terms of preparing students for external standardized or large-scale assessments. Also, principals are expected to help teachers differentiate instruction and assessments to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Principals depend on their vice-principals and teacher leaders to support them in performing the numerous instructional duties required to improve teaching and learning (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Harris et al., 2003). However, tension can exist when the secondary principal and vice-principal roles overlap and are not clearly distinguishable.

Overlap between secondary principal and vice-principal roles. Secondary principals perform their duties in collaboration with their vice-principals; the principal role can be configured so principals and vice-principals are co-principals and perform duties collaboratively rather than in isolation (Porter, 1996). This can allow vice-principals to help perform duties traditionally reserved for the principal (such as budgeting and instructional leadership) (Chirichello, 2003; Gaston, 2005). Earlier, Geoff stated that there is fluidity and overlap between roles as he and his vice-principals work together to perform increasingly complex tasks, which Wayne described as making a collaborative and informed decision by considering varying perspectives. Specifically, Gavin shared that he has meetings with difficult students, parents, or staff with a vice-principal present. This is inconsistent with my review of the literature in which vice-principals performed their roles independent of other administrators (Citty, 2010; Mertz, 2000, 2006). With a neoliberal approach to education, the secondary principals in my study did not view the vice-principal role as separate from the principal role, but rather, as similar to and an extension of their own, which is consistent with the study by Leithwood et al. (2014).

Tension can occur when the principal and vice-principal roles are not clearly distinguishable; vice-principals can experience role conflict (i.e., incompatible/contradictory expectations) and role ambiguity (i.e., vague/incomplete expectations) (Harris et al., 2003; Melton et al., 2012; Rintoul & Goulais, 2010). As stated in my review of the literature, the vice-principal role does not contain a standard list of duties since the role is determined by the principal and influenced by social, political, and legal factors (Barnett et al., 2012; Lattuca, 2012; Marshall & Hooley, 2006;

National Association for Secondary School Principals, 1991). Earlier, Steven mentioned that his school administrative team functions as co-managers and co-leaders, with overlap between the secondary principal and vice-principal roles. In the current neoliberal approach to education, the principal and vice-principal roles have become more complex due to the need to comply with numerous mandated education policies. Principals can support their vice-principals in performing their duties and fulfilling their responsibilities by providing descriptive feedback, debriefing difficult situations so there is learning, actively listening to their concerns, engaging in difficult and reflective conversations, and modeling how to lead people and deal with difficult people (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009; Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Citty, 2010; Joseph, 2014; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Retelle, 2010; Singletary-Dixon, 2011). Principals can also support their vice-principals, strengthening their competency and confidence, by allowing them to perform a variety of increasingly difficult operational and instructional duties (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009; Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Joseph, 2014; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Oleszewski et al., 2012; Singletary-Dixon, 2011; Vladika, 2010; Wong, 2009). The secondary principals in this study expect that their vice-principals will eventually perform the full spectrum of vice-principal duties, as they think of vice-principals as principals-in-training.

Vice-principals are principals-in-training. The secondary principals interviewed stated that the vice-principal role is one of principal-in-training. Many of the secondary principals in my study believe their vice-principals will eventually perform the full spectrum of vice-principal duties, in addition to those commonly reserved for the principal, so that they can transition smoothly into the principal role, if desired. My literature review conveyed that vice-principals should engage in curriculum and

instruction, staff personnel, community relations, budgeting, as well as their own professional learning for principal readiness (Kwan, 2011; Madden, 2008; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Principals can support their vice-principals' long-term growth by developing in their vice-principals the skills necessary to be self-directing, self-managing, self-monitoring, and reflective through cognitive coaching and by asking open-ended questions, probing, and encouraging reflection (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009; Costa & Garmston, 2016; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001; Williamson, 2011). In my study, Wayne shared that by asking questions, he allowed for his vice-principals to think and problem solve using different perspectives, and to anticipate the implications of various issues for the rest of the school. The secondary principals articulated that their district school boards hire vice-principals for their potential to be future principals, and do not expect them to remain vice-principals until retirement. Yet in each high school, there are often two or three vice-principals for every one principal, which implies that many secondary vice-principals will not be appointed to the role of principal. Victor shared earlier that vice-principals who have performed the full spectrum of duties have a better understanding of how to eventually support their own vice-principals when they themselves become principals. In particular, Geoff cautioned that principals who were not exposed to budgeting duties as vice-principals were vulnerable to mismanaging school funds. This is especially important in a neoliberal approach to education, as finite funds must be used efficiently and as intended. Although the secondary principals in this study expect their vice-principals to perform all the vice-principal duties and essentially serve as co-principals, they also emphasized that they remain ultimately accountable in terms of how their vice-principals fulfill their responsibilities. This can cause tension in

terms of role conflict (i.e., which are principal duties and which are vice-principal duties), as duties are often not performed in isolation.

Tension Two: Challenge for Secondary Vice-Principals to Prioritize their Operational and Instructional Duties

The second tension revolves around the fact that the secondary principals interviewed for this study stated their vice-principals find it challenging to prioritize their operational and instructional duties. This tension is organized into three themes: (1) organizational management, (2) instructional leadership, and (3) making operational duties instructional.

Vice-principals as organizational managers. Secondary principals reported that their vice-principals' operational and managerial duties have increased in recent years. The secondary principals stated that the majority of their vice-principals' school day is often spent dealing with student discipline, attendance, and conflict resolution. Specifically, Victor acknowledged that his vice-principals could conceivably spend two consecutive weeks dealing non-stop with student discipline. My finding is consistent with seminal research dating back to 1970 which found that student discipline is the top or major duty of vice-principals (Barnett et al., 2012; Celikten, 2001; Chan et al., 2003; Cranston et al., 2004; Domel, 2001; Glanz, 1994; Harris et al., 2003; Hausman et al., 2002; Lattuca, 2012; Lee et al., 2009; Mertz, 2000; Militello et al., 2015; Scott, 2011; Singletary-Dixon, 2011; Sun, 2012; Terosky, 2014). However, secondary vice-principals' work has intensified, as they are also required to perform other timely operational and managerial duties such as occupational health and safety, tracking teacher absences, supervising field trips, assigning on-call supervision, organizing and administering the

EQAO large-scale assessments, creating the master school timetable, revising emergency response protocols, and creating the examination supervision schedule.

Secondary vice-principals now perform more (not fewer) operational and managerial duties. For instance, Wayne stated that during the past 15 years there has been an increase of operational duties as instructional leadership has been added to the vice-principal role. Neoliberalism has increased the managerial role of vice-principals, as vice-principals must now comply with the numerous educational policies that focus on external and internal accountability, including organizing and administrating external standardized tests, as well as completing increased paperwork for district school board and Ministry of Education reporting and accountability (Cranston, 2013; Wallace, 2001). Earlier, Pauline shared that with greater accountability, the duties her vice-principals perform (e.g., teacher hiring, occupational health and safety regulations) have multiplied. With a neoliberal approach to education, the focus is on short-term improvements based on urgency, consistency, and compliance at the expense of staff autonomy and professionalism (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Although vice-principals' days are spent predominantly on operational and managerial tasks, the secondary principals expect their vice-principals to be instructional leaders as well.

Vice-principals as instructional leaders. Secondary vice-principals are expected to demonstrate instructional leadership to support their principals in terms of improving teaching and learning. Vice-principals can provide instructional leadership through leading and facilitating staff professional learning, providing resources and time for teachers to collaborate in professional learning communities, and sharing descriptive feedback after classroom visits regarding the influence of change initiatives on student

learning (Blaise & Blaise, 1999; Fullan, 2014). It is important to note that principals and vice-principals indirectly influence teaching and learning as they provide the working conditions, motivation, and commitment for staff to engage in professional learning (Leithwood et al., 2008). As Melanie iterated, vice-principals' operational duties are numerous and time-consuming, yet vice-principals need to find the time to perform instructional tasks. Aligned with my literature review, my findings demonstrate that vice-principals provide instructional leadership by supporting their principals to set school vision, being a member of the school improvement planning committee, engaging teachers in professional learning, observing classes, and conducting staff performance appraisals (Grate, 2005; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Kwan, 2011; Sun, 2012).

However, we cannot assume that vice-principals are strong instructional leaders. Principals can help their vice-principals develop the skills to lead whole staff professional learning (Barnett et al., 2012; Reagan, 2015). Earlier, Victor stated that he builds his vice-principals' confidence to stand in front of staff to lead professional learning by modeling and helping with planning. Vice-principals often find it difficult to be instructional leaders, as they need to prioritize the multitude of operational and instructional duties while also addressing the urgent needs of staff, parents, and students in a timely manner (Colwell, 2015). Yet, school administrators need to spend time on what matters most, that is, teaching and learning (Barber et al., 2011; Fullan, 2014; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, 2011). In particular, vice-principals should spend at least 50% of their time on instructional leadership (Colwell, 2015). Vice-principals want to provide instructional leadership, as doing so positively

influences their level of job satisfaction (Cattonar et al., 2007; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Kwan, 2011; Reagan, 2015).

A tension regarding instructional leadership arises when a vice-principal's entire school day must be spent dealing with urgent operational and managerial tasks. For instance, Pauline shared that her vice-principals spend a great deal of time on occupational health and safety, and working in collaboration with the principal to comply with Ministry of Education policies such as *Bill 274* on teacher hiring. Due to the prescriptive nature of *Bill 274*, administrative teams now spend potentially double the amount of time they previously did on staffing. Also, the Ministry of Labour's requirements for health and safety can double or triple the amount of time vice-principals spend working on health and safety. Due to this increase in workload, finding time to spend on instructional leadership can be a challenge for vice-principals.

Another challenge regarding instructional leadership lies in the fact that school administrators are no longer members of the teachers' union. Being removed from the teachers' union means principals and vice-principals are categorized as managers, which has resulted in an "us versus them" mentality, with resistance from teachers in terms of implementing change initiatives (Wallace, 2001; Williams, 2003). A 2015 study by Pollock et al. found that 31.7% of principals responded "only somewhat" or "not at all" when asked whether they believed teachers' unions respect their work. The Ontario Progressive Conservative government removed Ontario school administrators from the teachers' union back in the late 1990s to demonstrate that principals and vice-principals are part of their district school boards' organizational management structures (Sattler, 2012). Staff professional learning is limited to staff meetings and professional activity

days since staff cannot be mandated, according to their negotiated teacher-board collective agreements, to attend and participate in professional learning before, during, or after school. Due to school structures, classroom instruction remains traditional: “...incremental changes have largely left intact teaching routines that students’ grandparents visiting these schools would find familiar” (Cuban, 2012, p. 112). Tension surrounding professional learning exists in high schools, which are structured so teachers are compartmentalized with no common lunch or preparation periods, school culture is deeply imbedded to resist change, and teacher unions advocate for teacher working conditions (Bolman & Deal, 2009; Harris, 2006).

Neoliberalism has made the secondary vice-principal role more complex and increased vice-principals’ workloads. Olivia stated earlier that she wants her vice-principals to help facilitate teacher leaders to deliver professional learning. She believes when teacher leaders lead professional learning, they build teacher leadership and capacity to sustain change initiatives. Also, Victor shared that he expects his vice-principals to perform regular classroom walkthroughs to observe how professional learning is being implemented in classrooms, and to engage in follow-up discussions with teachers. A dilemma is how to prioritize operational and instructional tasks within existing school structures, as performing operational tasks takes time away from instructional leadership, while performing instructional tasks minimizes time that can be spent on the daily operations and management of a school (Castle & Mitchell, 2001). The secondary principals in my study reported that their vice-principals perform operational duties with an instructional lens.

Operational duties can be made instructional. All the secondary principals interviewed for this study stated that operational duties, which can consume the majority – if not all – of a school day can be approached as instructional. Managerial and administrative duties are performed using an integrated approach, so tasks commonly executed for managing school operations can also be viewed as instructional to improve student learning and achievement (Colwell, 2015; Kruse & Louis, 2009). For instance, Marla stated that creating the master school timetable influences students’ academic year. Also, Steven shared that student discipline can be approached by changing student behaviour while supporting teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment practices.

As discussed, one tension regarding operational and instructional duties is how to prioritize between the two. School administrators are reminded that they need to spend their day supporting teachers’ instructional and assessment practices to improve student learning and achievement (Fullan, 2014; Hattie, 2013; Robinson, 2011). Yet, principals need to be strong operational managers to create the safe and supportive working conditions needed for instructional leadership to occur (Colwell, 2015; Fullan, 2014; Horng & Loeb, 2010). The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) calls for an integrated approach when it comes to operational management and instructional leadership (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Tension occurs when vice-principal appointments are based on an emphasis on instructional leadership (Rintoul & Kennelly, 2014). Hallinger (2003) cautions: “Efforts to limit or even focus narrowly on [instructional leadership] in an effort to improve student performance will be dysfunctional for the principal” (p. 334). Winton and Pollock (2016) argued that the

Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) is problematic, since the policy document identifies what a successful school leader would be at the expense of other leadership competencies and practices. As Kyle iterated, without being effective operational managers, vice-principals can be the best instructional leaders, and yet they would not be effective without teacher followers. An integrated leadership approach recognizes the complexity of the secondary principal and vice-principal roles, yet the secondary principals in my study iterated that figuring out how to implement an integrated approach remains a dilemma.

Tension Three: Composition of the Administrative Team

The third tension, composition of the administrative team, can result in operational and instructional duties not being performed effectively or not being fulfilled at all. This tension is organized into two themes: (1) the importance of regular communication, and (2) lack of a team approach.

The importance of regular communication. Secondary principals and vice-principals should have regular communication to fulfill their increasingly complex responsibilities. There needs to be willingness for members of the school administrative team to align their philosophies, styles, beliefs, and visions, which can occur through strong working relationships, communication, and trust (Colwell, 2015; Germes, 2010; Hughes & James, 1999; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Wong, 2009). Instrumental to having strong working relationships is for principals and vice-principals to recognize that their relationship is superordinate/subordinate (Fields, 2015; Hausman et al., 2002; Wong, 2009). As already shared, vice-principals can serve as co-principals, although the principal is ultimately in charge. Denise builds in time during the busy school day to

communicate with her vice-principals so that each administrator can share what they are dealing with and so the rest of the team can offer support. Regular communication is also necessary to build trusting relationships. Building relationships and developing people is the second domain in the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Building relationships promotes capacity building in others through risk-taking and increased motivation (Leithwood, 2012). Earlier, Wayne shared the notion that if vice-principals do not trust and do not have a strong relationship with their principals, they will not feel comfortable sharing concerns and challenges. Vice-principals who have strong working relationships with their principals can develop confidence to take risks while simultaneously receiving support and direction. As Steven reported, he has an open-door policy and uses a co-principal model with his vice-principal; they work collaboratively and have regular communication. The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) includes personal leadership resources that help strengthen vice-principals' ability to perform their role (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). As Denise stated, when relationships fail, the cause of the failure can often be traced back to lack of personal leadership resources. However, it may also be the case that the administrative team lacks a team approach.

Lack of team approach. All the secondary principals in the study reported that a major challenge they face is the possibility of not functioning as a cohesive school administrative team. The secondary principals stated that there is no formal process in place for them to provide input to superintendents regarding the selection of incoming vice-principals or their needs in general. Principals and vice-principals who share common vision and understand each other's roles develop positive professional

relationships; if this was not the case, conflict could occur as a result of a lack of communication, and duties could be performed individually or left unfulfilled (Barnett et al., 2012; Rutherford, 2003). Earlier, Daniel shared that the principal is responsible for ensuring that the school administrative team functions through the “storming and norming” phases. Vice-principals also have a responsibility to make the administrative team function by aligning with their principal’s style and philosophy, and knowing the limits in terms of when to push back (Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Mertz, 2000, 2006; Militello et al., 2015). For dysfunctional administrative teams, Pauline suggested principals speak with their superintendent about having one of the vice-principals transferred for the benefit of the team. This is particularly important as the secondary principals reported that the need to perform duties collaboratively as the principal and vice-principal roles have become increasingly complex with a neoliberal approach to education.

Another challenge that can result in the lack of a cohesive and functioning team is frequent changeover in the administrative team. Referred to as “revolving-door syndrome” (Sarason, 1996) or “passing presence in the school than a lasting influence on its development” (Fink & Brayman, 2006), constant changeover can occur as a result of promotion, school transfer, retirement, or resignation (Fink & Brayman, 2006). School transfers allow school administrators to professionally grow by working with different administrators, staff, and school communities (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012; Macmillan, 2000). However, such transfers can be disruptive (Beteille et al., 2012; Macmillan, 2000); staff can become frustrated if they are not able to sustain a change initiative once their principal is transferred, and may resist or ignore their new principal’s

vision for the school (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Macmillan, 2000). Earlier, Wayne shared that focus should be on implementing deep change with the same administrative team rather than spending time developing relationships each time there is a change in school administration. Incoming principals require time to build relationships, and may be transferred before they are able to create a positive and lasting impact, which can take between seven and 10 years (Fink & Brayman, 2006; Louis et al., 2010; Sarason, 1996). As Victor stated, he has had the same administrative team only once in the past 12 years. Victor's experience is consistent with other secondary principals in the study, as administrative team changes are the norm and frequent.

Summary

This chapter presented a discussion and interpretation of my findings. I began by describing how secondary principals perceive the changing nature of the secondary vice-principal role. Secondary principals stated that their vice-principals' work has intensified, which I connected to the neoliberal education reforms. Three tensions surrounding how secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role were discussed: (1) principal and vice-principal roles appear to be similar, (2) vice-principals find it challenging to prioritize their operational and instructional duties, and (3) composition of the administrative team. In the next chapter, I will provide explanations for each of the research sub-questions. Implications for myself as a scholar-practitioner, for professional practice, for educational policy, and for research in educational leadership are described, along with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this final chapter of my thesis, I provide a summary of my study, and discuss implications and recommendations for future research. First, I summarize my study by briefly restating my research question and methodology. I then summarize my findings to explain each research sub-question through the secondary principals' perspectives. Next, I discuss the implications of my study for my own practice, for professional practice, for educational policy, and for research in educational leadership. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study

My study adds to the growing research on the changing nature of the secondary vice-principal role through the perspectives provided by secondary principals. An interpretative basic, generic qualitative study approach was used to answer my research question, "How do secondary principals understand and negotiate the secondary vice-principal role?" My conceptual framework, based on the notions of *role* and *work*, informed the study.

I chose to use an interpretive basic, generic qualitative research methodology since I was interested in context and thick description to describe, understand, and interpret my participants' perspectives. My data collection method was one-time, semi-structured interviews, to allow for probes and follow-up questions with each participant. In total, 13 secondary principals from four district school boards participated in the study. Data analysis was ongoing and analyzed using a modified version of the constant comparative method for themes and sub-themes to emerge.

Summary of Findings

In this section, I present a summary of my findings to explain each research sub-question. Chapters four and five presented the findings. Chapter six discussed and interpreted my findings and connected them back to my review of the literature and conceptual framework.

Research sub-question one: What do secondary principals believe their vice-principals' role to be? The secondary principals interviewed for this study reported that a major part of their vice-principals' day is spent managing the daily operations of the school. Secondary vice-principals react to situations involving student discipline, attendance, and conflict resolution, as well as supporting staff's professional and personal needs. Vice-principals, through visibility in the school, can proactively reduce inappropriate student behaviour. Further, the secondary principals emphasized that the secondary vice-principal role is about supporting people, so developing relationships with the administrative team, students, teachers, and parents is important. Vice-principals need to work collaboratively with their school administrative team, which can be enhanced by strengthening the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)'s personal leadership resources (problem-solving expertise, knowledge of effective school and classroom practices that directly affect student learning, systems thinking, perceiving emotions, managing emotions, acting in emotionally appropriate ways, optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, proactivity) (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). When dealing with student discipline, attendance, and conflict resolution, the secondary principals stated that one goal is for their vice-principals to positively change student behaviour. Vice-principals support staff's professional and personal needs so teachers can directly influence student

learning and achievement in their classrooms. Also, secondary principals expect their vice-principals to be instructional leaders by leading and facilitating staff professional learning. The secondary principals interviewed iterated that they prefer their vice-principals facilitate teacher leaders to deliver professional learning which builds teacher capacity and sustains the change initiatives. Secondary vice-principals can also demonstrate instructional leadership by providing descriptive feedback to teachers from classroom walkthroughs as well as during teacher performance appraisals.

Since vice-principals spend a great deal of their day performing operational tasks, the secondary principals in the study believe that operational duties can be performed with an instructional lens. The secondary principals shared how student discipline and attendance can be made instructional by changing student behaviour, how creating the school master timetable can be instructional by strategically placing teachers to courses and courses to periods, and how provincial large-scale assessments can be made instructional by implementing research-based instructional and assessment strategies to support what gets tested.

Research sub-question two: How do secondary principals determine their vice-principals' role? The secondary principals in the study reported that their vice-principals' duties are assigned collaboratively by the school administrative team. The team meets to discuss who will be the lead for each duty, which is determined by examining each school administrator's strengths, interests, and areas of growth. Secondary principals may strategically assign duties to their vice-principals for professional growth. The secondary principals stated that they finalize each portfolio to

ensure that there are both operational and instructional duties, with consideration to the workload during different times of the school year.

The secondary principals interviewed stated that their role and their vice-principals' role are not much different, although the secondary principals emphasized that they remain ultimately in charge since they delegate tasks, but not the responsibility. Thus, the secondary principals monitor how their vice-principals perform their duties and offer support as needed.

Research sub-question three: How do secondary principals support their vice-principals in performing their daily role? The secondary principals in the study stated that they support their vice-principals on a regular basis through collaborative problem solving and decision making. They serve as mentors and consultants to their vice-principals by providing advice, sharing their expertise, and supporting their vice-principals to make informed decisions.

The secondary principals also reported that they assist their vice-principals on a consistent basis by having regular communication. Principals stated that they build check-in time with their vice-principals to support them with performing their role. The secondary principals also shared that they ask their vice-principals questions to encourage multiple perspectives and viewpoints.

Third, secondary principals provide short-term supports by modeling and leading by example. Principals emphasized that they take a student-centered approach, which helps their vice-principals to think and work through challenging situations. The secondary principals iterated that duties are performed collaboratively due to the increased complexity of the principal and vice-principal roles.

Research sub-question four: How do secondary principals support the long-term growth of their vice-principals in performing their role? Secondary principals support the long-term growth of their vice-principals by using the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) as a self-assessment tool (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). Using the OLF, vice-principals can identify areas of strength and areas for growth. The secondary principals believe that their vice-principals need to continually learn and grow, regardless of whether or not they are interested in pursuing the principalship.

The secondary principals in the study expect their vice-principals to eventually perform the full spectrum of vice-principal duties. The rationale for this is that vice-principals are principals-in-training, and if they perform all vice-principal duties they will be able to support their own vice-principals when they themselves are appointed as principals. The secondary principals stated that they share their principal role with their vice-principals. Secondary principals also support their vice-principals by using cognitive coaching conversations to ask questions and encourage their vice-principals to see the whole school perspective.

Research sub-question five: What challenges do secondary principals face in terms of working with vice-principals or the vice-principal role? One challenge that the secondary principals interviewed shared in terms of working with vice-principals is the composition of the school administrative team. District school board superintendents put the school administrative team together often without input from principals, and principals are then responsible for making the team function. Also, the secondary principals expressed concern that there can be frequent changeover in the team as time is spent establishing strong relationships at the expense of implementing long-term change

to influence student learning and achievement. Further, the secondary principals shared that vice-principals with limited skills are a challenge, as principals are in that case required to provide the necessary supports while simultaneously performing their own role.

A challenge regarding the secondary vice-principal role is the increased workload. The secondary principals articulated that the number of operational tasks has increased, and there is simultaneously an expectation that vice-principals will act as instructional leaders, with the focus on accountability. The secondary principals also shared that their vice-principals have difficulty fulfilling their operational and instructional responsibilities due work intensification, which I argued in the previous chapter is a result of neoliberal education reforms. The secondary principals suggested that having an additional vice-principal would free up time for instructional leadership.

Limitations

One limitation of my study is that I did not include secondary vice-principals. Thus, the secondary vice-principal role is described through the perspectives of the secondary principals interviewed, which may or may not be consistent with what secondary vice-principals would have reported were they included in the study. I do need to emphasize that the school context (Hallinger, 2007) may influence the vice-principal role as the secondary principals reported varying approaches to instructional leadership (e.g., whether to lead or facilitate) based on the staff and school community needs.

Also, a potential limitation of my study is social desirability bias. *Social desirability bias* occurs when participants respond in a socially acceptable or favourable way, often to sensitive topics (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). I do not believe

social desirability bias influenced my study, since my participants provided similar responses to my research sub-questions even though they were not aware of each other's responses. Data saturation was reached after six interviews; however, I continued to interview more participants to solidify the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study. Prior to conducting each interview, I spent time developing a rapport with the participants, emphasized the fact that the focus of my study was on their perspectives, and that their identity would not be revealed in my thesis. However, a possibility for social desirability bias remains, as the principal role is political and my participants may have responded in a more favourable manner to provide responses they think I seek. To enhance dependability, I left an audit trail for my reader (see appendices E through J), which include an entry from my reflective journal, data analysis through memoing and coding, data summary table, themes and sub-themes after six and nine interviews, and an intensive analysis chart.

Implications of Study for my Own Practice, Professional Practice, Educational Policy, and Research in Educational Leadership

My research study has implications for my own practice, professional practice, educational policy, and research in educational leadership. I discuss each implication in a separate section, which conveys practicality and usefulness.

Implications for my own practice. As a scholar-practitioner, my study is applicable to my current role as a secondary vice-principal. The secondary vice-principal role remains predominantly managerial due to a neoliberal approach to education, which emphasizes external and internal accountability with efficient use of education funds. Although I continue to struggle with performing my numerous duties and fulfilling the

responsibilities required in my role, I was reassured by the secondary principals in my study who acknowledged the growing complexity of the vice-principal role and work intensification. However, there is an expectation for instructional leadership in my role and I need to proactively seek it, rather than simply make operational tasks instructional. I need to learn how to balance my professional and personal time. I also need to perform all the vice-principal duties and learn about duties traditionally reserved for the principal (e.g., budgeting). I entered the Doctor of Education program interested in how secondary vice-principals prioritize their duties and responsibilities, and I leave the program having identified what professional learning I still need to do. I have also developed an understanding of neoliberalism, which answers the “so what?” question in my study, and has resulted in the vice-principal role becoming more complex, increasingly tied to compliance of educational policies, and including an augmented workload. I appreciate the perspectives of the 13 secondary principals I interviewed for this study, and I have incorporated many of their perspectives into my practice as a secondary vice-principal. For instance, I can certainly relate to Geoff, who stated that the vice-principal’s desk looks like a tornado at the end of the day!

Implications for professional practice. At the school level, my study is of interest to secondary principals, secondary vice-principals, and those aspiring to become secondary principals or vice-principals. After reading my study, principals can reflect upon whether the duties they assign to their vice-principals effectively support them to lead change and manage school operations, while simultaneously providing their vice-principals with growth opportunities. My study can encourage secondary principals to reflect on how they support, mentor, and coach their vice-principals, keeping in mind the

numerous neoliberal education policies that must be implemented, which influence the secondary principal and vice-principal roles and work performed. Also, teachers aspiring to become secondary vice-principals can learn what secondary principals can expect of them in the secondary vice-principal role; it is timely to address school administrator succession planning, since after 2018, 39% of Ontario secondary vice-principals will be eligible to retire (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2008). Further, current secondary vice-principals can reflect on their practices through the secondary principals interviewed as they continue to learn and grow as school administrators.

My study is also of interest to system administrators at the district school board level. After reading my study, superintendents can review their vice-principal induction program and what supports are offered to newly appointed secondary vice-principals. Superintendents can also revisit what professional learning secondary principals are provided to mentor and coach their vice-principals for short-term and long-term growth respectively. As the secondary principals emphasized that the school administrative team composition is important for the function of the team, one implication of this study is to recommend a formal process for secondary principals to provide input to their superintendent on the incoming vice-principal needs and vice-principal compatibility. With secondary principals at their schools for approximately three to five years and vice-principals at their schools for approximately two to three years, the secondary principals in this study expressed concern over the frequent changeover in administrative teams, as time is spent creating a functional team at the expense of focusing on deep and sustainable implementation of change initiatives. Thus, board senior administrators can revisit their transfer policy regarding school administrators. Another implication of this

study is for district school boards to revisit the number of vice-principals assigned to high schools. The secondary principals in this study commented on the ever-increasing role complexity and workload of the vice-principal, with compliance to numerous Ministry of Education policies, takes time away from providing instructional leadership. With additional secondary vice-principals, the workload would be made more manageable, allowing more time for instructional leadership. A further implication is to revisit the secondary vice-principal role and to consider whether some of the operational and administrative tasks could be delegated to teachers interested in pursuing the secondary vice-principalship; teachers could serve as administrative assistants during a one-period release from classroom teaching. Perhaps making it mandatory to serve as administrative assistants prior to appointment as vice-principal would help teachers make an informed decision to enter school administration, since once in the role, returning to classroom teaching results in losing prior teacher seniority. By addressing the tension that exists between wanting to be an instructional leader and needing to perform numerous urgent operational tasks, more teachers may be interested in pursuing the secondary vice-principalship.

Implications for educational policy. My study has implications for the Ontario College of Teachers, which regulates the principal qualification program (PQP) in Ontario. As it is, the PQP focuses on the principal role rather than on specific skills, such as the personal leadership resources, needed for the vice-principal role (Rintoul & Kennelly, 2014). Consistent with my review of the literature (e.g., Barnett et al., 2012; Marshall & Hooley, 2006), the secondary principals in my study portrayed the secondary vice-principal role as predominantly operational and managerial, which are learned while

performing the role. Specific topics that could be included in the PQP to prepare for the secondary vice-principal role could include: how to manage conflict, how to build relationships, the importance of the team, how to strengthen personal leadership resources, and time management. With attention to the secondary vice-principal role, my study could also be of interest to PQP service providers such as Ontario faculties of education, the Ontario Principal Council, and Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario.

My study also has implications for the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) provided a vision for school administrators to perform their role as leaders and managers (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2013). This research-based policy document calls for an integrated leadership approach consisting of operational, instructional, and transformational leadership (Leithwood, 2012). However, my study found, through secondary principals' perspectives, vice-principals remain in a reactionary mode, dealing with urgent student, staff, and parent issues throughout the day rather than performing important instructional duties and responsibilities. Although the secondary principals interviewed in this study stated how operational duties can be made instructional, I believe we need to explore how the vice-principal role can be *balanced* between managerial and instructional duties. The secondary principals in the study stated that vice-principals are principals-in-training, yet their time is dominated by operational tasks. Suggestions include exploring the notion of "co-principals," and creating funding for additional secondary vice-principals and administrative assistants; that is, teachers aspiring to become vice-principals and are released for a period each semester from their teaching duties to support the main office with operational tasks.

Implications for research in educational leadership. My study adds to the growing literature on the changing nature of the vice-principal role as a result of a neoliberal education approach. The secondary principals in my study articulated that they found their role and their vice-principals' role to be similar, with much overlap. Consistent with recent research sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Education (Leithwood et al., 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015) and the Ontario Principals' Council (Pollock et al., 2014, 2015), my study found that increasing numbers of operational duties dominated the school day at the expense of providing instructional leadership. This poses a dilemma, as principals are expected to be instructional leaders, yet are preoccupied with supporting their vice-principals with urgent and immediate operational tasks such as student safety and occupational health and safety. Also consistent with educational research (e.g., Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b; Leithwood et al., 2014; Pollock et al., 2014), my study found secondary principals and vice-principals are accountable to comply with Ministry and district school board policies with "an environment of centralized control and localized accountability" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b, p. 1). Thus, there is little autonomy to address specific school needs (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014b; Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Pollock et al., 2014, 2015).

My study also adds to the growing literature on the complexity of the secondary vice-principal role due to the influence of neoliberal education policies. The vice-principal role is defined as *duties assigned by the principal* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1990) as there is no standardized list due to varying school contexts and needs. Findings such as "the secondary vice-principal role is determined collaboratively by an administrative team and there is overlap between the principal and vice-principal

roles” contradict my review of the literature and suggest that secondary principals are moving towards a collaborative and team approach to support their vice-principals to lead and manage in a neoliberal approach to education. Although these findings are encouraging, the growing complexity of the vice-principal role and work intensification as shared by the secondary principals need to be addressed to ensure secondary teachers continue to apply for the secondary vice-principalship (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2014a, 2014b; Leithwood et al., 2014; Pollock et al., 2014; Reagan, 2015). An Ontario study in 2008 found the number of educators certified to teach in the province increased each year from 2003 to 2007, yet the number of educators applying for school and system administrative positions appears to have decreased (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2008).

Recommendations for Future Research

As my study interviewed a total of 13 secondary principals in four district school boards to explore their understanding of the secondary vice-principal role, future basic, generic qualitative research studies using semi-structured interviews are recommended. My study can be expanded to include elementary principals and to compare the vice-principal role, through the perspectives of principals, at the elementary and secondary levels. Another study could include how secondary vice-principals understand their role and then compare findings with the findings of this study. A third suggestion is to interview more secondary principals from the Catholic system and compare the findings to the public system. A final suggestion is to compare the perspectives of male and female principals and vice-principals regarding the vice-principal role.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, other qualitative research methods could be used in future studies. For instance, an ethnographic study involving observing a small number of secondary vice-principals for a prolonged time period could provide rich data to understand the complexities of the secondary vice-principal role. Also, as the secondary principals interviewed for this study reported that their vice-principals find it challenging to prioritize their operational and instructional tasks, as well as balance their work and personal lives, an ethnographic study of vice-principals who have effectively prioritized their operational and instructional duties and balanced professional and personal lives, would be timely and important.

Quantitative research methodology can also be used in future research concerning the role of the secondary vice-principal. For instance, one possible study idea is to collect data through surveys from secondary principals and secondary vice-principals regarding the vice-principal role. Such data would be generalizable to the regions collected. Comparisons could be made between principals and vice-principals, male and female administrators, administrators from urban and rural schools, from different sized school, and schools with differing socioeconomic statuses.

Summary

The final chapter of this dissertation presented a summary of the findings for each research sub-question; implications for my own practice, professional practice, educational policy, research to educational leadership; and recommendations for future research. The findings are encouraging as the secondary principals in this study articulated that the secondary vice-principal role is to support principals as operational managers and instructional leaders. However, with a neoliberal approach to education,

my participants reported that the secondary principal and vice-principal roles are similar, the focus is on compliance with Ministry and district school board policies, and there is an imbalance in the operational duties which require urgent and immediate attention at the expense of instructional leadership. Implications of my study include potentially revisiting the number of vice-principals assigned to high schools, the possibility of reconfiguring the vice-principal role so it can better support the secondary principal role with prioritizing operational and instructional tasks, and employing administrative assistants who can free up time so secondary principals and vice-principals can be instructional leaders. Currently, once teachers become vice-principals they leave their teachers' union and lose their teacher seniority. Teachers need the opportunity to be apprenticed into school administration and to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to become school administrators. From the secondary principals' perspectives, I conclude that the secondary vice-principal role is challenging, demanding, and includes numerous responsibilities to fulfill. By making the secondary vice-principal role more manageable, perhaps more teachers will seek the secondary vice-principalship in the future during the current era of external and internal accountability, and with 39% of Ontario secondary vice-principals eligible to retire by 2018 (The Institute for Educational Leadership, 2008).

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW APPROVAL



Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Katina Pollock
Department & Institution: Education\Faculty of Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 106590
Study Title: How Elementary Principals Understand and Negotiate the Vice-Principal Role
Sponsor:

NMREB Initial Approval Date: May 29, 2015
NMREB Expiry Date: May 29, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2015/05/08
Revised Letter of Information & Consent		2015/05/08
Instruments	Interview Guide	2015/03/30
Advertisement	Email script to potential participants	2015/03/31
Advertisement	Study Description for Dr Joanne Robinson	2015/03/31


The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.


Ethics Officer, on behalf of Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

<input type="checkbox"/> Erika Basile ebasile@uwo.ca	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grace Kelly grace.kelly@uwo.ca	<input type="checkbox"/> Mina Mekhail mmekhail@uwo.ca	<input type="checkbox"/> Vikki Tran vikki.tran@uwo.ca
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This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Questions to help participant become comfortable before the interview and to set context:

(a) Please tell me about your career and how you ended up in the position you are in today.

Possible probes: (Do not use them all!)

- How long have you been a secondary principal?
- Describe some of your past experiences leading up to becoming a principal?
- Explain why you choose to become a principal.
- How long were you a teacher? What leadership positions did you hold?
- What initial and additional academic qualifications do you hold?

(b) Please describe your school.

Possible probes: (Do not use them all!)

- How many teachers are in your school? How many students?
- Describe the student population at your school. What is the ethnic make-up?
- What percentage of your students are identified as Special Education? English language learners?
- Describe the parent involvement at your school in terms of their child's education.

2. What are the duties and responsibilities performed by your vice-principals? I.e., what do your vice-principals do?

Possible probes:

- What duties and responsibilities do your vice-principals actually perform that supports teacher professional growth and learning? Why?
- What would you consider to be the top three duties and responsibilities your vice-principals actually perform on a daily basis? Why?
- Is there a balance between your vice-principals' duties and responsibilities to support the school operations and to support teacher professional learning? Explain.
- What are the ideal duties and responsibilities your vice-principals should perform to support the running of the school? Why?
- What are the ideal duties and responsibilities your vice-principals should perform to support teacher professional growth and learning? Why?
- Is there mismatch between the duties and responsibilities your vice-principals actually perform and should perform? Explain.

3. How do you determine your vice-principals' duties and responsibilities? I.e., how do you determine what your vice-principals do?

Possible probes:

- (a) Are your vice-principals involved in determining their duties and responsibilities? Explain why or why not.

- (b) Do you consider your vice-principals' growth when determining how they will spend their time? Explain.
- (c) Are your vice-principals' roles based mainly on school needs? Explain.
- (d) Is there any overlap between your role and your vice-principals' roles? Explain.
4. Describe how do you support your vice-principals in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities? I.e., how do you support your vice-principals in what they do?
- Possible probes:
- (a) How closely do you work with your vice-principals to fulfill their roles?
For example, how often does the school administrative team meet?
- (b) Can you tell me about a time when your vice-principal had an idea or plan that he/she wanted to implement? If so, please describe and your involvement.
- (c) Can you describe a time when you perceived your vice-principal was dissatisfied or had difficulty in fulfilling his/her role? If so, what did you do?
- (d) How do you support your vice-principal when an area of growth is identified (either by you as principal or by your vice-principal)?
5. Do you think it is your responsibility to mentor or coach your vice-principals as future principals? If yes, how? If no, why?

Possible probes:

- (a) What does mentoring or coaching your vice-principals look like? Sound like?
- (b) Did you receive training on how to serve as a mentor or coach? If so, please describe.
- (c) Do you provide your vice-principals with opportunities to learn about duties traditionally reserved for the principal (e.g., budget, teacher professional growth and development)? Please explain.
- (d) How do you support your vice-principals to perform the duties and responsibilities that will prepare them as future principals?
- (e) Do you share your role with your vice-principals so they gain experience in the numerous duties and responsibilities to lead and manage a school? Explain why or why not.

6. What challenges do you have working with your vice-principals?

Possible probes:

- (a) How did you learn the skills to work with vice-principals?
- (b) Are decisions made collaboratively between principal and vice-principals? Explain.
- (c) What are your expectations of your vice-principals?
- (d) When a challenge is identified, what steps do you and your vice-principals take?

7. Is there anything you would like to add?

8. Can you recommend names of secondary principals who may be interested in participating in this study?

Probes

- How do you do that?
- Tell me more about that.
- Why do you think that?

APPENDIX C: STUDY DESCRIPTION



My study, *How Secondary Principals Understand and Negotiate the Vice-Principal Role*, seeks to understand how secondary principals determine their vice-principals' role so the school administrative team can fulfill their leadership and managerial roles. From secondary principals' perspectives, what do vice-principals do? My study has received ethical approval from the University of Western Ontario and the Ontario Principals' Council.

Recent Canadian studies have documented the increased workload and changing nature of principals' work as managerial and compliancy of ministry and board policies and initiatives (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2014; Canadian Association of Principals, 2014; Leithwood, Azah, Harris, Slater, & Jantzi, 2014a, 2014b; Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2014; Pollock & Hauseman, 2015). To fulfill their role, principals need a combination of leadership, management, and shared authority (Leithwood, 2012).

Secondary principals in the role at least three years, have been at their current school for at least a year, and have at least one full-time vice-principal are sought for this study. Participants will engage in a 60-90 minute face-to-face audiotaped interview. Potential benefits to participants include the opportunity to reflect on their practices and reflect on how an administrative team can collaborate to lead and manage their school. This study, which will become my doctoral dissertation, is supervised by Dr. Katina Pollock, [REDACTED]. Interested secondary principals are asked to contact Louis Lim, Ed.D. Candidate, at [REDACTED].

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT



Project Title: How Secondary Principals Understand and Negotiate the Vice-Principal Role

Principal Investigator: Dr. Katina Pollock, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

Student Investigator: Mr. Louis Lim, Ed.D. Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

Letter of Information

1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study, *How Secondary Principals Understand and Negotiate the Vice-Principal Role*, because you are an experienced secondary principal.

2. Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study

This study seeks to determine how secondary principals understand their vice-principals' role; that is, what do secondary vice-principals do from their principals' perspective? This study seeks to add to the growing literature on the changing nature of principals' work and increased workload through the lens of the vice-principal role to help fulfill the leadership and managerial roles and responsibilities required of the school administrative team.

4. Inclusion Criteria

Secondary principals who have been in the role for at least three years, have been at their current school for at least one year, and have at least one full-time vice-principal at the school are eligible to participate in this study.

5. Exclusion Criteria

The following individuals are not eligible to participate in this study: First and second year secondary principals, secondary principals in their first year at their current school, secondary principals who share a vice-principal with another school, secondary vice-principals and elementary school administrators.

6. Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to engage in a one-time individual semi-structured interview. It is anticipated that the entire task will take 1 to 1.5 hours. The task will be conducted in a mutually agreed upon location, date, and time. As a condition to participate, the interview will be audiotaped. You may terminate the interview and withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

7. Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

8. Possible Benefits

The possible benefits to participants may be the opportunity to reflect on your practices as a secondary principal as well as to reflect on how an administrative team can collaborate to lead and manage their school. The possible benefits to society may be to provide a glimpse into secondary principals' perspectives of their vice-principals' role in one region of Ontario, which can influence on how vice-principals prepare for the principalship, and benefit Principal's Qualification Program providers such as the Ontario Principals' Council and faculties of education.

9. Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

10. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not impact on your employment. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your employment or other consequences.

11. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database.

12. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Principal Investigator, Dr. Katina Pollock, Ph.D., Associate Professor, [REDACTED] or Student Researcher, Louis Lim, Ed.D. Candidate, [REDACTED].

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics [REDACTED], email: [REDACTED].

13. Publication

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Student Researcher, Louis Lim, Ed.D. Candidate, [REDACTED].

14. Consent

If you agree to participate in the study, written informed consent is required. Please see next page.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Consent Form

Project Title: How Secondary Principals Understand and Negotiate the Vice-Principal Role

Study Investigator's Name:

- Principal Investigator: Dr. Katina Pollock, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
- Student Investigator: Mr. Louis Lim, Ed.D. Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to have the interview audiotaped.

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Consent's Name: _____

Person Obtaining Consent Signature _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of the consent form is for your records.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRY

August 19, 2015

Reflexivity

- Close to the problem of practice
- Who I am?: 5th year secondary vice-principal who has experienced the role as compliance, political, managerial/administrative/operational – yet needed to demonstrate instructional leadership to be formally appointed in role
- Work closely with principal who assigns duties, has expectations, style determines autonomy level
- Data Analysis: Need to let codes → themes
 - However, are the themes predetermined since I organized research sub-questions based on 4 themes from literature review? Ask Katina (thesis supervisor)
- Need to be neutral and non-judgmental during semi-structured interviews
 - “Thank you” so participants don’t seek feedback on their responses e.g., on right track when their perspectives is what is valued; if agree to responses, then introducing bias – as I am a vice-principal who can relate to their responses
- Need to remember in qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument to data collection and analysis – need to be transparent on approach; justify why I did something/chose approach over others

APPENDIX F: DATA ANALYSIS – MEMOING AND CODING TRANSCRIPTS

Colour Code:

1. What do secondary principals believe their vice-principals' role to be? [blue]
2. How do secondary principals determine their vice-principals' role? [yellow]
3. How do secondary principals support their vice-principals in fulfilling their role? [orange]
4. How do secondary principals mentor and coach their vice-principals to be future principals? [green]
5. What challenges do secondary principals face with the vice-principal role? [pink]

CODE

An excerpt from Victor's verbatim transcript:

A: Every year I sit down with my vice-principal team and I am going to take a standpoint of working in a secondary school. We talk and look at the overall roles and responsibilities. We really divide them into 2 areas to be very conscious. Yes there are the operational pieces that we need to be conscious of covering and being responsible for in the operations of the school. The other side is what are the roles and responsibilities that are instructional leaders? What are the things we need to focus on? What are our priorities? And how are we going to work together?

*- Operational
- instructional*

admin head meet to determine duties

PRIORITIZE TEAM Although each time we'll sit down and we will divide out responsibilities in the school so there is a key point person responsible for it. I really try to emphasize with the vice-principals that it's not done in isolation. **COLLABORATION** While I may be the lead person on budget and the professional development network team, my expectation is that I am working with the vice-principals. I want them involved with each of these processes. **WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH** Because working together as a team. One multiple minds working together is to be more effective, creative, and efficient.

*- team
- duties not performed in isolation
- each duties
- fully contact*

quote

quote

And at the same time, my responsibilities as principal are also to see how I am supporting their professional growth. So not isolating them into certain responsibilities but having those responsibilities as key components that they are going to take on but also involved in all other aspects of the school as well. **WHOLE SCHOOL PICTURE**

Q: What do you consider the actual duties that your vice-principals perform in terms of the operational pieces?

APPENDIX G: DATA SUMMARY TABLE

Data summary table for Marla, page one:

Participant 06	Question 1: What do secondary vice-principals believe to be their vice-principals' role?	Question 2: How do secondary principals determine their vice-principals' role?	Question 3: How do secondary principals support their vice-principals in fulfilling their role?	Question 4: How do secondary principals mentor and coach their vice-principals to be future principals?	Question 5: What challenges do secondary principals face with the vice-principal role?
<p>-P = 3 years -VP = 6 years (2 schools) -consultant = 3 yrs -dept head = 15 years -current school outside major city; 700 students, 25% Spec Ed, 30% ELL</p>	<p>Operational (most of day spent) - #1 duty: conflict resolution -create and maintain timetable -manage on-calls and supply teachers -staff attendance -organize events: Open house, awards assembly, awards night, parents' night -supervise events -locker assignments -report cards</p>	<p>-based on strengths VPs bring, their experiences, and where they are in career -P determines VP duties in consultation with VPs *"It's really important to give him the big picture and understanding how a school runs to be able to do that (timetabling) ... My new VP doing staff supervision it's a really good way to get to know the staff"</p>	<p>-work as a team: * "We work collaboratively, make decisions together, we meet all the time, sometimes we meet with students together if need be" -support & coach: * "To make sure they know what they're doing and know how to do it. Sitting down and showing them things." -provide opportunities</p>	<p>-provide opportunities - sharing * "He listens to me talk through everything and then eventually he'll take over the work so he has that experience when for he becomes a principal". * I wouldn't say I have a formal plan. It's a lot of talking. We talk all the time. It's a lot of conversations. It's like everything that we do. We</p>	<p>-time: * "Certainly getting to some of the duties is really challenging. For example, performance appraisal is very challenging ... There isn't enough time in the course of a day for any of us to do our jobs completely ... your day gets hijacked with so many other things. If a student is in crisis, whether it's</p>

APPENDIX H: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES AFTER SIX INTERVIEWS

Theme AND Sub-Theme [6 INTERVIEWS]	
VP runs the school	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student discipline and problem solving 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 ○ School safety 04, 05, 06 • Proactive – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ set tone, vision inclusive, supportive 01, 04 	
Operational duty made into instructional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline 03, 04, 05, 06 • Timetabling 03, 06 • technology committee 03 • TPA 03, 06 • Budget 05 	
Relationships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • admin team 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 • staff 01, 02, 03, 04, 05 • students 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 • parents 05 	
Team approach	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborate 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ arrive at assigned portfolio duties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strengths, interests, area of growth 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 ○ problem solve 01, 02 • consult 01, 02, 03, 05, 06 • communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ regular 03, 04, 05, 06 ○ P asks questions 02, 04, 05 	
OLF personal leadership resources	01, 05
Workload intensification	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more duties added on 01, 02 • need to prioritize 01, 02, 03, 04
<p>P providing VP with opportunities for instructional leadership –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead 02, 03, 04, 05, 06 • Support/facilitate 04, 05, 06 • Classroom visits 03, 04
<p>VP is P in training (assign varied duties for “big” picture) 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OLF for self-assessment 02, 04, 05
<p>Challenge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changeover in admin team 02, 04 • composition of team – don’t get along 01, 02, 03, 04, 05 • changing VP role due to technological change 01 • lack of time 02, 03, 05, 06

APPENDIX I: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES AFTER NINE INTERVIEWS

Highlighted portions indicate did not appear after nine interviews.

Theme AND Sub-Theme [AFTER 9 INTERVIEWS]
<p>VP runs the school more than instructional leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student discipline and problem solving 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09 ○ School safety 04, 05, 06, 07, 08 • Proactive – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ set tone, vision inclusive, supportive, visibility, develop relationships 01, 04, 07, 08, 09
<p>Operational duty made into instructional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09 • Timetabling 03, 06, 07, 10 • technology committee/computers 03 • TPA 03, 06, 08 • Budget 05
<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • admin team 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08 • staff 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 08 • students 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08 • parents 05, 07
<p>Team approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborate 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ arrive at assigned portfolio duties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strengths, interests, area of growth 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08 ○ problem solve, decision making 01, 02, 07, 08, 09 • consult 01, 02, 03, 05, 06 • communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ regular 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08 ○ P asks questions 02, 04, 05
<p>Workload intensification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more duties added on 01, 02, 08, 09 • need to prioritize 01, 02, 03, 04, 09

P providing VP with opportunities for instructional leadership –	
• lead	02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09
• Support/facilitate	04, 05, 06, 09
• Classroom visits	03, 04, 07
VP is P in training (assign varied duties for “big” picture) 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 09	
• OLF for self-assessment	01, 02, 04, 05
Challenge	
• changeover in admin team	02, 04
• composition of team – don’t get along	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09
• VP experiencing difficulty in role	02
• changing VP role due to technological change	01
• lack of time/workload	02, 03, 05, 06
• need another VP	08, 09
• half-time VP	09

APPENDIX J: INTENSIVE ANALYSIS CHART

students	01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, 10, 11
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Our job is people. Even in terms of students it’s being out in the hallways, being visible, knowing a little about them, supporting them in their events, their athletics, it’s having that presence because when you have that relationship with kids and the people in your building” (Participant 08) ○ “The relationship piece of the VP is to bring some mediation between those 2 people so they can get back to a place where they respect each other and work together and/or layer with negative thoughts. That’s a relationship. There is the relationship where our children for whatever reasons come into conflict and not where there was a relation, there may never have been a relationship, and has eroded even further. Two of our children let their hormones run away from each other and take a front and bump into each other and get into a physical altercation and that has to be remediated. There are those types of relationships where you may have kids do things that are illegal. They are borrowing a cell phone from a friend and not giving it back. How do we coordinate them in giving them back? Or we have kids marketing different products within our building, properties, there are some learning conversations going on there. We are with the children with different support agencies, maybe the police...There’s those relationships that break down between kids, relationships that go in negative directions, the fights that happen, mismanagement of what kids post in social media and you’re having to deal with those challenges.” (Participant 10) ○ “Vice-principals typically have relationships with lots of students. They are visible in the school, they walk around, they are doing supervision in the cafeteria, so they get to know kids. Kids know they are the vice-principal and they can help them. Sometimes kids will disclose. More often than not, vice-principals become involved in students’ mental health because something goes wrong and there is a problem.” (Participant 11)

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW GUIDE TWO

1. Please tell me about your career – in particular, how many years were you a secondary vice-principal and how many years have you been in your current position as a secondary principal.
2. Please tell me about the secondary vice-principal role and instructional leadership.
 - *(Probe)* Can the vice-principal role in fulfilling operational tasks be performed using an instructional lens? If so, how? If not, why not.
 - *(Probe)* Can the EQAO be both an operational and leadership task? Please elaborate.
 - *(Probe)* Do you expect your vice-principals to perform classroom walkthroughs? Please elaborate.
3. Is the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) used to support the long-term growth of the secondary vice-principal role? If so, how? If not, why not?
4. What is the secondary vice-principal role with parents?
5. Can you share examples of the secondary vice-principal role requiring a **process** to perform operational duties and responsibilities? If not, why not?
6. What challenges do you have working with secondary vice-principals?
 - *(Probe)* Can you describe for me any experiences or occasions where the composition of the school administrative team can be a challenge to the secondary vice-principal role?
7. Is there anything you would like to add about your understanding of the secondary vice-principal role?

Probes

- How do you do that?
- Tell me more about that.
- Why do you think that?

VITAE

Name:	Louis Lim
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	<p>The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada 2013-2016 Doctor of Education (Educational Leadership)</p> <p>Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario, Canada 2009-2012 Advanced Bachelor's Degree in Education</p> <p>Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada 1997-2002 Master of Education (Curriculum & Instruction)</p> <p>York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2003-2009 Master of Arts (Mathematics for Teachers) 2003-2009 Graduate Diploma in Mathematics Education 1992-1996 Bachelor of Education (Intermediate/Senior Mathematics & General Science) 1990-1996 Honours Bachelor of Science (Applied Mathematics)</p>
Honours and Awards:	<p>Exceptional and Creative Teaching in Secondary Mathematics 2005 Ontario Association for Mathematics Education</p> <p>Excellence in Teaching Award 2003 York University Faculty of Education Alumni Association</p> <p>Future Leaders Project Award 2000 National Council of Teachers of Mathematics</p>
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