

Leadership Supports for First-Time Vice-Principals:
How Leadership Coaching Shapes Leader Self-Efficacy
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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

As Ontario's provincial School Boards struggle with the issue of an aging cohort of school and system administrators the issue of succession management has become increasingly urgent (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). To date, significant focus has been given to the number of school leaders who will be retiring which creates a potential provincial vacuum of leadership (McIntyre, 1999). Shifting the focus away from those who are leaving to those who are entering the ranks of school administrators, we see a cohort of young leaders entering an educational context that is dramatically different from that which their predecessors entered. Clearly leadership development of this new cohort is a significant aspect of succession management in the new provincial context.

The Ontario provincial education context has changed over the last decade to focus increasingly on improving student achievement. This accountability policy context has shaped the education agenda in Ontario and globally. School improvement has become the expectation of all schools across many western countries (Harris, 2002) and school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how well students learn (Leithwood and Reihl, 2003). Fullan explains that leaders are faced with sustaining learning under conditions described as "complex, rapid change" (2003).

To respond to this environment, The Ontario Ministry of Education and local School Boards have acknowledged the importance of the principal's role in leading publicly funded education. The Ministry and local Boards are using recent research (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steibach 1999; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty 2005; Fullan 2005, 2006) to reinforce the importance of developing school leadership.

The provincial response has taken the form of the Ontario Leadership Strategy. The Strategy (OLS) was delivered to provincial educators with four main purposes. These purposes are:

- "To inspire a shared vision of leadership in schools and boards
- To inspire a common language that fosters an understanding of leadership and what it means to be a leader

- To identify the competencies and practices that describe effective leadership
- To guide the design and implementation of training and development of leaders.”
(<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/>)

It is apparent from these purposes that the Strategy is broad-based and comprehensive in its view of educational leadership in the province for the coming years. The Strategy was designed to set a clear leadership direction, a shared understanding of that direction, common practices for leadership, and the professional learning for school leaders – from a provincial perspective.

The Strategy has a four-point action plan. The four points of the plan are:

- Establish a Common Provincial Framework
- Align Leadership Development Activities with the Provincial Leadership Framework
- Provide Support Mechanisms for Leaders
- Support and Encourage the Work of the Institute for Education Leadership

For the purposes of this paper, the key points of the plan to be considered are the Common Provincial Framework and the Support Mechanisms for Leaders. It is the Common Provincial Framework that outlines the specific “core competencies and practices for leadership”. As stated in the Plan, the Common Provincial Framework “...describes what good leadership looks like”. In order not to be too prescriptive, the Framework is “...not intended to be a job description for the role or leader, nor a checklist against which to measure performance.” Furthermore, it is “...general enough to allow for its application in different contexts”. If this is indeed the case, then the Framework is the key element of the Plan that informs school administrators – from a provincial perspective - about what their leadership practice can look like.

The Framework is divided into five ‘Leader Competencies and Practices’. These competencies and practices are:

- Setting Directions
- Building Relationships and Developing People
- Developing the Organization

- Leading the Instructional Program
- Securing Accountability

Each of the competencies and practices is then subdivided into four sections: Practices, Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes. These sections articulate very specifically what principals do, are capable of, know about, and are committed to. It is within these four sections that the Framework makes very clear exactly what an effective principal does.

In order to respond to the Common Provincial Framework and the Support Mechanisms for Leaders, school boards have developed a range of supports for their school administrators. One such support is the provision of leadership coaching.

In one Ontario School Board (referred to in this paper as Northland District School Board) there is a sense of urgency based on current retirement and growth statistics. The challenge in Northland District School Board is to create the conditions necessary for sustainable leadership and improved student achievement amidst the pressure of continued growth and attrition. In light of this, there is an evident need to support existing and newly-appointed school leaders.

At a presentation to the delegates of the Ministry's *Institute for Education Leadership* on December 12, 2006, Professor Andy Hargreaves (Boston University) addressed the issue of leadership development as a key component in a sound succession management strategy. According to Hargreaves, effective succession management addresses the need for the recruitment, training, and on-going support of all school administrators. It ensures that first-time school administrators have adequate time to prepare for administrative roles, that the training support is linked to clearly defined leadership standards and competencies (Daresh 2001; Normore 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education 2007), and that strong professional communities are built that deepen the pools of leadership talent.

This paper will address the issue of the impact of one such support for newly-appointed school leaders. That is, the provision of leadership coaching to first-time school administrators. The paper will present the results of findings from interviews with a group of newly-appointed vice-principals to determine how leadership coaching shaped their sense of efficacy in their new role.

It is important to define what leadership coaching is within the context of this study. Leadership coaching is a process of support provided to each first-time vice-principal in the

board examined in this study. Leadership coaching is delivered through a one-to-one relationship with a leadership coach who is a retired and well-experienced principal. Leadership coaching sessions are conversations that take approximately one hour every two to three weeks in a location selected by the vice-principal. The vice-principal determines the content of the sessions. Vice-principals Northland District School Board participate in a comprehensive selection process based on a set of leadership competencies that align closely with the Common Provincial Framework. From the selection process, each first-time vice-principal determines growth goals based on areas of need identified within the leadership competencies. These growth goals form the foundation of the discussions with the leadership coach. However, some vice-principals find themselves in school contexts where they face challenging circumstances. It is entirely determined by the vice-principal if they wish to work on the original growth goals or if they wish to revise them based on the circumstances they face in their new school placement.

The leadership coach's role is not to evaluate the performance or ideas of the vice-principal. Rather, the coach's role is to listen attentively, paraphrase for content and clarity, and then to engage in probing discussion to help guide the vice-principal to a higher level of self-knowledge relative to the vice-principal's leadership. The key goal of the coaching experience is for vice-principals to reflect on their experiences in the school, to see their words and actions as leadership, to celebrate successes, and to set new leadership growth goals for the future. The ultimate goal of the leadership coaching is for first-time administrators to move from a level of being an unconsciously-skilled leader to one who is consciously-skilled and who makes informed decisions about their behaviours as a leader. The vice-principals who participated in this study worked with the board's leadership coach who will be known as Veronica in this paper.

Research Questions

This study is based on one primary research question that examines the impact of leadership coaching on the sense of self-efficacy of first-time school administrators. The primary question is:

How does leadership coaching shape the self-efficacy of first-time school administrators?

Within this research question, there are four sub-questions that provide more specific responses for greater focus and depth in the study. These four sub-questions are:

1. How does leadership coaching support the development of the affective processes (those regulating emotional states) of first-time school administrators?
2. How does leadership coaching support the development of the cognitive processes (those involved in the acquisition, organization, and use of information) of first-time school administrators?
3. How does leadership coaching support the development of the motivation (activation to action / persistence of effort) of first-time school administrators?
4. How does leadership coaching support the development of the self-regulation (exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behaviour) of first-time school administrators?

Significance of the Study

This study is of significance to both educational leaders and policy makers. It contributes to the literature relative to the issue of the professional supports provided to first-time school administrators. The study is situated within a context of a provincial focus on education leadership as identified in the Ontario Leadership Strategy as evidenced in one Ontario school board.

With large numbers of existing school administrators eligible to retire within the coming years (Hargreaves et al 2003; Williams 2001), a large cohort of new administrators is being appointed (McIntyre, 1999). Within organizations leadership development is seen as ensuring that leadership growth keeps pace with the needs and growth of the organization (Report From the Study Group – Institute on Rehabilitation Studies: University of Wisconsin, 2001). The internship, induction, and coaching of first-time school administrators is an issue of succession management for school boards (Hargreaves et al, 2003). The educational context into which these new administrators are coming is one of accountability (Fullan 2005; MacBeath 2003) with a focus on results – as articulated in the Common Provincial Framework.

The findings of this study will be helpful for those who plan and deliver the supports to first-time school administrators as well as those who prepare and deliver ongoing professional learning for these administrators. Current literature indicates a disconnect between the type of professional learning school administrators receive and how valuable it is in terms of preparing them for their work (Zellner, Jinkins, Gideon, Doughty, and McNamara, 2002; Male and Daresh, 1997; Royal Commission on Learning 1994; U.S. National Policy Board on Administrative Preparation 1989). The results of this study will be illuminating for those who create and deliver professional learning experiences for first-time administrators because the results bring authentic and current voices ‘from the field’.

As indicated above, research has provided some evidence of the need for a re-examination of the professional learning supports for first-time school administrators (Zellner et al, 2002; Male and Daresh, 1997; Royal Commission on Learning 1994; U.S. National Policy Board on Administrative Preparation 1989). This study augments the existing literature and fills a gap by providing data that detail the impact of one specific form of support for these administrators. For scholars to know exactly how beginning school leaders are experiencing one of the specific support mechanisms for their roles can provide valuable insights into the needs new leaders have for initial training and on-going professional learning within the current educational context. In this case, the support mechanism is unique in that it is targeted, personalized, and context-specific learning.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In the context of what has come to be known as a 'leadership crunch' (McIntyre, 1999) there is surprisingly little literature that addresses the issue of on-going professional learning supports for first-time administrators once in their roles. A review of what does exist in research and theoretical literature on the topic of the readiness of vice principals emphasizes the need for them to function as a leader rather than as a manager. Managerial leadership focuses on "efficient completion of clearly specified tasks by employees" (Leithwood et al, 1999). On the other hand, school leadership in an international age of accountability has "...five core mind-action sets – moral purpose, understanding change processes, relationship building, knowledge building, and coherence building..." (Fullan, 2005). It is evident that these are not 'clearly specified tasks'. There is no doubt that the internship and induction of first-time school administrators is an issue of leadership development for school districts (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, White, 2003). However, it is in the preparation and on-going supports of first-time administrators where one needs to see the development of the necessary skills for school leadership in the 21st century (Fullan 2005).

Self-Efficacy

Supports are provided to first-time vice-principals for a number of reasons. One of these reasons is to have them see their daily work in the school as leadership, not simply managerialism. This can be seen as part of the move from unconscious skill as a leader to conscious skill as a leader. In support of this level of consciousness is the self-efficacy of beginning school leaders.

This literature review will examine an overview of concepts related to self-efficacy. It will further examine the relationship between self-efficacy and leadership. The literature review will also consider ways in which self-efficacy can be increased.

Self-efficacy is generally explained as a person's estimate of their capabilities to achieve specific levels of performance by successfully executing the behaviours that are needed in a variety of circumstances. These behaviours are intended to exercise influence over events that affect the individual's life and to produce the outcomes

they desire (Paglis & Green, 2002; Bandura, 1994). A person's judgement of their own efficacy influences their initiation, intensity, and persistence in approaching tasks (Paglis & Green, 2002). People choose to involve themselves in tasks that they believe they are capable of handling. Once engaged in the task, their efficacy beliefs influence how much effort they will devote to the task and how long they will persevere in the face of challenges (Paglis & Green, 2002; Luthans & Peterson, 2001). Self-efficacy determines how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and how they behave in a range of situations (Bandura, 1994).

Self-efficacy is not a singular phenomenon. It is composed of four interconnected processes which impact on, and in turn, are impacted by, each other. These elements are: affective processes, cognitive processes, motivation, and self-regulation (Bandura, 2002). It is of value to examine each of these processes individually in order to understand the complexities of self-efficacy.

Affective Processes

Affective processes are those that regulate emotional states and elicit emotional reactions. The stronger the sense of self-efficacy in this realm, the more confident people are in taking on challenging or difficult activities. The more a person believes they have control over their own thought processes, the more they have a sense of being able to regulate thoughts that produce stress or anxiety (Bandura, 2002). Those with a low sense of self-efficacy do not believe that they can manage difficult circumstances thus they tend to experience high levels of anxiety. They focus on their perceived personal deficiencies, and they tend to view their working environments as routinely fraught with difficulties (Bandura, 2002). Working environments are seen as stressful and emotionally draining. Those with a higher sense of self-efficacy see working environments as having challenges, but challenges that are manageable.

Cognitive Processes

Cognitive processes are the thinking processes involved in acquiring, organizing, and using information. Most courses of action that people take are initiated in thought. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the higher the level of goals or challenges

people will set for themselves. They can visualize and mentally rehearse successful experiences that ultimately serve as both guides and supports in the performance of their work (Bandura, 2002). Conversely, those with low self-efficacy, visualize the opposite – failure experiences. In order to visualize success, people need cognitive processing skills that allow for ambiguity and uncertainty. People learn to draw on their existing knowledge to construct a range of possible responses to challenging situations. As well, they consider a variety of potentialities in these scenarios. In essence, they have used their existing knowledge in a range of ways in order to feel prepared to engage in work.

Motivation

Motivation is the activation to action. One's level of motivation is reflected in one's choice of courses of action and in the intensity and persistence of one's effort. Most human motivation is created cognitively. People motivate themselves and choose their actions through the exercise of forethought (Bandura, 2004). They create beliefs about what they are able to do. People anticipate possible outcomes of their actions and set goals and courses of action designed for success (Bandura, 2002). Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation by the types of goals people will set for themselves, how much effort they will put into their work, how long they will persevere at a task, and their level of resilience when things do not go well.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behaviour (Bandura, 2002; McCormick, 2001; Lyons & Murphy, 1994; Imants et al, 1994; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). People are products of, and impacted by, their environments. Self-regulation is the process of utilizing one's strengths to engage in activities that build a strong sense of self-efficacy. In addition, it is the process of mobilizing strengths to engage in increasingly challenging situations in order to build more extensive skills. Success in these challenging situations will, in turn, increase both personal skills and the sense of self-efficacy within a workplace environment. The higher the level of a person's perceived self-efficacy, the greater the possibility of success in their endeavours. These people have the 'staying power' to

successfully deal with setbacks and obstacles and to learn from them.

Self-Efficacy and Educational Leadership

Michael McCormick (2001) states that, “Every major review of the leadership literature lists self-confidence as an essential characteristic for effective leadership”. He identifies self-efficacy as “task-specific self-confidence”. If self-efficacy is a person’s estimate of their capabilities to produce desired outcomes (Bandura, 1994; Paglis & Green, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), one can see a clear relationship between self-efficacy and leadership. According to Paglis and Green (2002), “Leadership self-efficacy is a person’s judgement that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the work group, building relationships with followers in order to gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change”.

McCormick (2001) posits that “leadership self-efficacy...is defined as one’s perceived capability to perform the cognitive and behavioural functions necessary to regulate group process in relation to goal achievement.” He goes on to say that, “leadership self-efficacy is critical to the leadership process because it affects the goals a leader selects, leader motivation, development of functional leadership strategies, and the skilful execution of those strategies”.

According to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), it is necessary for an educational leader to assess their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the requirements of the role. In assessing the sense of self-efficacy a leader must consider capabilities such as skills, knowledge, strategies, and personality balanced against personal weaknesses or liabilities in any particular educational setting. The interaction of these capabilities allows the leader to make decisions about their self-efficacy in any particular context.

One of the primary purposes of leadership is to organize and facilitate group goal attainment by creating and sustaining an environment that is conducive to the achievement of the goals. A strong sense of self-efficacy is needed to stimulate and sustain the necessary motivation and effort that are necessary for the achievement of the goals. According to Paglis and Green (2002), leadership self-efficacy has been related to

establishing organizational direction, building staff commitment, and overcoming challenges in the accomplishment of the goals. Luthans and Peterson (2001) have also found that the self-efficacy of the leader helps to mediate the engagement of the staff with the established goals.

School principals with a strong sense of self-efficacy have been found to persevere in pursuing goals, but even more significantly, to be more flexible and willing to adapt in order to meet the demands of the specific context (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Imants & De Brabander, 1996). When confronted with a challenge, educational leaders with a strong sense of self-efficacy do not see the lack of ability to solve a particular problem as a failure. They will tend to self-regulate by drawing on their affective and cognitive processes to remain calm. They will also tend to draw on other personal resources to deal with challenges in a variety of ways (Bandura, 2004). Luthans and Peterson (2001) echo these sentiments in stating, “Over 20 years of research has revealed a strong positive relationship between high self-efficacy and performance. Specifically, studies have shown that the higher the person’s self-efficacy, the more likely he or she will persist when problems are encountered or even in the face of failure”.

In a 1994 study of school principals, Lyons and Murphy came to a significant conclusion about school leadership and self-efficacy. They found that principals high in self-efficacy are more likely to hold themselves accountable for the achievement results of their students. Imants and De Brabander (1996) have identified research findings that support the relationship between high levels of principal self-efficacy and school effectiveness relative to student learning.

In light of the fact that leader self-efficacy positively affects desired outcomes (Luthans & Peterson, 2001), it is valuable to know in what ways self-efficacy can be increased.

How Self-Efficacy is Increased

Bandura (1994) identifies four different ways in which self-efficacy can be developed. The first is through mastery experiences (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Mastery experiences are, more simply put, successful experiences within specific contexts. Successes build a strong sense of capacity and personal efficacy. These successes however,

are not based on routine tasks. They are successes where challenging circumstances served as obstacles to success. Difficulties or setbacks highlight the need for sustained effort and perseverance. Success in such situations helps to build self-efficacy.

The second way in which self-efficacy can be strengthened is through observation of others in the same or similar role and who are successful thanks to their ongoing efforts. The successes of others serve as models of how to achieve desired outcomes. Observing peers performing successfully is more than seeing a social standard which can be used as a measure of one's own skill. These peers provide models of the competencies to which one aspires. The models transmit knowledge and teach those observing through the demonstration of their behaviour and expressed ways of thinking (Bandura, 1994; Gist & Mitchell, 1002).

A third way that self-efficacy is strengthened is through social persuasion (Bandura, 1994; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In many cases, social persuasion is delivered by an admired peer or person in a more senior position. However, social persuasion is more than simply positive commentary. It is the intentional strategy of creating situations for success. This is done by encouraging the recipient to attempt challenging tasks and ensuring that the person is as fully prepared as possible for the challenge while not overextending their reach.

The fourth way in which self-efficacy is developed is for a person to be supported in monitoring and mediating stress reactions (Bandura, 1994). This comes about through emotional support and discussion of emotional states. The significance here is not the intensity of emotional or physical reactions but how these are perceived, interpreted, and debriefed. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy will likely see their affective stimulation as an energizing contributor to performance rather than as a limiting or debilitating force.

Recommendations for On-going Leadership Learning

Having considered the significance of self-efficacy and its relationship to leadership, it becomes necessary to examine what the literature presents as recommendations for on-going support for the professional learning of beginning school administrators. The tensions (Castle & Mitchell, 2001) that exist between transformational

and managerial leadership have been recognized and addressed by a 1999 study in which Leithwood and Jantzi recognize the importance of a blend of transformational leadership skills with managerial leadership skills. They state,

“The model of transformational leadership developed from our own research in schools, including factor analysis studies, describes transformational leadership along six dimensions: building school vision and goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualized support; symbolizing professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions...” (p.5)

“Most models of transformational leadership are flawed by their under representation of transactional practices (which we interpret to be “managerial” in nature). Such practices are fundamental to organizational stability. For this reason we have recently added four management dimensions to our own model based on a review of relevant literature (Duke & Leithwood, 1994). These dimensions, also measured in this study, include: staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities, and community focus.” (pp.5-6)

It is not an ‘either/or’ choice in leadership. Leithwood and Jantzi have presented a balance in their leadership model. The question then becomes, How do newly-appointed school leaders need to be supported to ensure they have the skills and knowledge needed to do their jobs – as both leaders and managers? The literature presents recommendations in three areas. First, leadership learning supports need to align the learning with the articulated competency standards. Secondly, professional learning supports need to include professional learning through on-going leadership mentoring for those who are in the role of school administrator. Thirdly, induction (defined as: any official or formal program to provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession) processes need to provide experiential and current learning. This review will examine these three areas of recommendation in the literature.

Competency Standards

An abundance of leadership literature (Marzano et al, 2005) coupled with a global context of accountability (Fullan 2005) has led many educational jurisdictions to create articulated leadership competencies that can be used in the refinement of leadership training for first-time administrators. In the United States, for example, we see the *Learner-Centred Leadership Standards* adopted by the Texas Education Agency and the State Board for

Educator Certification (Daresh, 1997). In Ontario, the Ministry of Education has issued a Common Provincial Framework that articulates the behaviours, attitudes, knowledge, and skills of “what good leadership looks like”. School boards have begun to create their own competency standards based on the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Education. In early 2007 the Ontario Ministry of Education released on its website its *Leader Competencies* within a ‘Leadership Development’ framework. Comparable administrator standards exist in countries such as New Zealand (First-Time Principals Programme), England (National Professional Qualification for Headship), and Finland (Teaching Qualifications Act, 1999). Each of these was designed to articulate the specific competencies of leadership in order to frame the training of beginning and existing school leaders. As succinctly stated by Normore (2004),

“...school districts need to articulate and clarify their expectations from the outset – aligning leadership development activities with leadership expectations.” (pp.119-120)

Leadership Coaching

The Need for Leadership Coaching (a.k.a. mentoring)

Coaching and mentoring programs were first introduced in the field of business during the 1970s. In the United States in recent years more than one third of large corporations now have coaching programs in place (Hegstad & Wentling, 2004). According to Belasco (2000), coaching “now occupies a place of honour on the management stage [and] is destined to be *the* leadership approach of the twenty-first century” (Belasco, 2000). In education, coaching was first introduced to support teaching and instructional practice at the classroom level and has expanded in recent years to be seen as a valuable support for leadership development in the form of leadership coaching (Nanavati, 2006; Tomlinson, 1995; Hobson, 2003).

Current research indicates that more focussed and robust coaching (White et al, 2006) is called for if the process is to provide the type of learning needed to support beginning leaders in developing the competencies of leadership specified by their

respective organizations. It is significant to note that the terms coaching and mentoring are often used interchangeably but, for our purposes here, maintain the meaning identified at the outset of this paper.

Hargreaves et al (2003) call for “better mentorship and more availability of mentorship” for beginning leaders. Michael and Young (2006) identify a need for “a more formalized system of mentoring during a new leader’s first years” so that the learning will indeed develop the needed skills. Hartzell (1994) specifies coaching that provides direct feedback to the ‘protégé’ to support the learning. He states,

“Without feedback, new assistants (vice-principals) are left to gain their information from observing how others react to what they do.” (p.25)

Who Provides the Leadership Coaching?

The need for leadership coaches is noted. But who can provide such coaching? In order to be effective, “mentoring relationships need to be authentic, meaning that the mentor is credible and qualified...” (Nanavati, 2003). Petzko (2002) calls for “trained mentors” to serve in this role. Michael & Young (2006) propose the use of “skilled current practitioners” to serve in the role as coaches in “structured mentoring programs”. During the first years of their tenure, beginning school leaders need to be provided with “learning and support in a safe and trusting environment” (Hargreaves et al, 2003). Advice from the research is that, without proper training and preparation, long experienced leaders who have been identified as leadership coaches may reinforce traditional role expectations rather than identify new expectations and rethinking of approaches as identified in the competency standards (Southworth, 1995). Given the fact that the relationship between leadership coaches and first-time administrators needs to focus on professional learning, careful consideration must be given to ensuring that there is optimal matching of leadership coaches and vice-principals (Ricciardi 2000).

For the professional learning of new leaders, it is important to focus on specific skill development as well as to provide guidance related to both leadership and managerial responsibilities. Most importantly though, the training must be flexible enough to meet individual needs, be grounded in ‘on-the-job administrative experience’ (Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho, 2002) and recognize that the focus of activity may need to shift as the first-time administrator becomes more experienced. Initially the needs of a new leader may be more

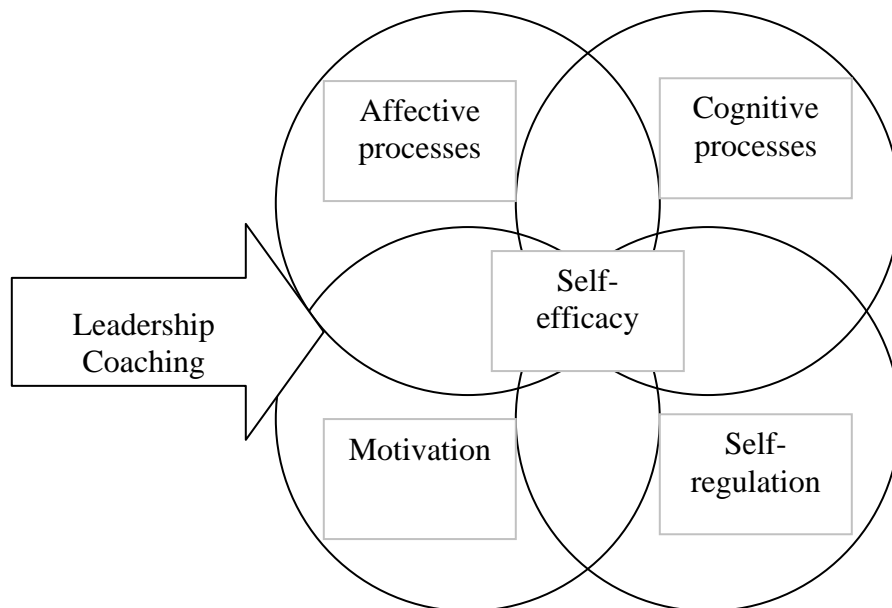
on practical, day-to-day activities. Gradually, the focus of the learning may shift to begin to develop and refine the administrator's skills as a leader and to help them become more strategic in their work (Lindley, 2003).

Leadership coaching needs to provide contextually-based opportunities for candidates to learn the broad range of skills needed for success in their roles (Zellner et al, 2002).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following conceptual framework (Figure 1) was developed to assist with the clarification of detailed and potentially confusing data. This framework is designed to illustrate the phenomenon of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is composed of four interwoven elements – affective processes, cognitive processes, motivation, and self-regulation (Bandura, 1994). Each of these elements impacts upon – and is impacted upon – by the other three elements. The experience of leadership coaching is presented as an external element that can impact on self-efficacy in its entirety or on any one of the four inter-related elements. The framework has been designed to capture the complexity of the components of this study and to highlight the non-linear aspect of these components. As such, it is a useful organizer and frame for this article.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



METHODOLOGY

Overview of Methodology and Rationale

In this study a qualitative research approach was used. It took the form of personal interviews with four participants. Qualitative research by its nature can be based on the views, ideas, and opinions of the participants. It gathers data based on broad, general questions and then analyzes this data to determine themes (Creswell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). This was an appropriate research strategy to use because the intent of the research was to understand, from primary sources, the thoughts and beliefs of the participants. It was important to hear ‘the voice’ of the participants within the data. Qualitative research is the best vehicle to provide this authentic and first-hand voice.

Sample and Sampling

This research study required data to be collected from first-time elementary vice-principals appointed to their role in January of 2008. This sample was chosen because this was the only group of first-time vice-principals who received leadership coaching. From participant data and an analysis of the data recommendations for the future use of leadership coaching for first-time vice-principals can be made.

The study involved four first-time elementary vice-principals from one centrally-located school board in Ontario. The four vice-principals had all been appointed in January 2008. Each one was in their sixth month of the role at the time of the interview. Personal invitations were emailed to all potential vice-principal participants. Four invitations were emailed and all four invitees accepted the offer to participate in the study.

The composition of the participant cohort was representative of the geographic range of the board, a gender mix, and the types of schools as identified by board data. The board is divided into four geographic quadrants. The participants represented each of the four quadrants. Two of the four participants were female and two were male. Two of the participants – one female and one male – work in schools identified by the board as being ‘schools not in challenging circumstances’. The other two participants – one male and one female - work in schools identified by the board as ‘schools in challenging circumstances’. This board uses a range of data to determine if a school is deemed to be in ‘challenging circumstances’. Schools are thus deemed if they meet the following criteria: student

achievement is low according to EQAO data, parental education levels are low, median household income is low, there is a high percentage of rental housing, there is high mobility of the school population, and student suspension rates are high.

It was intentional to select first-time vice-principals who would be as representative as possible of the entire board. Because the board is geographically large and encompasses urban, suburban, and rural jurisdictions, it was seen to be of value to have the participants be representative of the board in as many ways as possible, thus the selection criteria based on geographic, gender, and school circumstance factors.

Instruments

The research instrument used in this study was a personal interview. The data were collected by means of semi-structured, recorded interviews which focused on the personal experiences, thoughts, and opinions of four first-time administrators in the sixth month in their administrative role.

The interviews with the participants included seven questions. Two of the questions had additional prompts to guide and probe the respondents without directing their responses. The interview questions support and align with the research questions. See Appendix A for the full Interview Guide Questions.

Procedure

The data collected in this study came in the form of responses to interviews with four first-time vice-principals in the sixth month of their new role. Four potential participants were identified using Board supplied data. The intent was to select the participants to be representative of the four geographic quadrants of the Board, a gender mix, and the circumstances of the schools in which the vice-principals work. Invitations to participate in the study were individually emailed to four potential participants. All four responded positively to the invitation.

Data collection through the interview process occurred by means of structured, taped interviews focusing on specific questions related to supports they have received as

first-time vice-principals, their experiences with mentoring by their principals, their experiences with the leadership coach, their successes and challenges, and their perceptions of their growth as a school leader. Informed consent forms, confidentiality issues, and other data collection protocols were followed in accordance with the ethical review standards of the University of Toronto.

Once the four vice-principals agreed to participate, each was provided with a copy of the Informational / Consent Letter to Participants. The Informational / Consent Letter to Participants ensured that all participants: fully understood their involvement, knew that they could choose at any time to remove themselves from the study, would be provided with a transcript of the interview in order to confirm the contents, and knew how all data would be handled, stored, and eventually destroyed. All four participants signed and kept a copy of the Letter of Informed Consent.

The participants were asked for their preference for the time and location of the interview. All four identified preferred times and dates and these preferences were accommodated for the interviews. All four requested to hold the interviews in their own schools. The interviews took place in June of 2008.

The interviews with the four participants included seven questions. See Appendix A for the interview questions. Two of the questions had additional prompts to guide and probe the respondents. The prompts were only used if the interview participants tended not to respond, to hesitate, to repeat themselves, or to have some difficulty in responding.

The interviews ranged in length from 32 minutes to 37 minutes long. Each respondent spoke comfortably and candidly. All of the interview questions were addressed with very little use of the prompts. The quality of responses from the participants proved to be comparable in that they each contained detailed and thorough information about the topic being addressed.

Treatment of Data

The data in this study were collected and analyzed according to currently accepted processes for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data (Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 1998).

Initially, the interview responses were transcribed into individual text documents in order to have full transcripts of each of the four interviews held. The data in the transcripts

were reviewed to determine the particulars of the detailed responses. The data were reviewed numerous times to subdivide and group them according to similar or dissimilar responses. Through the process of using the 'constant comparative' method of analysis (Merriam, 1998), general themes were determined.

RESULTS

The Results section of this report contains the presentation of the research findings. This section includes a description of the participants in the study and how they were representative of the Board in which they work. The results of the study are then presented as findings within each of the research questions.

The Participants

The research findings are based on interviews held with four participants. The participants were all newly-appointed elementary vice-principals in a large and growing Ontario school board, referred to here as the Northland District School Board. All of the vice-principals were appointed to begin their roles in January 2008 so each one had five months of experience in the role when the interviews were done in early June of 2008. The Northland Board appoints approximately twenty new vice-principals each year. The need for new school administrators comes from the retirement of principals as well as administrator needs for new schools that are opening. There were four vice-principals who participated in this study. In the last year, twelve new vice-principals were appointed in the elementary panel. For this reason the four participants are numerically representative of newly-appointed vice-principals in this Board. The participants are also representative of both the geographic areas of the Board and of the types of schools as identified by circumstances.

The following table presents the vice-principals:

Table 3

Participants

Geographic quadrant of the Board	Board quadrant 1	Board quadrant 2	Board quadrant 3	Board quadrant 4
Participant pseudonym	Keith	Wanda	Andy	Andrea
School circumstances (see key below)	SNCC	SCC	SCC	SNCC
Key <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCC = School in Challenging Circumstances • SNCC = School Not in Challenging Circumstances 				
• Number of males in SCC = 1				
• Number of females in SCC = 1				
• Number of males in SNCC = 1				
• Number of females in SNCC = 1				
• Total number of males = 2				
• Total number of females = 2				
• Total number of participants = 4				

The above table (Table 1) presents graphically the participants in the study. A number of elements of the table require further explanation.

The Northland District School Board

The Northland District School Board is one of very few Boards in Ontario that is still growing. It currently has approximately 110 000 students and anticipates growth in the 1-3% range for at least the next 10 years. The Board has 160 elementary schools and 33 secondary schools. The Board will open five new elementary schools as well as one secondary school in the 2009-2010 school year.

Geographic Quadrant of the Board

The Northland District School Board is geographically large. For organizational purposes the Board has been divided into four quadrants. Each quadrant has a regional Board office which houses the Superintendents for the schools in that quadrant. The Board has approximately 160 elementary schools. Because the board is so large geographically, it includes urban, suburban, and rural jurisdictions. The four participants were chosen to represent as accurately as possible the four geographic quadrants.

School Circumstances

The Northland District School Board retains extensive data on each of its schools. Certain schools are deemed to be ‘Schools in Challenging Circumstances’ if they meet the following criteria:

- student achievement is low according to EQAO data
- parental education levels are low (based on Census Canada data)
- Median household income is low (based on Census Canada data)
- There is a high percentage of rental housing (based on Census Canada data)
- There is high mobility of the school population
- Student suspension rates are high

Participants for this study were carefully chosen in order to represent the four geographic quadrants of the Board as well as by circumstances. That is to say, ‘Schools in Challenging Circumstances’ and ‘Schools Not in Challenging Circumstances’.

In light of the fact that there is a limited number of newly-appointed vice-principals each year it was fortunate to be able to find participants who represented so broadly both the geographic quadrants of the Board as well the types of schools in which these vice-principals work. For this reason it appears that the participants in the study are broadly representative of first-time administrators in this Board.

Introduction to the Results

The four participants in this study each took part in an interview of approximately thirty minutes. All of the data gathered are therefore found within the transcribed texts of

the interviews and the results will appear, for the most part, as commentary with a few brief quotations taken from the transcripts. The results that follow are presented as responses to the research questions and will thus appear in the following three categories: Affective Processes and Motivation, Cognitive Processes, Self-Regulation. (Please note: Affective Processes and Motivation have been combined into one category because of the nature of the data gathered from the participants. Questions concerning these two elements were combined in the interview guide questions because of the closely aligned nature of these two elements.)

Affective Processes and Motivation

This section will address the following research questions: How does leadership coaching support the development of the affective processes (those regulating emotional states) of first-time school administrators? and, How does leadership coaching support the development of the motivation (activation to action / persistence of effort) of first-time school administrators?

The data for this question came from Questions 3, 4, and 5 of the interview guide questions. These questions were:

3. What are some of the successes you have had as a leader in this school? [Prompt: How did you feel about (ask about 1 or 2 specific items)?]
4. What are some of the challenges you have had as a leader in this school? [Prompt: How did you feel about (ask about 1 or 2 specific items)?]
5. How has leadership coaching influenced your leadership practice?

From these three questions and the accompanying probes a great deal of data were collected. All of the participants spoke at length about how much they were enjoying their new roles and the many successes they felt they had enjoyed. Interestingly, there were minimal data collected about the challenges they felt they had experienced. This may be a result of the broad range of supports these first-time vice-principals identified as having in their transition months to their new role.

There were only brief data collected based on Question 5. This may have been because the participants were provided with all of the questions prior to the actual interviews. Questions 6 and 7 elicited a lot of data and captured, in many ways, the essence of Question 5.

From the data relative to affective processes and motivation, the two main areas talked about by the participants were: how good they felt about their work and their successes, and their level of confidence.

All four participants spoke at length about one or two specific experiences they felt that highlighted successes they had in their new roles. It was apparent that all four were excited by these successes and motivated by them. All of the participants spoke specifically about the range of supports they had and how helpful they found each type of support to be. In the following comment, Wanda mentioned a number of the supports she had been receiving as a first-time vice-principal,

“I was assigned a leadership coach...and that’s been very helpful in many different ways...also the mentoring with my principal...I’ve received support in the administrative team where the vice-principals go off and have a discussion about vice-principal issues and topics...also the supports that have come from the board itself. There have been workshops that have been set up for new vice-principals and these have been quite effective in helping to guide me and helping me to feel anchored.”

Self-confidence was an element talked about by each participant. Comments about confidence flowed from the stories about their successes and how happy they are with their new roles. Keith spoke specifically about the connection between success and his growth of confidence. He also linked this growth of confidence to future actions.

“I know that I’ve become much more confident in myself as a leader. I feel good about the decisions that I’m making. I know that they aren’t always easy decisions and they aren’t always easy conversations to be had...I’m feeling much more confident now. I don’t fear those difficult conversations any more. I don’t fear those situations any more. I don’t like when they happen but I feel much more confident in my ability to handle those kinds of things...”.

Cognitive Processes

This section will address the following research question: How does leadership coaching support the development of the cognitive processes (those involved in the acquisition, organization, and use of information) of first-time school administrators?

The data for this question came from Questions 3, 4, and 5 of the interview guide questions. These questions were:

1. Describe the support you have received in your new role.
2. How has the leadership coaching differed from the mentoring experience you have had with your principal?

In reviewing the data from the four interview participants it is interesting to note that all four specifically discussed the ways in which the leadership coaching was different from the mentoring support provided by their principal. Even though this was one of the questions from the interview guide, it was interesting to note how very specific each of the participants were in articulating the differences. In every case, the participants spoke of the support from their principal as almost entirely focused on specific and immediate issues that were happening in the school at the time. The participants identified their principals as providing key pieces of information that they needed in order to complete a task or to deal with a situation that needed an immediate answer. Keith summed this up very well when he stated,

“The biggest difference that I see is that the mentoring with the principal is where I go for answers because he’s got those pieces with six years as an experienced administrator. It’s like, here’s how you do it. Whereas with the coach, it’s less about here’s how you do it, and more, what will happen if you do it that way? The coach allows me to think through the ‘why’ of why I would do it that way.”

This is a significant finding in terms of cognitive processes. It indicates that the participants found that the learning experiences related to their principals connected most directly with being provided with answers to questions. The support tended more to being given information rather than ways in which to use information.

All of the participants spoke about their experiences with leadership coaching as opportunities to examine more deeply and to probe into issues in order to have a fuller picture of situations within their schools. The participants articulated that their thinking was affected by the coach in terms of identifying a need to gather all relevant information about a topic, to consider multiple options, consider what information might be missing, and to take the time to think carefully about the information that they had. Keith commented,

“...she talks you through, what would happen if you choose to go this way or what would happen if you choose to go that way? It helps you think through the long term effects of your decisions.”

In addition, Wanda stated,

“I now think about the other periphery people I might not have thought about before. For example, I think, how is this going to affect teachers and students but then I go, what about the parents? How are the parents going to be affected or the community? How’s the community going to be affected?”

From this deeper level of probing into issues, the interview participants identified decision-making as another area where they received support from the leadership coach. Each person spoke of how they processed the information they had gathered and how they used it to inform their decisions. Even though Andrea was the most concise in her interview, she spoke at length about this learning from the coach,

“...when I was making some decisions and I second guessed myself Veronica (the leadership coach) was helpful in reaffirming the decisions that I had made and I guess giving me the confidence in making some of those difficult decisions and not second guessing myself. And I can’t remember now the last time I second guessed a decision that I made. And I think in the first two months I second guessed a whole bunch of them.”

It is interesting to note that three of the four participants spoke about how they viewed differently the work they did on a daily basis in the school thanks to their conversations with the leadership coach. These participants talked about completing tasks at the school but not seeing their own leadership in their work. Andy captured most eloquently this concept in these comments,

“It has allowed me to become more aware of the things that I am doing and that they are considered part of being a leader.....And whatever I said, she (Veronica) framed it for me....I was just doing what felt right at the time and just getting by. I didn’t even think it was leadership.....She was helping me realize what leadership is or that what I was doing was actually leadership.”

Self-Regulation

This section will address the following research question: How does leadership coaching support the development of the self-regulation (exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behaviour) of first-time school administrators?

The data for this question came from Questions 6 and 7 of the interview guide questions. These questions were:

6. How has leadership coaching affected your awareness of yourself as a school leader?
7. How do you believe you have grown as a leader?

In every interview these two questions led to lengthy and detailed explanations of how the leadership coaching shaped their reflective thinking. Even though reflection was not specifically asked about it was almost exclusively the entire content of the answers to these two questions. All four participants highlighted how the leadership coaching experience provided them with opportunities to reflect on their thinking and their actions as well as their thinking toward future action.

Andrea talked about how the leadership coach stimulated reflective thinking by asking questions. She said,

“Being asked the questions. I guess things like, How do you think that went? Given what you know now about how it went, would you do things any differently the next time? Were you satisfied with the outcome? Those kinds of questions. The biggest one for me is, What would you do differently next time? My mindset now is, if it were my school this is how I would do things differently. I couldn't imagine having said that six months ago.”

Keith discussed how the reflection that comes from the leadership coaching sessions would inform his future actions. He stated,

“...it's an hour where I reflect on all of the things that I've done, the reasons that I made the decisions that I did, what I might do differently next time or just simply what led me to those decisions.....The coach allows me to deepen that....She has helped me become more aware of just how important it is to take time to stop and reflect because it's those reflections that allow me to get the insight.”

Wanda echoed these sentiments in the following comments,

“I felt the coaching experience enabled me to sit back and reflect about things in a deeper way...It involves a deeper reflection point.”

Even though reflection was the most significant point about which the participants spoke, Keith also spoke directly about self-regulation in terms of his growth as a leader. He was able to articulate how the leadership coaching shaped his learning in this area.

“I’ll start with the self-regulation piece. I’m someone who loves to be involved in every aspect of what’s going on....I’ve learned that I don’t have to be involved in absolutely everything and controlling every aspect of all of the pieces.....I think that’s one of the biggest things for me and seeing that part of leadership is giving others those opportunities, providing them the support, asking the questions to make sure that things are going well for them.”

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Introduction

In the previous section the responses from the interviews held with the four participants were presented. In this section there will be an analysis and discussion of the interview responses.

School systems in Ontario are facing succession issues as they never have before (Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White, 2003). Researchers have identified the impending large exodus of aging administrators as a vacuum of leadership and as a result, creating a 'leadership crunch' (McIntyre, 1999). With this gloomy picture in mind it is not surprising that the Ministry of Education and local school boards are actively engaged in addressing the issue. From a policy perspective, the Ministry of Education issued the Ontario Leadership Strategy in 2007 which outlined, in part, the provision of support mechanisms for school leaders (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). At the local school board level, one of the elements of support for administrators is the provision of leadership coaching. In the 2007/2008 school year a number of mentoring-coaching pilots were Ministry-funded and took place in various school boards in the province through the Ontario Principals' Council or in individual boards.

There is a clear policy direction to support school leaders. Professional organizations and school boards have begun to deliver on these supports. In this paper, leadership coaching has been examined as one of the supports for first-time school leaders. The research results indicated that leadership coaching did indeed provide support in shaping the self-efficacy of those being coached ("coachees").

Within the research findings three broad themes emerged. These themes aligned with the research questions. The three broad themes are: affective processes and motivation, cognitive processes, and self-regulation. Within two of these broad themes, sub-themes emerged. Within the broad theme of affective process and motivation the two sub-themes are: feeling supported in the transition to the new role, and feeling confident. Within the broad theme of cognitive processes three sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes are: the difference between principal mentoring and leadership coaching, decision-making, and seeing oneself as a leader. The third broad theme, self-regulation, did not have any sub-themes. Each of the broader themes and sub-themes will be discussed below.

Affective Processes / Motivation

Liking the Job and Feeling Supported

Policy direction for Ontario has identified a need to provide support mechanisms for school leaders in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Within school boards this support takes a number of different forms. In this study, participants identified many different elements of support. These included: leadership coaching provided by Veronica (a retired principal from the board), administrative teams within the school, administrator meetings, vice-principal learning networks, vice-principal administrator meetings, workshops and seminars designed for first-time administrators, and mentoring by the school principal, among others. The participants in this study discussed these supports as helping them to enjoy their new role more and to feel that they are supported in taking on administrative responsibilities within the school. According to Imants et al (1994), sense of efficacy is an important intrinsic motivational factor in education and sense of self-efficacy is positively affected by focused training supports provided by a coach. Because the support is tailored to the specific needs of the ‘coachee’ and is context-specific, effectiveness increases by the use of incremental sub-goals collaboratively set by the coach and ‘coachee’ (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Creasy & Paterson, 2005). McCormick (2001) concurs with the significance of the personalized nature of supports as highly effective professional learning. He goes on to state that, “...enhancing leadership self-efficacy should be an important objective for those responsible for improving the quality of leadership in organizations”. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) echo these sentiments. Imants and De Brabander (1996) highlight the significance of the personalized nature of supports that shape self-efficacy to ensure that the specific nature of the work and the context within which it are done are taken into consideration when planning the form the supports will take. In a 1994 research study, Lyons and Murphy (1994) determined that leader self-efficacy is increased when coaching is done in a safe and supportive environment by a skilled colleague. Just as the participants in this research study indicated, the level and nature of the supports provided is significant to them. As first-time school leaders socialization into the role is an aspect of enjoying the position and being supported. According to Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), newcomer socialization into a leadership role has a reciprocal relationship with the self-

efficacy of the individual. They advocate for focused support programs that will help to shape individual self-efficacy.

Feeling Confident

One of the interesting elements linked to the supports and enjoying the role of school administrator was that of feeling confident in doing the work. The participants in the study spoke about the development of their confidence as being shaped, at least in part, by the broad range of supports provided to them. Coupled with successful experiences (Bandura, 1994) and positive feedback from school stakeholders, the sense of self-confidence among the research participants grew over time. It is interesting to note that one of the participants spoke specifically about successfully working through challenging situations (i.e. having difficult conversations with parents or staff) as one of the sources of his self-confidence. Bandura (1994) identifies this type of ‘mastery experience’ as a powerful way to build self-efficacy. Gist and Mitchell (1994) confirm that confidence impacts the decisions individuals make relative to the tasks they face. They also believe that the personal interaction between a coach and ‘coachee’ accesses the verbal persuasive experiences that help to build self-efficacy. Paglis and Green (2002) found that coaching by a senior colleague built confidence by encouraging first-time leaders to make leadership attempts that they might otherwise not have felt prepared to do. In 2003, Chris Luck conducted a research study of the impact of leadership coaching. He found that every participant found their coaching experience helped to build their self-confidence as a school leader. Comparable findings were made by Andy Hobson (2003) in his literature review of mentoring and coaching for new leaders.

Cognitive Processes

Principal Mentoring and Leadership Coaching

It was interesting to note that the participants in the study spoke about the difference in support between mentoring by their principal and leadership coaching by their coach. The participants saw the mentoring by their principal as a process where they could quickly

get specific answers to specific questions in order to complete a task. It was the leadership coaching that the study participants identified as being significant in helping them to examine their work in the school in a different light – that of leadership. One of the study participants explained that he did not even see many of his actions as being leadership until he had an opportunity to discuss his work in the school with his coach. The coach was able to help him frame his thinking in terms of the competencies of leadership. The leadership coach guided a cognitive level of thinking about the meaning of the work being done. Again, Bandura (1994) identified cognitive processes as a source of building self-efficacy.

Decision-making

One of the unanticipated themes that emerged in the data was that of decision-making. It was interesting to note that the participants viewed decision-making in a different way than when they had been teachers. In the interviews, the participants revealed that decision-making had different significance for them once in the role of administrator. They began to see their decisions as having more far-reaching impact than when they were teachers. This caused them to ‘second guess’ themselves at times. As well, it began to cause them to need to gather information and to consider this information in different ways (Imants et al, 1994). Bandura (1994) identifies the cognitive processes of acquiring, organizing, and using information as a key element of self-efficacy. Decision-making is seen as a skill of an effective, or high-self-efficacy leader (Luck, 2003). When self-efficacy is high individuals can engage in decision-making by regulating their own thoughts, motivation, and decisions rather than simply reacting to their environment (McCormick, 2001). This is often referred to in current educational literature as leadership capacity. Leaders with high self-efficacy are seen as having a high level of leadership capacity. Leadership coaching is frequently employed as a method of building self-efficacy, or, leadership capacity relative to leader activities such as decision-making (Creasy & Paterson, 2005).

Seeing Selves as Leaders

In the current leadership context there continues to be a tension between managerial leadership – the efficient completion of clearly specified tasks (Leithwood et al, 1999) –

and transformative leadership as described by Fullan (2005) with its five core mind-action sets. From the research study findings, it is apparent that this tension is being played out in the minds and lives of these first-time administrators. More than once the issue of task completion and leadership surfaced. The study participants identified some struggles with seeing that the work they were doing in the school was indeed leadership. In at least one case, the participant identified that he simply thought that he was doing the job. It was his leadership coach who introduced a level of cognition that helped him to build a better understanding of the 'leadership' that exists even in the most mundane of 'managerial' tasks. The leadership coaching allowed the participants to examine the work they did in the school on an hour-by-hour, day-by-day basis to see their work as leadership and not simply task completion. In a 2003 research study conducted in the United Kingdom by Chris Luck, 21 of 23 participants identified leadership coaching as helping them to know themselves better as leaders.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the most challenging of the themes from the data to discuss because it is the exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behaviour (Bandura, 1994). In many ways self-regulation can be seen 'in action' in what tasks individuals choose to tackle and what they choose to avoid (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Luck, 2003). From the data collected in this study there is one excellent example of this. One of the participants identified a dread of facing difficult conversations with staff members or parents of students in the school. Rather than trying to avoid such conversations, this vice-principal took advantage of the learning provided by the leadership coach to prepare himself by considering different strategies to use to approach such conversations. He identified that he considered a range of options, examined potential outcomes of each, and prepared himself with how he would engage in the actual conversations. This is an excellent example of his self-efficacy. He did not try to avoid the challenge. He prepared himself, faced the challenging situation, and then took the opportunity with the leadership coach to debrief and reflect on the experience – as a growth opportunity. Leaders with high self-efficacy engage in exactly this type of behaviour according to Bandura (1994) and McCormick (2001). Imants et al (1994) claim that

leadership learning that is performed under conditions of observation and feedback by a well-trained and trusted coach is highly effective.

In many ways, self-regulation is the ever-evolving inter-relationship among the four elements of self-efficacy. As such, reflective thinking in this realm is likely most effective because it addresses all elements of self-efficacy. All of the participants in this study identified leadership coaching as an experience that helped them to become more reflective in their thinking. Costa and Kallick (2000) and Donald Schon (1987) state that reflection deepens meaning, encourages insight and fosters further learning. They also claim that effective reflective practice can be learned and shared with others who coach us in learning the skills of reflective thinking. Hobson (2003) had comparable finding in his literature review of mentoring and coaching for new leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

This research study focused on the experiences of newly-appointed vice-principals and the way in which leadership coaching shaped their sense of leadership self-efficacy. The study sought to answer the four following research questions:

- How does leadership coaching support the development of the affective processes (those regulating emotional states) of first-time school administrators?
- How does leadership coaching support the development of the cognitive processes (those involved in the acquisition, organization, and use of information) of first-time school administrators?
- How does leadership coaching support the development of the motivation (activation to action / persistence of effort) of first-time school administrators?
- How does leadership coaching support the development of the self-regulation (exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behaviour) of first-time school administrators?

The participants in the study were four first-time vice-principals who had been appointed in January of 2008. They are all school administrators in one central Ontario school board. The participants are representative of school administrators in the board relative to gender, the four geographic regions of the board, as well as the circumstances of the schools within the board. Research interviews were held with the participants in June of 2008, thus each was in the sixth month of the role.

The interviews focused on the research questions but used an interview guide (Appendix A) in order to gather rich and detailed data. The interviews were transcribed into text documents for identification of the findings as well as analysis and discussion. The research findings fell within three areas. These areas are: affective process and motivation, cognitive processes, and self-regulation.

Conclusion

This study has presented the findings from interviews with four first-time vice-principals at the mid-way point in their first year as a school administrator. The research findings as well as the emerging themes are well situated within the *Conceptual Framework*. The *Conceptual Framework* addresses the interconnectedness of the elements of self-efficacy and the way in which leadership coaching shapes the self-efficacy of first-time school administrators.

Within the research findings three broad themes emerged. These themes aligned with the research questions. The three broad themes are: affective process and motivation, cognitive processes, and self-regulation. Within two of these broad themes, sub-themes emerged. Within the broad theme of affective process and motivation the two sub-themes are: feeling supported in the transition to the new role, and feeling confident. Within the broad theme of cognitive processes three sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes are: the difference between principal mentoring and leadership coaching, decision-making, and seeing oneself as a leader. The third broad theme, self-regulation, did not have any sub-themes.

The purpose of this research was to examine the ways in which leadership coaching shaped the self-efficacy of first-time school leaders. From the findings above, it is evident that leadership coaching has had a significant effect in terms of shaping the efficacy of these four leaders. The findings have demonstrated that these first-time school leaders felt supported in the transition into their new role. They articulated having successes of which they were proud. These successes helped to build their confidence as leaders. The participants in the study were readily able to differentiate between the level of support provided to them by their principal - this was referred to as 'mentoring' - from the support provided by their leadership coach. The participants described ways in which the leadership coaching helped them to be more effective decision-makers because they considered a broader range of information, took more time to deliberate on decisions, considered a broader range of options based on reflective thinking, and then thought back on their decisions in order to learn for the future.

Only one of the participants spoke specifically about self-regulation. However, when one considers that Bandura (1994) describes self-regulation as, "Exercise of influence over one's own motivation, thought processes, emotional states, and patterns of behaviour",

it is apparent that the research sub-themes align well with Bandura's concept.

The four first-time vice-principal participants in the study have, without being aware of it, articulated in many ways their own self-regulation through the learning that took place in the leadership coaching experience.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The implications of this study for practice are clear. Those in positions to provide supports to first-time school leaders now know how leadership coaching shapes the self-efficacy of these leaders. Self-efficacy has been shown to have a positive impact on the effectiveness of leaders. Supports that build self-efficacy are therefore supports that can increase leadership effectiveness for first-time school administrators. The personalized nature of leadership coaching and the high level of input provided by the 'coachee' ensure that the professional learning is timely, specific, and grounded in the context of each administrator's own school circumstances (Normore 2004).

As evidenced in the content of the research findings, leadership coaching provided a level of professional learning support that first-time administrators found very helpful. The traditional providers of professional learning for school administrators - University Faculties of Education, Ontario Principals Council, Ministry of Education, and school boards - need to examine ways in which such a method of leadership support can be provided to beginning school leaders

The implications for policy align well with the implications for practice. Future school leaders need to be provided supports that are not purely academic or operational. This study has demonstrated that within the range of professional learning supports provided to first-time administrators, there needs to be a context-specific and personalized format for learning if there is a true desire to support school leaders in being effective. Leadership coaching is a support strategy that provides this needed level of learning. It would be of value for school administrator training and support policy to articulate the specifics of a continuum of leadership support that addresses both the range of types of learning needed as well as the range of modes of delivery to ensure maximum benefit to the participants. The modes of delivery of such training need to engage prospective administrators through both academic and practical learning methods. In an age of high-

stakes accountability and complex, rapid change, the development of beginning school leaders needs to be reflective of these demands and complexities.

Policy makers need to provide for powerful, ongoing professional learning as well as support structures from the initial stage of recruiting, preparing, and selecting aspiring administrators for the role. In addition, school districts and the Ministry of Education need to gather data on administrators in order to understand the skill gaps and then to plan for professional learning that can address these gaps (Normore 2004).

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of this study exist. This study involved four first-time vice-principals. This is not a large sample group but it was extensive within the parameters of the Board in which the study was done. The sample size may limit the generalization of the study. The use of self-reported data is both useful and problematic in that the data represents the perceptions and opinions of beginning administrators. Formal performance evaluations were not examined. Data were not collected from the supervising principals or superintendents of the participants. Thus, the study is reliant on the participants' perceptions and opinions as the sole source of data. This study involved only vice-principals in elementary (Kindergarten through grade 8) schools. Caution must be taken in generalizing the findings to first-time vice-principals in secondary schools. Finally, the author's 'professional judgement' was used in organizing and analyzing the data which carries an inherent bias and can limit the scope of the research.

Areas for Future Research

This study examined the self-efficacy of school administrators after six months in their new role. Existing literature indicates that leader self-efficacy has a positive impact on leader effectiveness. It would be of interest to know more about the specifics of school administrator self-efficacy and its relationship to effectiveness within the current educational context. It would also be of value to examine the different ways in which leader self-efficacy is increased within a school context. A further area of interest would be to know at what career stage focused work on building self-efficacy would be most

effectively delivered. For example, would it most effective to provide such support to aspiring school leaders, first-time, or experienced school leaders? One additional area of interest would be to examine current examples of school leader profiles, such as the Ontario Leadership Strategy, to examine what professional learning methods are most effective in building the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of school leaders in the beginning years of the twenty-first century.

In addition, as companion research to this study, it would be beneficial to do research with the principals with whom these vice-principals work. There would be value in doing a comparative analysis of how self-efficacious the principals found their new vice-principals to be. The experienced principals who were assigned these first-time vice-principals would offer a comparative view of the level of self-efficacy of their vice-principals relative to the demands of the job. Such a comparative analysis could add to the findings of this study and the field as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Below are the interview questions asked along with the prompts used:

Cognitive

1. Describe the support you have received in your new role.
2. How has the leadership coaching differed from the mentoring experience you have had with your principal?

Affective / Motivation

3. What are some of the successes you have had as a leader in this school?
[Prompt: How did you feel about (ask about 1 or 2 specific items)?]
4. What are some of the challenges you have had as a leader in this school?
[Prompt: How did you feel about (ask about 1 or 2 specific items)?]
5. How has leadership coaching influenced your leadership practice?

Self-regulation

6. How has leadership coaching affected your awareness of yourself as a school leader?
7. How do you believe you have grown as a leader?