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Charter School Leadership: The Leadership Affects of the Transition from Public School Administration to Charter School Administration

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Charter School Leadership: The Leadership Affects of the Transition from Public School Administration to Charter School Administration

Abstract

Charter schools have emerged as a viable option for parents and students who seek educational options. Currently there are approximately 5,000 charter schools nationally, which serve more than 1.5 million students. As charter schools continue to enroll students, there are increased leadership opportunities within charter school organizations. Presently, there is a limited body of research that analyzes the leadership affect of charter school leaders who have transitioned from public school leadership positions. This study analyzed this growing population of charter school leaders to ascertain factors associated with the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. In addition, the study sought to determine if transformational and/or transactional leadership styles were evidenced as characteristics of these charter school leaders. This qualitative research study used data solicited from interviews of five charter school leaders. The data was analyzed to identify factors that contributed to the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. The data uncovered factors such as principal burnout due to the many responsibilities required of charter school leadership and the lack of sufficient entrepreneurial training as a rationale to explain this trend. In addition, evidence of transformational and/or transactional leadership styles was identified. However, transactional leadership style was the dominant style for these leaders as a significant amount of their leadership responsibilities hinged on the concept of rewards and punishment.

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Charter School Leadership: The Leadership Affects of the Transition from Public School
Administration to Charter School Administration

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to the almighty God, for with whom all things are possible!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Richard Maurer, my dissertation committee member, Dr. Yigal Joseph, and my academic advisor, Dr. Claudia Edwards. Thank you for your honesty, guidance, and support during this journey; your knowledge and expertise made this dream a reality for me.

As the old adage denotes, behind every great women, are great people. This experience would not have been possible without my family. To my parents George and Hyacinth Seivright, thank you for believing in me at those moments when I did not believe in myself. You are truly the wind beneath my wings. Thank you for also instilling in me at an early age that education is the ticket to which many opportunities will present themselves. As immigrants from Jamaica, West Indies, you have provided me with a life filled with educational experiences. At the time I did not recognize how significant these experiences would be, but without them or you, I may not have sought to partake in this educational journey. To my husband Bernard Crawford, you thank you for being there through the ups and downs of this educational experience. To my heart's joy, my precious angels, Cassidy and Camryn Crawford, your strength and unconditional love propelled me to complete this degree. It is my hope that completing this degree is tangible evidence that all dreams are possible with commitment, endurance, and most importantly, love.

Biographical Sketch

Colleen Seivright-Crawford is currently serving as an Assistant Principal within the Mount Vernon City School District. In this role, Mrs. Seivright-Crawford has provided leadership in the areas of instructional planning and delivery to teachers on the elementary and high school levels. Mrs. Seivright-Crawford is a graduate of Temple University, Philadelphia, PA where she earned a Bachelor of Liberal Arts Degree. After recognizing her calling to teach while working as an internal auditor, Mrs. Seivright-Crawford began her teaching career with the New York City Department of Education in 2000. Mrs. Seivright-Crawford rose through the ranks and served as a Staff Developer and Math Coach. While employed with the New York City Department of Education, Mrs. Seivright-Crawford earned a Masters of Science in Literacy Education Degree from Adelphi University in 2003. As an avid learner, in 2005, Mrs. Seivright-Crawford earned another Masters of Science Degree in School Building Leadership from Mercy College. Mrs. Seivright-Crawford was accepted to St. John Fisher College's Educational Doctorate Program in May 2011 and has earned her Doctorate of Education in Executive Leadership in 2013.

Abstract

Charter schools have emerged as a viable option for parents and students who seek educational options. Currently there are approximately 5,000 charter schools nationally, which serve more than 1.5 million students. As charter schools continue to enroll students, there are increased leadership opportunities within charter school organizations.

Presently, there is a limited body of research that analyzes the leadership affect of charter school leaders who have transitioned from public school leadership positions. This study analyzed this growing population of charter school leaders to ascertain factors associated with the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. In addition, the study sought to determine if transformational and/or transactional leadership styles were evidenced as characteristics of these charter school leaders.

This qualitative research study used data solicited from interviews of five charter school leaders. The data was analyzed to identify factors that contributed to the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. The data uncovered factors such as principal burnout due to the many responsibilities required of charter school leadership and the lack of sufficient entrepreneurial training as a rationale to explain this trend. In addition, evidence of transformational and/or transactional leadership styles was identified. However, transactional leadership style was the dominant style for these leaders as a significant amount of their leadership responsibilities hinged on the concept of rewards and punishment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

As the pendulum of educational issues continues to swing from one end of the spectrum to the other, a constant issue that arises is the resounding need for urban school reform. In recent decades, this belief has helped promote the waves of reform that have swept American education and then dissipated without producing sustained change (Hess, 1999). The lure of dramatic school improvement was even showcased through Morgan Freeman's big-screen portrayal of bat-wielding principal Joe Clark, philanthropic initiatives like the Gates Foundation's "small schools" project, and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) restructuring mandate (Smarick, 2010). In 2009, the Race to the Top initiative has also emerged as a dramatic nationwide education reform effort, leading 45 states and the District of Columbia to pursue higher college- and career-ready standards, data-driven decision making, greater support for teachers and leaders, and turnaround interventions in low-performing schools (United States Department of Education, 2009). In addition, the charter school movement has also been associated as another initiative to address urban school reform efforts.

The 1990s saw a proliferation of charter schools in the United States, and by the end of the century, 34 states and the District of Columbia had charter school legislation as more than 1,100 charter schools enrolled over 250,000 students in their programs (Hassel, 1999). This increase can be attributed to the wave of school reform that was evidenced from 1986 to 1989. This involved a movement towards local control of schools

with an emphasis on teacher and community empowerment. Collaboration and shared decision-making were the preferred processes, as school-based management became the cure-all for the system's ills (Cheng, 1996). Subsequently, the charge then became to restructure schools, which resulted in a change in the governance and operations of schools (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Unfortunately, according to Elmore (1991), this phase of restructuring was not clearly defined and therefore different meanings and applications appeared in different states, communities, and districts. However, a change of the distribution of power between schools and their clients was still evidenced. Parents became increasingly involved by deciding how their community schools would operate. The traditional dominant relationship between schools and the public was reworked and instead focused on equal arrangements and partnerships. Seeley (1988) noted that the business of schooling is being redefined in relation to those who are being served. Educational researchers who studied the impact on these reform efforts found that approaches that utilized personalized school based management techniques were needed (Bolman & Deal, 1997). School based decision-making was infused to include parents, staff and community in the governance of their local schools. This change towards a more inclusive approach in school governance planted the seeds for alternative schools of choice, such as magnet schools, voucher programs, and charter schools (Brouillette, 2002).

Charter schools have surfaced as popular alternatives to traditional public schools, with some 5,000 schools now serving more than 1.5 million students (Consoletti, 2011). Because of this trend, charter schools have received considerable attention among researchers (Booker, Sass, Gill, & Zimmer, 2010). According to RPP International and

the University of Minnesota (1997), there are three reasons most charter schools are created to realize an educational vision, to gain autonomy, or to serve a special population. Many communities, educators, and legislators explored the idea of charter schools in an effort to implement educational reform ideas (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). According to O'Connor (2009), states began to adopt charter school legislation with a basic frame of what constitutes a charter school; a public school of choice that operates according to the school's own design, with minimum government oversight. The schools therefore are held accountable to the terms of its charter.

Charter schools are nonsectarian public schools of choice that operate with freedom from many of the regulations that apply to traditional schools. The "charter" establishing each school is a performance contract detailing the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. Charter schools are public schools and are therefore publicly funded. Teachers, parents, school administrators, or any organization or individual within the local community of the charter school can develop these schools (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). Charter schools are unique because of the autonomy given to them in terms of the design and use of the instructional methods and materials compared to public schools, which, in general, have to adhere to more specific regulations and guidelines. For example, charter schools have the freedom to decide how much time to spend on curriculum subjects, as they do not have to follow a set curriculum or spend a certain amount of time on a curriculum subject. Unlike public schools, charter schools can decide how long their school days are and how many days out of the year school will be in session. This allows charter school leaders to decide how long to spend on a certain curriculum subject (Zimmer & Buddin,

2007). According to Lange and Lehr (2000), charter schools can be beneficial to students as they can provide a smaller teacher to student ratio in the classrooms. McDermott, Johnson, Rothenberg, and Baker (2006), also identified positive attributes of charter schools included increased opportunities for parental involvement and the self-governance of staffing. Having this flexibility gives additional freedom and may influence student performance and the overall success of charter schools.

As charter schools continue to surface in neighborhoods with the hope of offering academic options for students, there are both supporters and opponents to its notion. Charter school advocates believe that these schools have the potential to improve student performance (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). Considering the flexibility granted towards teaching methods and the learning process given traditional public schools, inventive approaches may increase student learning as teachers apply innovative methods that might attract students' attention more than a traditional teaching method would (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). In addition, parental involvement and commitment with a school increases when parents choose their child's school more than when children are assigned to a school-by-school authority (O'Neil, 1996). This translates into increased parental involvement in charter schools due to the option of school choice.

Opponents of charter schools contend that charter schools carry considerable potential for discrimination and other social injustices (Lazaridou & Fris, 2005). Charter school opponents also believe that charter schools threaten the viability of mainstream public schools because the charter schools do little to improve educational achievements in general and charter schools do not foster innovativeness in delivery modes and teaching techniques as they are intended to (Lazaridou & Fris, 2005). In addition,

according to Buddin and Zimmer (2005) charter schools have not proven to be more effective in education than traditional district schools.

Beyond the consideration that the ultimate goal of all school leaders is the academic success of students, who are charter school leaders and what inspires them to lead their institutions. Eighty-six percent of charter school leaders said the school's mission attracted them to the job (Campbell, Gross, & Lake, 2008). When asked what satisfies them most about their jobs, the top three answers were passion for the school's mission; a commitment to educating the kinds of students served by the school; and the autonomy gained by leading a charter school. Ninety-four percent of charter school leaders said they felt confident or very confident engaging their staff to work toward the common mission (Campbell, 2010).

Because of the autonomy given to charter schools, leaders of charter schools can manage their institutions using a variety of organizational models. Leaders of charter schools are usually the people who perform the day-to-day procedures of running their school. However, some leaders choose to hire a principal or director to run their schools. In either case, there is little research on the leadership skills needed to run a charter school. Lane (1998) found, most of the present and potential charter school founders possess the desire, ingenuity, and passion necessary to develop and sustain a charter school. However, many of these individuals do not possess all of the technical expertise to handle the administrative, financial, and public relations duties, which go hand in hand with the development of a charter school (Lane, 1998). Lane (1998) continued by suggesting that although altruistic ideals planted the seeds for the inception of most charter schools, the founders of these schools are frequently unprepared for the transition

from the goal-oriented process to the day-to-day operation of the schools. This in turn causes the organization to have difficulty in making the transition from an informal organizational process to a formal organizational structure.

Prior training and experience play important roles in operating a charter school (Campbell, 2010). Those with prior education from traditional colleges of education seem more confident in overseeing instruction and curriculum in the school. Similarly, charter school leaders with a background in financial management were confident in the financial aspects of leading schools. Consequently, the confidence levels of these leaders depended on their experience and other factors. Leaders who have been principals (in public, charter, or private schools) for three years or more are the most confident about both financial and instructional matters. On the other hand, directors in their first or second year are the least confident in almost every aspect of school leadership (Campbell et al., 2008). In addition to the self-confidence of these leaders, several other issues were raised by charter school leaders, which may have significant impact to the schools' success. Some of the issues raised by charter leaders are finding and retaining qualified staff members, doubts in the areas of managing finances, and leading strategic planning (Campbell et al., 2008).

These aforementioned issues begin to scratch the surface of issues charter school leaders face. In addition to the leadership role the founders of charter schools play, charter school principals also experience administrative issues. A charter school's first year of existence is demanding for a principal. Principals must spend time securing operating funds and acquiring a facility, thereby leaving instructional leadership such as the supervision of instruction, staff, development, and curriculum development as their

lowest priority (Peebles, 2004). According to Rutherford (2006), the continual expansion of a principal's role makes it difficult for many principals to accomplish all their daily obligations. In addition to being an education leader and a business leader, principals have to lead their school to excellence (Rutherford, 2006).

Continued research into the many facets of charter school leadership is needed to help support the various levels of leadership within charter schools. Based on the movement towards school based management techniques, this creates unique opportunities for school leaders, specifically for charter school leadership. However, today's school leaders, that is, administrators, are trained in traditional school improvement and reform strategies, some through university programs and some in local districts preparation programs (Price, Martin, & Robertson, 2010). Evidence-based information on what specifically principals need to do to be successful, which in turn would influence student achievement, has been presented (Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). However, there is limited research that addresses the specific needs of school leaders who are trained and experienced in traditional school leadership models and who are assuming leadership positions in the exponentially growing charter school industry.

Problem Statement

The number of charter schools has increased nationally thus resulting in a greater need for recruiting and hiring effective leaders. Many charter school leaders are transitioning from public school leadership positions without previous experience in the charter school sector. Therefore, it is important to ascertain the leadership demands of

these school leaders in order to support future professional development opportunities to support these leaders in their new roles.

In addition, as with many careers today, including the traditional public school principal, turnover among charter school leaders is common. One-third plan to leave their current positions in the next three years, and about 70 % expect to move on in the next five years. Half of those departing charter directors intend to remain in the education field, although few expect to transition to other leadership positions in charter schools (Campbell et al., 2008). The general problem is that charter school leaders have had to overcome obstacles during the development and implementation stages of creating a charter school. Considering the importance experience plays in managing a charter school, the predicted turnover may be cause for concern. Only a handful of the charter school said they plan to take on a similar position at another charter school. Instead, respondents indicated they would become school consultants, join charter management organizations, work in school districts or state departments of education, or work as education advocates (Campbell et al., 2008).

Considering professionals from recent graduates to those nearing the end of their careers have assumed the challenge of charter school leadership, most charter school leaders are professional educators with the vast majority, 74%, earned their highest degrees in traditional educational training from colleges of education. Almost 60% are or have been state-certified school principals (Campbell et al., 2008). While the majority of charter school leaders have advanced degrees in education and prior careers in education, they tend to be newer to leadership than traditional public school leaders. Federal data

suggest that almost 30 % of charter school leaders have led a school for two years or less, compared with only 16 % of traditional public school principals (Campbell et al., 2008).

The leadership qualities and techniques necessary and required for charter school leaders to operate a charter school effectively and successfully are not known (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007). There are many practical and administrative requirements for managing a charter school. Facilities issues top the list of challenges, with about 40% of charter school leaders reporting that securing and managing facilities is a problem. Unlike traditional public schools, charter schools must find their own buildings and pay for these facilities out of the education funds allotted per student. Personnel and finances come next on the list of struggles. The need to attract good teachers, the constant necessity of raising money, and the challenge of matching expenses with enrollment-driven income are anxiety-provoking and time-consuming concerns for charter school leaders. In a traditional public school, the district's central office takes care of these issues. (Campbell et al., 2008)

The lack of sufficient time for strategic planning, looking ahead to plot the school's growth and build its capacity is another daunting challenge for charter school leaders. According to Campbell et al. (2008) nearly one in five charter school leaders' reports being only slightly confident or not at all confident in implementing a strategic, school-wide instructional initiative or school-wide improvement plan. All of those concerns are more common among leaders with the least experience in the principal's office. Therefore, it is suggested that experience on the job is the number one factor explaining confidence in charter school leaders, even more so than specialized training and experience (Campbell et al., 2008). Charter school founders are unable to learn from

experiences because on average charter schools are less than three years old (Finn, 2002). These school leaders face many issues, and are expected to meet all the demands of their schools (Peebles, 2004). Due to time constraints, little time is spent guiding and providing instructional leadership to teachers. Some charter school leaders do not find the time to identify teaching goals and objectives and cannot plan learning activities or define the scope and sequence of the curriculum. In some instances, the lack of time causes an unhealthy organizational culture to develop within the school (Peebles, 2004).

Fusarelli (2002) determined founders of charter schools tend to underestimate how difficult it is to create a school from scratch, particularly the unanticipated conflicts that arise. Many founders, particularly teachers, parents, and community groups unfamiliar with the administrative details of actually running a school, are often unprepared and ill-equipped for the demands and burdens of school administration.

A notable key difference separating charter school leaders from traditional public school leaders is their experience with school leadership. Taking into account the national increase of charter schools, this will likely yield increased opportunities for aspiring charter school leaders. Currently, traditional school leadership programs offer an array of courses to support the operational and instructional demands of school building leaders. However, the management of charter schools poses different challenges from those of traditional public school leaders, who for example, receive support from their districts' central offices. For the charter school leader, there is no central office to recruit students and teachers, secure and manage facilities, or raise money and manage school finances (Campbell et al., 2008). Presently the research does not suggest that there is a program, which trains and supports school leaders who are transitioning from traditional public

schools to charter schools. The focus of this study is to identify the necessary leadership qualities and techniques for school leaders transitioning from a traditional public school to a charter school.

Theoretical Rationale

The focus of most charter school research studies surrounds student achievement and teacher development. Little research exists on charter school leaders. A review of the literature revealed that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are those who have tried to define the concept (Rosenbach & Taylor, 1998). Kouzes and Posner (2002) argued that leadership is a universal process where leaders display certain exemplary behaviors regardless of the discipline or profession. They declared that leaders obtain extraordinary results when they engage in five practices of exemplary leadership: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Ultimately, this leadership model contended that leaders set examples for excellence by the character of their leadership.

According to vanEede, Cilliers, and van Deventer (2008), the transformational and transactional theories have been the most effective in the charter school environment. Transactional leadership builds important influence components between a leader and a follower (Boseman, 2008). Transformational leadership occurs when a group of people works together towards a common goal (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership is also the process by which a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2010). This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of followers and tries to help followers reach their full potential. Considering the vast responsibilities charter school

leaders assume, this study sought to uncover the leadership styles of the study participants.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, participatory research study is to gather, analyze, and interpret data about charter school leadership experiences among school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public schools to charter schools and to elicit factors that may contribute to the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. Through the lens of transformational and transactional leadership theory, charter school leadership experiences were analyzed. Transformational leadership theory suggests that there is an idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration that the leader embodies which supports organizational effectiveness (Northouse, 2010). Transactional leadership theory involves influence components between a leader and a follower (Boseman, 2008).

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to gain insight into the leadership behaviors of traditional public school leaders who have transitioned into leadership roles within charter schools. The following research questions provided insight into the experiences of current charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public school leadership positions:

1. What are the factors or concerns that may affect the turnover rate of charter school leaders?
2. How are transformational and/or transactional leadership styles evidenced in the roles and responsibilities of charter school leaders?

Potential Significance of the Study

Leadership is needed in organizations and social institutions because the success or failure of an organization or social institution depends on the leadership (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). Qualified candidates for leadership positions are becoming difficult to find and charter schools are no exception. The current study is of significance to leaders because the study involved an investigation into the leadership experiences of traditional public school leaders who have transitioned into charter school leadership positions. The study provides insight into the leadership skills needed to operate a successful charter school and factors that contribute to the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. The study may also benefit entities that provide charter schools with professional development including the development of school management or leadership processes that will be useful to charter school leaders and educational entities.

Charter school leadership can affect a school's ability to keep a charter in various ways, such as by not meeting the instructional accountability rates as set by the state and federal governments. Charter school leaders are responsible for understanding managerial decisions such as relevant district, state, and federal policies that affect their ability to keep their charter (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). If a charter school is not meeting the accountability standards as well as the relevant district, state, and federal policies, a charter school leader can be forced to shut down the charter school and the charter may be revoked. The current study is significant because it involved exploring the leadership skills needed for a charter school to become successful and retain its charter in its good standing state. In addition, the study provided insight into factors that influence the high

attrition rate of charter school leaders and support on-going professional development opportunities for charter school leaders.

Definitions of Terms

Leadership. A personality that suggests specific traits to accomplish tasks and acts to influence change (Northouse, 2010).

Transformational leadership. The process in which a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower (Northouse, 2010).

Transactional leadership. Leadership that builds important influence components between a leader and a follower (Boseman, 2008).

Charter schools. A public school operated independently of the local school board, often with a curriculum and educational philosophy different from the other schools in the system (Dictionary.com).

Traditional public schools. Any elementary or secondary school besides charter schools that are supported by public tax funds and operated by local public school districts. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

Chapter Summary

In an era that has a heightened interest in educational reform efforts, charter schools have garnered both support and criticisms. As charter schools continue to open each year, the leaders of these institutions must be aware of the factors that promote success considering that historically as 15% of charter schools have closed (Consoletti, 2011). With a keen focus on its leadership, specifically, examining charter school leadership experiences among school leaders who have transitioned from traditional

public schools to charter school is a population in which there is limited research surrounded their leadership experiences.

Considering operating a charter school poses many challenges for its leaders, Downing, Spencer, and Cavallaro (2004) found that the challenges charter school leaders experienced and addressed during their first year of operations were lack of space and materials, faculty and staff turnover, and difficulties with personnel, not knowing students' needs, providing adequate student support, and developing effective systems for collaboration.

Charter school leadership skills are important because charter school leaders are charged with delivering instructional leadership, managing the operations and finances of the school, and often this is done from scratch (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007). Because most charter schools are start-up schools, there is not an established blueprint to follow. Therefore charter school leaders sometimes must act as not only as superintendents or managers of the charter school, but also as principals, managers, and instructional leaders (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007).

Although operating a charter school grants its leaders with certain instructional and operational liberties, many school leadership programs do not train its students to assume all of the responsibilities simultaneously which is the charge through charter school leadership. This in turn may not spell success for its leaders and contribute to the turnover associated with charter school leadership. Campbell (2007) notes significant turnover of charter school leaders in the near future is to be expected as according to her research, 10% of charter school leaders expect to move on to new opportunities or retire in the next year, and 71% expect to have moved on in the next five years. The numbers of

new leaders needed are not small, given the 4,300 charter schools currently in operation across in the country (Campbell et al., 2008). Therefore identifying a system to recruit, train and hire charter school leaders to meet the increasing demands is necessary. Charter schools add another dimension to being a school leader because charter school leaders have greater decision control and freedom (Zimmer & Buddin, 2007).

It is beneficial to growth and sustainability of any organization to have effective leadership. Specifically, in order to determine leadership attributes that are exhibited by charter school leaders, transformational and transactional leadership theories will be explored. Burns (1978) proposed that the leadership process occurs in one of two ways, either transactional or transformational. He further defined transactional leadership as being based on bureaucratic authority and legitimacy within the organization.

Transactional leaders are characterized by emphasizing work standards, assignments, and task-oriented goals. They also tend to focus on task completion and employee compliance and rely quite heavily on organizational rewards and punishments to influence employee performance (Burns, 1978). He also explained that transformational leadership is a process that motivates followers by appealing to higher ideals and moral values.

Transformational leaders must be able to define and articulate a vision for their organizations, and the followers must accept the credibility of the leader (Burns, 1978).

For the charter movement to successfully sustain itself and grow, a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting charter school leaders who have transitioned from public school administration positions is needed. Therefore, this research study intends to identify factors that contribute to the high turnover of charter school leaders, to identify additional professional development opportunities needed for

charter school leaders, and through the lens of transformational and/or transactional the leadership theories, determine if characteristics of these theories were evidenced in the study participants' leadership styles.

The remainder of the dissertation contains a review of the literature in Chapter 2, a discussion of the research methodology in Chapter 3, data analysis in Chapter 4, and a discussion of the results and implications of the study for research and practice is included in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

As the charter school movement continues to develop, understanding the success of some over others is of great importance to stakeholders who want to create their own institutions (Wells, 2002). Alston (2002) contended that the organizational model of bureaucracy, with the principal at the top of the pyramid of power; serve the needs of education of the 21st century. This hierarchal model, which served the purposes of the industrial society, is not able to support the goals of reform. What needs to replace it is a hierarchical model of organization that has been described as a constellation, a federation, a network, and a shamrock organization (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Beck and Murphy (1993) continued by stating that the core structure of bureaucracy is no longer applicable in the new century as hierarchy of authority. They also often viewed this style of leadership as detrimental; impersonality was found to be incompatible with cooperative work efforts, specialization and division of labor are no longer considered assets, scientific management based on controlling the efforts of subordinates was judged inappropriate, and the distinct separation of management and labor is seen as counterproductive. Sizer (1984) concluded that bureaucratic systems inhibit initiative, creativity and professional judgment, the necessary skills for significant reform to take place. These reformers maintain that the organizational structure that steered the course of schools for the past 80 years is not sufficiently flexible or robust to prepare students and teachers for the challenges of the 21st century. Sizer (1984) definitively states that

such practices are paralyzing American education and is getting in the way of children's learning. The bureaucratic organization that is hierarchical in structure does not support the central mission of schools, teaching and learning.

In contrast, a proposed structure for schools of the new millennium is the antithesis of the hierarchical structure. This form is one that is more decentralized and more professionally managed where there are basic changes in roles, relationships and responsibilities (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Authority structures less top down and role definitions are more general and flexible. Independence and isolation, hallmarks of the industrial age are replaced by cooperative work. The focus has shifted from the maintenance of the organization to the holistic development of the people in the schoolhouse (Sergiovanni, 2000). There is an emphasis on the school community created from a foundation of moral judgment and shared decision-making (Barth, 1990). Beck and Murphy (1993) argue that the transition from schools as institutions to schools as communities, from principals as managers to principals as facilitators from teachers as workers to teachers as leaders constitutes a reformation of schools defined by the empowerment of all stakeholders. School based management requires an open climate that encourages the questioning of existing practice and a willingness to challenge the status quo.

According to Wohlstetter and Griffin (1997), charter schools seek a certain type of leadership that promotes leadership practices that are aligned with the charter school's mission. In a study of 17 charter schools, Wohlstetter and Griffin (1997) concluded that charter school leaders commonly shared an "outlaw mentality" and a sense of entrepreneurship. In addition, having worked in the public school system, many charter

school leaders were dissatisfied with public school governance and perceived themselves as challenging the status quo. They saw the flaws in public education and started charter schools to challenge the public school system. Since their fiscal autonomy had granted charter schools the power to provide teachers with the freedom to seek out and utilize alternative resources and various types of support, charter school leaders worked to establish linkages in order to bring new ideas about teaching and learning into the schools. Finally, the study showed that there was a sense of collaboration between administrators and teachers in charter schools that they had studied (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997). The study concluded that school leadership provided the compass for development and sustenance of the charter school as a learning community. A key component of this leadership was negotiating the many roles and demands within the school (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997).

The challenge of creating and maintaining charter schools that promotes the ultimate goal of student learning involves many facets of the education system. It requires a new level of leadership to provide inspiration, expertise, drive and endurance. This study will convey the importance of building leadership capacity in charter schools. This new level of leadership provides a critical bridge between most educational reform initiatives and those reforms that make a genuine difference for all students (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007). Successful charter schools depend on the quality of leadership and the opportunities for shared decision-making among the stakeholders.

Review of the Literature

In the 1990s, there was a notable increase in charter schools due to several reasons. One such reason for the increase, according to Wells (2002), was attributed to the backlash against the large and bureaucratic educational system and the equity based policies of the 1960s and 1970s such as special education, desegregation, and bilingual education. The conservative position believed that equity would occur as a by-product as the overall quality of the educational system was improved. Charter legislation then became a plausible response to the anti-bureaucracy view that school improvement reforms and innovative solutions were too massive, ineffectual system of top-down management and impersonal governance (O'Connor, 2009). Political conservatives who demanded that central governance policies be eliminated in favor of local agency control claimed this change in organization. In contrast, progressives wanted schools that met the needs of diverse populations and supported community control of the schools through teacher and parent participation in school-based management.

Charter school governance recognizes and supports the decentralization of power and authority to those who work in the local schools. This ideology supports the establishment of community-based schools whose policies and practice reflect the students who enroll and the teachers who instruct (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). This leads to the leadership challenge. A new level of leadership is then required to facilitate this initiative. This type of leadership would need to provide the bridge between educational reform efforts and having the reforms make a genuine difference for all students (DeVita et al., 2007). Leadership can bring together all necessary components of school reform into a coherent whole (Brouillette, 2002).

According to Griffin and Wohlstetter (2001), the two distinct areas of leadership evident regardless of where the charter schools were organized are managerial leadership and instructional leadership. The charter schools that are more independent from their district schools were more consumed by managerial decisions than those charter schools more dependent of their district traditional school (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). A large portion of a charter school leader's day is spent addressing managerial decisions such as finances and following the district, state, and federal policies. Other managerial decisions of a charter school leader are insurance, meals, and staff members such as security, custodians, substitutes, and bus companies. Charter school leaders spend a large portion of their day on these managerial decisions, and the smallest part of a charter school leader's time goes to teaching and learning issues (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). Many charter school leaders have experience in operating schools, but most charter school leaders only have teaching experience with no managerial experience (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001).

Leadership will vary among charter schools because of the flexibility charter school leaders have. Charter school leaders have the flexibility to be innovative and creative with their methods and techniques. Managerial and instructional leadership responsibilities are sometimes clearly distinctive for some charter schools, but for many charter schools, managerial and instructional responsibilities are integrated (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). Some individuals were responsible for the managerial issues and different individuals were held accountable for the instructional issues that arose within one charter school. In other charter schools, managerial responsibilities were contracted out to experts to prevent the charter school staff from being distracted from instructional

concerns. Charter school leadership is important because it can prevent charter school closures and charter revocations.

During the course of leadership development, several theories have been presented in an effort to identify the traits and characteristics of effective leaders. In the early 1900s, Thomas Carlyle offered a leadership theory, the great man theory, which argued leaders are born and not made (Chemers, 1997). This theory also leads to the notion that great leaders will appear in times of need.

During the 1920s and 1930s, trait leadership theory was introduced and assumed that traits were the primary factor for effective leadership behavior. Research focused on identifying traits common to all leaders; however, no consistent set of traits was found to differentiate leaders from non-leaders (Northouse, 2010). Trait approaches viewed that certain physical, social, and personal characteristics were inherent in all leaders; thus, these inherent characteristics lead to the discovery of leaders. According to trait theory, social traits consist of being charismatic, charming, popular and diplomatic. Personality traits include self-confidence, adaptability, assertiveness, and emotional stability. Traits that are task related are accepting responsibility, driven to excel, having initiative, and being results oriented (Bass, 1990).

Another leadership theory that emerged was situational leadership theory (SLT). Situational leadership theory emphasizes that one style does not fit every situation. Leaders are therefore able to adjust their leadership based on the needs and ability levels of followers (Hughes et al., 2002). The situational model of leadership is prescriptive because of its accommodation to the needs of followers.

A current and widely researched leadership theory is transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership theory was introduced by Burns (1978) as a process where leaders and followers heighten each other to high levels of morality and motivation. Sagor (1992) argued that transformational leadership involves creating a collaborative environment to uncover the purpose of teaching and learning. Rosenbach and Taylor (1998) acknowledged that followers are motivated to perform beyond expectation because of the importance of the desired outcome communicated by transformational leaders. These leaders are able to mobilize followers towards a common vision where creativity is encouraged. Leithwood (1992), developed three fundamental goals of transformational leaders pursue, assisting staff to maintain a professional culture of collaboration, affording teacher development, and assisting with effective problem solving. Transformational leadership, like all types of leadership, occurs when a group of people works together toward a common goal. Superior leaders support and encourage all team members' views, ideas, and creative thinking by allowing their employees to be innovative rather than requiring them to follow a predetermined plan. According to Bass (1999), in contrast to the transactional leader who practices contingent reinforcement of followers, the transformational leader inspires, intellectually stimulates, and is individually considerate of followers.

Transactional leadership theory consists of contingent reward and management by exception. Contingent reward is when a leader rewards positive behavior, and management by exception is when the leader corrects failures of subordinates when they occur (Bossink, 2004), Considering transactional leadership concentrates on monitoring

employees' activities it helps charter school employees overcome their fear of failure and grapple with difficult problems (Ash & Persall, 2000).

Fullan (2000) defines 21st century leadership as making positive differences in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole. He continues that leadership is not the mobilization of others to solve problems, but to help them confront problems that have yet to be addressed successfully. Leading means creating a culture of change. Lezotte, (1991) found that having: a clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, opportunity to learn and student time on task, a safe and orderly environment, and finally, positive home-school relations led to school improvement and student learning (Lezotte, 1991). Leaders who could deliver on the above list led in schools that worked for most students. Milstein et al. (1993) proposed some significant changes in the way leaders were trained. Following the research of Milstein et al. (1993), The Danforth Foundation of St. Louis Missouri awarded a grant that supported a five-year research and development program that implemented the Milstein proposals and changed how principals were prepared to lead in public schools (Milstein et al., 1993). Their study however, focused on preparing leaders for traditional schools.

Chapter Summary

There are several leadership theories that attempt to identify qualities and traits of successful leaders. There is a great deal of research detailing the “what” of effective school leadership; what school leaders in traditional schools need to know and do to lead in those schools. There is little research, however, on what leaders of charter schools need to know and do. Many higher education preparation programs prepare school

leaders for traditional school leadership; higher education preparation programs for charter school leaders are mostly nonexistent. Even with traditional preparation, beginning and inexperienced practitioners are easily overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of school leadership, and many contend the training leaders receive is off target (Price, Martin, & Robertson, 2010). Some contend that higher education preparation programs are not preparing leaders effectively for what some schools now see as their leadership needs (Levine, 2005). As a result, there is a “wait and see” approach for leadership talent to emerge by posting job openings and then seeing who applies.

Current research on charter school governance suggests that effective leadership of and throughout the charter institution is the main component in creating and managing high performing schools (O’Connor, 2009). However, the career experiences of leaders and teachers of some charter schools do not meet the experiences of those individuals within traditional district schools (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001).

Charter schools and other nontraditional public school options have the potential to facilitate education reforms and develop new and creative methods that can be replicated in traditional public schools for the benefit of all children. Whether charter schools will fulfill this potential depends on how charter schools are designed and implemented. It is also dependent on effective leadership.

Today new leaders are trained and become well versed in traditional school improvement and reform strategies, some through university programs and some in local districts preparation programs. Lezotte (1991) contends we know what education leaders in traditional schools need to know. What is unknown is characteristics are necessary in

order to create successful charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional school settings.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Research derived from a variety of fields has concluded that leadership matters. It can be the single most impactful contributor to the success or failure of an organization. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) declared that leadership is a dangerous occupation because leaders serve as inspiration for change. Such a perspective raises challenging questions and forces people to evaluate their values, assumptions, and norms. These leadership challenges can become even more daunting within the scope of charter school leadership. Currently, traditional school leadership programs offer an array of courses to support the operational and instructional demands of school building leaders (Campbell, Gross, & Lake, 2008). However, for the charter school leader, district office support is not an option as these leaders address administrative demands ranging in scope from the management of school finances, to securing and managing facilities, to the recruitment of staff and students (Campbell et al., 2008). Due to the exponential growth of charter schools nationally, there are increased opportunities for leaders within these organizations. For example, during the 2011-2012 school year, there were approximately 200 charter schools in operation in New York State that represented an 8.65% gain compared to the 2010-2011 school year (National Charter School & Enrollment Statistics, 2011). With these increased leadership opportunities within charter school organizations, are charter school leaders prepared for the rigors of leading these schools?

The purpose of this research study was to examine charter school leadership experiences in order to gain a better understanding of the obstacles faces by charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional school leadership positions to charter school leadership positions. In order to understand the experiences of these leaders, research questions were developed to solicit their insight.

The following research questions provided insight into the experiences of current charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public school leadership positions:

1. What are the factors or concerns that may affect the turnover rate of charter school leaders?
2. How are transformational and/or transactional leadership styles evidenced in the roles and responsibilities of charter school leaders?

How do charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public school leadership positions describe their experiences? Specifically, these leaders were asked the following interview questions to gain explicit insight into their leadership experiences.

Question 1. What factors influenced you to transition from a public school administrator to a leadership position within a charter school?

Question 2. What are some of the concerns or issues you have experienced with your transition from a traditional public school leadership position to a charter school leadership position?

Question 3. What type of previous administrative experience would you recommend a charter school leader have in order to contribute to the success of his/her charter school?

Question 4. How did your formal education administration training support your transition to a charter school leadership position? How did it not?

Question 5. How did your experience as a public school administrator support your transition to a charter school leadership position?" How did it not?

Question 6. How did your formal training as a school administrator support your transition to a charter school leadership position? How did it not?

Question 7. Why do you think charter school leaders leave their leadership positions in three to five years?

The general research design selected for this study was qualitative in nature. According to Creswell (2009), some types of qualitative research provide insight into the lived experiences of the participants. A qualitative method of research was chosen because the general purpose of this research is interpretative in nature and it seeks to describe phenomena from the viewpoint of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

Specifically, the study will be a qualitative case study. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) contend that qualitative case study research is especially suited for an in-depth study of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon. Manela and Moxley (2002) recommended using a case study method in identifying and investigating program goals and challenges for deeper understanding of a situation and experience. There are numerous advantages to using case studies as a method for investigation. First, case studies provide a rich and holistic

account of a given phenomenon, which assists in the investigation of unique cases such as innovations and transitions. Additionally, a case study, which is conducted in a natural setting, can advance one's understanding of the ways in which new knowledge is developed or applied. This allows the researcher to pursue important yet unanticipated topics of inquiry (Kim, 2010). Since this study intends to develop a better understanding of the experience of charter school leaders, the case study method is the most appropriate choice for the study.

The study employed purposeful sampling. Patton (2002) viewed purposeful sampling as valuable because it allows researchers to focus on information-rich cases. Purposeful sampling can also be used to explore new ideas that have not been widely disseminated yet have the potential to impact the broader educational community (Wohlstetter & Kuzin, 2006). By investigating the experiences relating to charter school leadership, this study analyzed these experiences because they may generate insights about the growing population of charter school leaders who fall into this category. In addition, the study is also relevant to the broader field of educational leadership.

Research Context

The study took place in the northeast section of the United States, specifically in New York State. The selected schools were located in urban areas in which approximately 90% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. A charter school network was initially identified to recruit volunteers for the study. An introductory e-mail letter was sent to the charter school network, which explained the research problem, interview process, and the procedures for the interview process. However, due to the lack

of responses, the study participants were referred to the researcher through associates and colleagues.

Research Participants

The research study involved interviewing five charter school administrators who have transitioned into charter school leadership positions from traditional public school settings. The participants' experience levels will vary between five to over 10 years of experience as educational leaders. In their administrative roles in traditional schools, the participants held the title of either principal or superintendent. All of the participants had three to five years of charter school leadership experience in an elementary school setting and an earned a master's degree in educational leadership. Participants were selected through convenient sampling of individuals who were referred by colleagues and associates to the researcher and who fit the aforementioned criteria.

Data Collection Instruments

According to Salkind (2003), interviews are a powerful research tool that provides full exploration of the subject under which the study might be obtained. In addition, interviews aid in obtaining data that might otherwise be difficult to obtain such as actual information about an individual's feelings, experiences, and views. Moustakas (1994) substantiated the use of interviews as a typical method of obtaining data in which there is a form of dialogue between the participant and the researcher. In depth, semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection procedure in this study. Specifically, semi-structured interviewing is an overarching term used to describe a range of different forms of interviewing most commonly associated with qualitative research. The defining characteristic of semi-structured interviews is that they have a flexible and fluid structure,

which includes an interview guide. The interview guide included an outline of topics to be covered during the course of the interview with suggested questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Once the participants were selected, on-site interviews were conducted at their respective organizations and/or at mutually agreed upon location.

A qualitative approach was used for the study because the study involved investigating an open-ended human situation focusing on leadership skills, which broadens perspectives (Creswell, 2005). According to Moustakas (1990), a common way to collect material is through interviews with dialogues between the researcher and the participants. The five participants were school leaders who have transitioned from leadership roles in traditional public schools to charter schools. In-depth interviews were used to gather data for text analysis. According to Moustakas (1994), it is typical in a phenomenological investigation to use long interviews as the method through which data is gathered. Text analysis consisted of coding and grouping similar codes to find themes and patterns (Neuman, 2003). Therefore, interviews and surveys are ideal methods for gathering the needed data.

In order to ensure validity, a panel of experts reviewed the sample interview questions in advance. The panel of experts was comprised of three educational professionals with extensive experience in charter school leadership. One expert was a member of a state charter school board of directors, another expert was a founder and principal of a charter school, and the third expert was an executive director of a charter school. The panel of experts ascertained if the study's interview questions were aligned with the research questions of the study. Once the interview questions were validated, the researcher interviewed the participants individually. The interview instrument used open-

ended questions to gather insight into the participants' leadership experiences. According to Creswell (2005), a researcher asks open-ended questions so that participants can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or limitations that might be imposed if the questions were based on past research findings. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to respond freely without being forced into response possibilities. The data collected from the interviews were the responses to the open-ended questions regarding the charter school leaders' skills, qualities, and issues in addition to the demographic data. The open-ended questions allowed for greater probing and thus resulted in acquiring greater in-depth knowledge concerning charter school leaders' skills and qualities. All questions and responses were audio recorded. This in itself will provide an opportunity to gather more information because these types of questions both allowed participants to speak in reference to their own detailed personal experiences and allowed the researcher to gather information that could not be directly observed (Creswell, 2005). As suggested by Moustakas (1990), the audio taped interview will be later transcribed in order to identify themes. The researcher will create the interview questions used. The necessary steps will be initiated in order to ensure reliability of the interview instrument including soliciting the feedback of a panel of experts in the field of charter school leadership.

Data Analysis

Yin (2009) noted that a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence in which the converging lines of inquiry allow for triangulation of data and subsequently more believable outcomes.

After the data was collected, it was organized into an Excel spreadsheet. The commonalities found in the data were identified and organized into major themes. The intent of the design and methodology of the study was to investigate charter school leadership experiences in order to gain a better understanding of the obstacles faced by charter school leaders.

Summary

The research tradition for this study was qualitative. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because the study will involve investigating the broad topic of leadership experiences, which broadens perspectives (Creswell, 2005). Specifically, the study will employ a case study approach.

Case studies are a strategy of inquiry, which, bounded by time, allows the researcher to explore in depth a program or event of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). The study incorporated purposeful convenient sampling, which is a sampling technique that is based on the judgment of the researcher. Convenient sampling represents sites or individuals from which the researcher can easily access to collect data (Creswell, 2009). After the research participants are selected through convenient sampling, interviews will be used to solicit the participants' experiences. According to Charmaz (2006), interviews are shaped but also can be emergent as they are paced and unrestricted. This method was selected, as the participants will represent a specific population of charter school leaders.

After the interview questions have been validated, the interviews will be conducted with the selected participants. The data derived through the interview process will be reviewed, analyzed, and coded in an effort to identify trends and themes. The

analysis of the data will be reported in Chapter 4. Each step in the action plan will be monitored through an on-going system of checks and balances in the form of a Gantt chart. A Gantt chart is a graphical representation of the duration of tasks against the progression of time. A Gantt chart is a useful tool for planning and scheduling projects. Once all of the data has been analyzed, the findings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1 the purpose of this research study was to examine the leadership experiences of charter school leaders who have transitioned from regular public school administrative positions. Considering the national exponential growth of charter schools, consequently there are also increased opportunities to lead these institutions. Therefore leadership development is an important component in all phases of a charter school's human resources continuum from recruitment and retention through professional development (National Charter School Resource Center, 2013).

This chapter opens with an overview of demographic information of the research participants and their respective organizations. Then the chapter discusses and identifies the data analysis process that led to the identification of themes. The themes were uncovered based on the responses of the research participants during their respective interviews. Two research questions guided this research study;

1. What are the factors or concerns that may affect the turnover rate of charter school leaders?
2. How are transformational and/or transactional leadership styles evidenced in the roles and responsibilities of charter school leaders?

Current research suggests that one in five charter school principals leave their position from one year to the next (Phillips, 2012), the interview questions also sought to understand factors that contribute to this trend. In addition, the interview questions also

sought to identify characteristics of transformational and/or transactional leadership theories evidenced by the research participants as leaders of charter schools.

According to Burns (1978) transformational leaders motivate and inspire their employees to go beyond their normal level of work performance. These leaders provide vision and a sense of mission, respect and trust with their employees. Northouse (2010) also contended that transformational leadership involves a process where the leader engages with others to elicit a connection that heightens the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower. In terms of transactional leadership theory, this theory is based on the premise of influencing followers through mutual exchanges that follow the employment contract, that is rewards and punishments are delivered contingent upon behaviors realizing work-related goals (Burns, 1978).

The following six interview questions that guided the study are as follows:

Question 1. What factors influenced you to transition from a public school administrator to a leadership position within a charter school?

Question 2. What are some of the concerns or issues you have experienced with your transition from a traditional public school leadership position to a charter school leadership position?

Question 3. What type of previous administrative experience would you recommend a charter school leader have in order to contribute to the success of his/her charter school?

Question 4. How did your formal education administration training support your transition to a charter school leadership position? How did it not?

Question 5. How did your experience as a public school administrator support

your transition to a charter school leadership position? How did it not?

Question 6. Why do you think charter school leaders leave their leadership positions in three to five years?

Data Analysis and Findings

Prior to transitioning into the charter sector, all of the research participants began in the educational field as teachers and then subsequently rose through the ranks to multiple levels within school leadership. In addition, all of the participants noted that they did not have a professional aspiration to open a charter school, but instead their introduction into the charter sector was through the professional and/or personal relationships that they had with individuals who were stakeholders within the charter sector. In their multiple roles within the traditional educational institutions, all of the research participants served as assistant principals and building principals at a point in their educational careers and one participant also had experience as a director of special education. Two of the participants held the title of superintendent of schools before transitioning into their respective charter school leadership role as executive directors. Table 4.1 identifies the multiple levels of leadership experiences of the participants within the regular public school educational environment.

Table 4.1

Participants' Educational Experiences in Regular Public Schools

| | Teacher | Special Education Supervisor | Asst. Principal | Principal | Superintendent |
|----|---------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------|
| P1 | X | | X | X | |
| P2 | X | | X | X | |
| P3 | X | | X | X | X |
| P4 | X | | X | X | |
| P5 | X | X | X | X | X |

The five research participants held the position of charter school principal or executive director of a charter school during the 2012-2013 school year. Four out of the five respective charter schools were located in one of the boroughs in New York City and one charter school was located in Westchester County, New York. Two out of the five participants were male and three out of the five participants self-identified as Black, one participant is of Hispanic/Latino descent, and one participant is White. Their cumulative years of experience ranged from 14- 20 years as educators with an average of 12.8 years of experience as administrators. In their current capacities as a charter school principal or executive director, their average length of service in these roles was approximately three years. Their ages were in the range of 40- 60 years old. All of the research participants had advanced degrees; three of the participants earned a doctorate degree and two participants were doctoral candidates. Table 4.2 provides an overview of demographic information of the study participants. Demographic information includes age, gender, ethnicity, education, and number of years of previous education administrative experience.

The potential participants were individually contacted via email and via phone calls to determine if they were interested and available to participate in the study. The initial email correspondence to the participants introduced the researcher and stated the intention of the research study. It was explained to the participants that the study sought to glean insight into the leadership experiences of current charter school leaders who have transitioned from regular public school administrative positions. The researcher also explained that the in-person interview would take approximately 30 minutes. Once the potential participants expressed their interest and availability to participate in the study, a mutually convenient time and location was selected to conduct the interviews. One out of the five interviews was conducted at the participant's charter school location and the other interviews were conducted at mutually agreed upon locations.

The interview sessions were recorded utilizing the iPad application Audionote. Each interview began with the participants sharing general demographic information as indicated in Table 4.2. At the completion of the interview, the interview was transcribed verbatim and further analyzed to identify codes, categories, and themes. The initial coding phase was conducted by analyzing the interview transcripts.

Table 4.2

Demographics of Participants

| Participants | Age | Gender | Ethnicity | Education | # of years previous education administrative experience |
|--------------|-------|--------|-----------|--------------------|---|
| P1 | 40-50 | Female | Black | Doctoral candidate | 25 |
| P2 | 40-50 | Female | Hispanic | Doctorate | 14 |
| P3 | 40-50 | Male | Black | Doctoral candidate | 25 |
| P4 | 40-50 | Female | Black | Doctorate | 15 |
| P5 | 50-60 | Male | White | Doctorate | 30 |

Demographic data of the school sites are identified in Table 4.3 that lists the charter schools' respective grade levels, approximate enrollment, and location. All of the schools served students in grades kindergarten to grade three. Two out of the five schools enrolled students in grades three through five and one school served students to grade eight. The enrollment ranged from 100 students to 429 students and the majority of the students in the schools were African American. Each of the schools selected their students based on a random lottery system. Students who were selected from the lottery were students of each of the location's respective school districts. The schools were located within urban settings that are populated with families from African American and Latino descent. The schools are housed independently and therefore do not share space with an existing regular public school. Each of the school leaders noted that their respective schools are designed to eventually accommodate students in grades Kindergarten to grade twelve.

Table 4.3

Demographics of School Sites

| School | Grades | Approximate Enrollment | Location |
|--------|--------|------------------------|-----------------|
| S1 | K- 3 | 219 | Brooklyn, NY |
| S2 | K- 8 | 429 | Westchester, NY |
| S3 | K- 5 | 100 | Brooklyn, NY |
| S4 | K-3 | 142 | Queens, NY |
| S5 | K-5 | 386 | Bronx, NY |

The data was collected and analyzed in several stages. Initially the recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed to determine codes. The researcher used these codes to identify key ideas evident in the data. These codes included key words and topics described by the respondents. The initial codes also included emotions, beliefs, behaviors, and incidents that the respondents shared. The benefit of coding in a line-by-line method provides an opportunity to analyze the data in a detailed manner rather than simply conducting a general thematic analysis. Charmaz (2006) furthered that, line-by-line coding works particularly well with detailed data about fundamental empirical problems or processes. The line-by-line coding of responses given to the six interview questions provided initial codes used to identify the developing categories. Each question was coded separately as an initial step and key words and phrases were identified from the respondents' responses. After all data were coded, the codes were reorganized into categories. The researcher grouped the codes into categories based on similarity of responses. These streamlined categories were further categorized into emergent themes.

A codebook was created to organize the responses and to record the identified themes. There were 20 codes that produced six emerging themes. (Appendix A) Qualitative data analysis produced the following six themes; Opportunity, Autonomy, Entrepreneurship Experience, Administrative Experience, Financial Experience, and Multi-tasking.

Opportunity. The first theme of opportunity was identified based on the charter school leaders' responses to what factors supported their transition to their current charter school leadership positions. It included the opportunities that presented themselves through colleagues, fellow parishioners and/or professors. Four out of five of participants entered the charter school sector through a collegial or professional relationship with someone who was already connected to the charter school industry. The following statements are examples of the leaders' responses to the first interview question surrounding a factor or factors that supported their transition to charter school leadership positions:

I was not interested in becoming a charter school leader but one of my former professors was a board member of a charter school and he asked me to consider becoming the principal as the current principal was going to resign. (Participant 2)

It was always my goal when I started teaching to open my own school. I had been planning once I was finished with the whole education aspect that the last step would be to open my own so I wasn't looking for charter necessarily. It happened to come along at a time when I was ready to do it. I explored the concept and partnered with a church with a faith-based partnership. I initially designed the school to be an independent school but when I approached my pastor with an idea, he said let's try it as the church was already successfully operating a private

school. If it didn't work, we were going to continue down the independent path.

(Participant 1)

I was asked to consider opening a charter school by community members as I served as a successful principal in one of the community school districts.

(Participant 4)

Prior to this role as an executive director, I had little direct interaction with charter schools except working with a couple of schools as they worked to become compliant with state regulations. I was asked to join my current charter school's team to assist the school's instructional needs that the school was facing and try to help the school more effectively address its mission statement. (Participant 5)

Autonomy. The second theme noted surrounded the concept of autonomy. The participants noted that one of the positive attributes of being a charter school leader was the amount of autonomy and flexibility in terms of staffing, curriculum, and instructional delivery. Flexibility in these areas provided unique opportunities that the participants stated were not always options within the regular public school educational system.

Transactional leadership was evidenced as these building level decisions were directly related to the concept of rewards and punishments. Ultimately if the leaders were unable to effectively staff their buildings or select a curriculum and instructional approach that translates into students meeting state mandates, their schools' charters would not be renewed. In addition, transformational leadership was also evidenced as many of the charter school leaders identified autonomy as a mechanism in which they were able to create needed educational change for students.

The flexibility that we have as a charter gives us some benefits as we can interview for teachers, set structures for how we distribute resources, structure our model in a more efficient way. (Participant 3)

The thing that attracted me the most to charter schools was the opportunity to work with a school that was less entrenched in the ways things have always been done and that's one of the issues I find with education in general is that we tend to get ourselves into a position of comfort and are reluctant and resistant to what change can offer students. With charter schools, I find across the board commitment to really doing something differently to connect and offer students something much more meaningful than what was experienced in traditional public schools. (Participant 5)

There weren't any challenges in transitioning it only gave me more autonomy because the difference is three things, curriculum, budget and governance structure. With the autonomy you can do what you want to do and are accountable to the state for standardized tests and making sure the students are meeting their benchmarks but other than that they don't monitor how you do that. You have the freedom to develop the school the way you want. (Participant 1)

One of the major differences I've experienced as a charter school principal is that I have the flexibility to implement change as necessary. (Participant 2)

Entrepreneurship experience. Entrepreneurship experience was identified as the third theme. Four out of five participants noted that having entrepreneurial experience aided their transition into charter school leadership positions. They related the opening and/or operating of a charter school as opening and/or operating a not-for-profit business.

Blueprints were not available for the leaders to emulate; therefore everything from school forms to identifying additional funding sources had to be created. The participants also report a lack of effective training and preparation towards developing the entrepreneurial skills essential for taking on their new roles.

This theme also represents characteristics associated with transactional leadership as the participants correlated operating a charter school to be similar to running a not-for-profit business. Similarly, if funding sources are not identified to support charter school initiatives such as an extended day and additional staff to support a smaller teacher to student ratio, consequently, the same fate would apply as it would a not for profit business that does not perform; the charter school would go out of business.

I had to create everything that you currently see in place here; from the forms we use to the curriculum that we use was all done when I arrived to the school. I would strongly recommend that future charter school leaders have experience in the not-for profit sector or as a business owner as you're basically creating a company from inception. I had my own consulting business prior to entering charter school leadership and that experience assisted me tremendously in this role. (Participant 2)

Our initial charter application was not accepted by the first charter authorizer. Instead, we had to apply to a different charter authorizer and we were ultimately successful in receiving the charter. This was a new experience as a regular public school administrator, I did not have to find an authorizing agency in order to open a school. I also had to identify additional funding sources, as our school was developed to have a unique structure, which included having social workers

assigned to each grade level to support the non-instructional issues and to provide resources to our students and their families. (Participant 3)

The flexibility given to me as a charter school leader enabled me to essentially build my organization from scratch. I was able to create the schools infrastructure from a template that did not previously exist. I identified additional funding sources to create positions that would support all school functions such as a hiring a business manager instead of an assistant principal. (Participant 4)

In terms of the high attrition rate experienced by charter school leaders, the participants noted several factors that contributed to this rate. The major themes associated with the attrition rate were administrative experience, financial experience, and multi-tasking.

Administrative experience. The research participants concurred that the lack of prior administrative experience played a major role in the attrition rate of some charter school leaders. The participants all agreed that their prior administrative positions assisted them with understanding what needed to be in place in order to effectively operate a school. These experiences included instructional leadership, staffing demands, and facilities management. Although the best intentions may have guided some individuals into the capacity of charter school leadership, one participant also noted that some charter school leaders have an unrealistic understanding of what charter school leadership entails. In addition, this participant also noted that prior administrative experience taught him that it was his responsibility as a leader to cultivate the next generation of leaders. Another participant noted that in the instance where charter

schoolteachers have transitioned into principals; there is a new reality that they are faced with in respect to the public's view of administration.

Transformational leadership was evidenced in a participant's understanding that he had a responsibility to cultivate an educational environment that promoted and supported the creation of the next generation of leaders.

Charter schools are hard. Charter schools often have these lofty and innovative models and some of those models have not been tested. If you're in a charter school, if you're not producing then you have to go. In a Department of Education situation, people live longer; there are unions and all kinds of ways for people to stay even though they know they are not doing the best that they can do. If you're doing a great job, then three years is long enough (to be a charter school leader). I don't believe that staying five or six years as a charter school principal is going to give you the ability to be a different kind of leader. I think that as you are working in a charter school you have the ability to create leaders. So what you should do as a charter school leader is give yourself the three years and then identify who the leaders are and work with them to continue with the success of the school.

(Participant 3)

Part of the problem with administration is the public's view of it. There's always a group that will talk with fondness about teachers. Nobody ever talks fondly about administrators and often times administration is considered... like what do they really do? Administrators' roles in the educational process is one step back, therefore the opportunity to get positive feedback is limited so you wind up working really hard and getting very little back from the people around you and

because of that you say I'm going to retire, I'm not going to do this. (Participant 5)

Financial experience. In addition to meeting the required state guidelines for student achievement, charter school leaders must also manage their funding. The research participants noted that charter school leaders who lacked significant financial experience would not be as successful as those leaders who have considerable financial experience. The participants agreed that the lack of financial experience would also contribute to the attrition rate experienced by charter school leaders. The charter school leaders noted that the diversification of funding sources was an initial challenge. In addition, fundraising efforts and the management of donors' funds were equally challenging.

Transactional leadership was evidenced in this theme as the participants' financial experience played a critical role in the success of charter school leaders. Considering a major component of charter school leaders' responsibilities hinges upon the accrual of additional funding, leaders who are not equipped by previous experience or training also were subject to the consequence of closure for not meeting their financial obligations.

Prior to becoming a charter school leader, I owned my own business. The skills that I acquired from owning and operating my business were instrumental when I became a charter school principal. I had to make sure all of the money from the various funding sources was accounted for. My experience also helped me to understand the importance of fundraising and setting financial goals.

(Participant 2)

As a principal within the traditional school system, my financial skills were limited to simply reviewing my allotted budget and making sure that I could

account for all expenditures. As a charter school principal, in addition to making sure I had a balanced budget, I was also responsible for fundraising. If you are not able to effectively secure funding in addition to the funding provided by the school district, you may not be able to financially survive in the charter environment. (Participant 4)

Multi-tasking. The sixth identified theme was the ability of charter school leaders to manage their time, abilities, and resources. The participants noted that charter school leadership attrition is also linked to some leaders not having the aptitude to meet the many demands associated with charter school leadership. There is a considerable amount of stress associated with operating a charter school as all of the decisions pertaining to the school are made at the building level. Although the participants had different organizational models; two of the schools employed executive directors who reported directly to the board of trustees while the other three schools employed principals who served as the direct contact to the board of trustees, they all agreed that they assumed all of the responsibilities associated with operating a charter school.

Transactional leadership was also evidenced in this theme. Many of the study participants noted they had to make personal sacrifices in order to operate their respective charter schools. These leaders recognized if they did not invest the additional time required to efficiently operate their buildings, this would result in not meeting the various leadership demands. Not meeting the various leadership demands would result in not meeting the terms set forth in the school's charter. Not meeting the stipulations identified in the school's charter makes the school subject to closure.

It's a lot of work! I was in the building from 6 AM to 9 PM; there are many long days like that because you are building things from the ground up. It takes time as charter schools have the concept of extended time. Your personal life takes a toll...colleagues have children and husbands and I don't know how they do it because a lot time is needed to invest in the school. (Participant 1)

Charter school leadership is a sacrifice. It's not meant for those who do not have the ability to do many things at once and to do them well. (Participant 4)

When you're in a charter school situation with all the flexibilities that you have, you can slip really quickly and that's a challenge. If you come in and see that its not working, you may by all intents and purposes be told by the board to leave and those are things that you sign up for and when you take the position. There's no safety net; people should perform in a way that's exemplary. (Participant 3)

You have to be a jack-of-all-trades. But being a jack-of-all-trades some things will not get done. Or if they do, they are not done as well as they should be. It's important to have a team to support you. I hired a business manager to focus on the financial component so that I can focus on everything else; but especially instruction. (Participant 2)

One of the research participants shared a different insight into the attrition rate associated with charter school leadership. He noted that attrition can also be contributed to the long-term financial options associated with public school systems and the current demands and accountability placed on administrators to improve students' scores on high stakes tests.

In charter schools, I actually haven't seen turnover at the tops of the charter, I see turnover at the teachers level at a rate that I thought needed to be attended to, but not for the executive directors' position. Administrators may also move on because of this moving target of success when you hear so much about test scores and you try to adjust your school to meet test scores and in so doing, you lose other things along the way. In addition you're dealing with a public and board of trustees that can be somewhat unclear as to what they want to see happen or what they see as the priorities of the school; sometimes the lack of clarity can create frustrations on the part of administrators and at that point they may decide its time to move on. A younger administrator who's looking to get into the public school system, charter schools may be a nice stepping-stone. The one thing the public school administrators have over charter school administrators is the opportunity to be in a pension system. (Participant 5)

The findings of this research supported concepts of transformational and transactional leadership styles. However, the dominant style evidenced was transactional in nature. This was evidenced in four of the six themes. The themes of autonomy, entrepreneurial experience, financial experience, and multi-tasking, all supported transactional leadership styles. Many of the study participants discussed their current roles and responsibilities as charter school leaders in terms of requirements they needed to meet in order to maintain their respective charters. Failure to meet the staffing, curriculum, location, and state mandates would subject these schools to closure. This supports the notion of transactional leadership as the premise of a system of rewards and punishments is contingent upon the performance of followers (Cherry, 2013).

It could also be inferred that these participants demonstrated components of transformational leadership theory through the identified theme of administrative experience. Considering transformational leadership theory recognizes the ability of the leaders to challenge their followers to be innovative and creative (Riggio, 2009). The study participants noted that within the charter sector provided opportunities for them to be creative and to think “outside of the box”; change is necessary in order to get different results. In addition, one participant supported the notion of transformational leadership as he stated that it was his responsibility as a leader to develop and cultivate the next generation of potential leaders

In respect to the theme of autonomy, the study participants stated that the lack of autonomy within the traditional public school system often thwarted educational reform efforts. However, these leaders experienced autonomy as charter school leaders with their ability to make decisions about their charter schools at the building level. Although these leaders led their organizations with a sense of autonomy, the majority of the participants also noted feelings of inadequacy of their abilities to start a school without existing structures in place; they stated this was a direct result of their experiences as traditional public school principals.

The participating charter school leaders demonstrated some ability to perform the entrepreneurial tasks (i.e., build capital, innovate, generate new products and services, build staff capacity). However, there were variations in the extent to which they demonstrated a comprehensive understanding for or were prepared to carry out the entrepreneurial behaviors essential to the success of a charter school. Business duties or entrepreneurial tasks such as securing and budgeting resources, human resources, and

facilities issues topped the list of additional responsibilities, with all five of the charter school leaders reporting that finances and facilities are most challenging. Considering the financial structure of charter schools is different from that of the traditional school the participants noted different skill set was required. They equated this task with a skill set that is honed as an entrepreneur.

All participants reported that the time spent on business management aspects of leading their charter school was time away from instructional and school improvement matters. Those with prior education from traditional colleges of education were more confident in overseeing instruction and curriculum in the school. While the leaders understood and organized the strengths of their teams, directing through their new responsibilities still consumed large quantities of time. However, in their quest to facilitate change, some of the responsibilities and challenges faced by these leaders in both charter and traditional public school systems, were the same. As traditional and charter principals, the participants reported being responsible for implementing the school's vision, handling parent and student issues, managing resources, instructional leadership and maintaining a healthy school culture. In addition fostering trust between adults and students, managing resources, and balancing the pressures inside and outside the school's environment were also identified as being responsibilities in both traditional and charter sectors. One of study participants noted the sentiment similarity.

I think what I experience is the same as when I transitioned from one traditional school to another I found that each school and district has a certain culture its like going into any new job, its always better I think initially to listen as I found the danger at times that administrators face is that this sense that I really should go in

and make changes and demonstrate that I have the authority to do this and that engage in prematurely and does work out as they would like it to. (Participant 5)

This noted difference may be attributed to this leader's transition from the role of a superintendent to the role of a charter school executive director. This participant did not experience any difficulties in his transition, and instead noted the issues and concerns that were experienced were relevant to both educational settings.

Four out of the five of the participants in this study described their roles as traditional public school principals as lower-level managers rather than leaders. In this role district leaders made most of the important decisions about policy; they set goals and it was the role of the principal to administer them. Transactional leadership was evidenced in this regard as failure to carryout the assigned task would result in a consequence (i.e. disciplinary action). Likewise, all five participants declared that when compared to their role as traditional public school leaders, their role as charter principal encompassed more entrepreneurial, business related tasks. In the absence of district support, they were now responsible for securing and taking care of facilities, securing and managing financial resources, human resources, benefits, creating policy and developing curriculum. Therefore the authority and responsibility necessary to carry out practical action and the management of all aspects of their organization was placed at the school level. Consequently, four out of the five participants reported a lack of effective training and preparation through their academic coursework towards developing the entrepreneurial skills essential for taking on their new roles.

This study revealed that the decentralized nature of the governance in the charter schools explored had in fact created new role demands for the principals (Campbell &

Grubb, 2008). However, all participants stated that they drew on their past experiences to help them navigate through unfamiliar tasks. Bradshaw (2000) described the new millennium principal as a collaborative site-based manager and instructional leader who is supposed to be a facilitator of change.

Summary

In summary, six themes were identified through the data. The theme of opportunity was identified as the charter school leaders discussed their introduction into the charter sector. The majority of the research participants entered into their respective charter school leadership positions through a professional connection they had with a charter school stakeholder. The theme also addressed that the opportunity to lead presented itself during a time in these leaders' professional lives when they were open to exploring leadership in a sector in which they did not have prior knowledge or experience.

The second theme of autonomy described the charter school leaders' abilities to make building level decisions. These decisions included all components of leadership from the selection of the school's curriculum, staffing decisions, and the school's schedule. The level of flexibility was not experienced in the traditional public school setting. Therefore, the autonomy associated with charter school leadership gave the leaders the freedom to do things differently in the hopes of bringing change to the educational experiences of children that they serve.

The third theme of entrepreneurship experiences drew a parallel to the responsibilities associated with owning and operating a not-for-profit business. The leaders shared that many of their initial responsibilities surrounded securing a location,

funding sources, and staff. In addition, they noted that these skills were not explicitly taught in their respective graduate studies, but instead were acquired through trial and error and learning on the job.

The fourth theme of administrative experience spoke to the experience prior to assuming the role as a charter school leader. Prior to acquiring charter school leadership positions, the charter school leaders noted that their experience as traditional public school leaders was instrumental in their new role. These experiences included serving in the capacity as instructional leaders, managing resources, and hiring and assigning staff members. One participant also noted that prior administrative experience supported his understanding that part of his responsibility, as a leader was the cultivation and development of new leaders. The absence of these experiences may also contribute to the attrition rate.

The fifth theme specifically referenced the role prior financial experience played in the attrition rate of charter school leaders. The lack of a financial background made the complex task of charter school even more complex. These leaders were challenged with establishing and meeting fundraising efforts to supplement the income generated from their local school districts. The fate of some charter schools depending on additional funding as some schools offered options such as extended school time and extracurricular activities.

The sixth and final theme of multi-tasking was discussed in relation to the multitude of responsibilities placed on charter school leaders. Leaders who were not equipped to manage operational, instructional, and financial responsibilities experienced burnout or fatigue in their leadership roles. A level of stress and sacrifice was also noted

as one participant shared that it is difficult to have a family and meet all of the demands associated with charter school leadership.

Transactional leadership appeared as the dominant leadership style evidenced by the participants as many of them discussed the concept of rewards and consequences/punishments in respect to their charter school leadership roles.

Transformational leadership was evidenced in the themes of autonomy and administrative experience. The participants recognized the responsibility to develop and cultivate the next generation of the organization's leaders through succession planning efforts.

The final chapter of the dissertation offers a summary of the findings. Specifically, implications, limitations and recommendations for practice and future research are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the conclusions and recommendations based on the data and analysis derived from this study. This study analyzes the experiences of a group of charter school leaders' that have experiences as administrators in traditional public school settings and their ongoing efforts to lead successful charter schools. The study determines how the shift in organizational structure contributes to the leadership affects of these leaders who have experiences in both educational environments. The study sheds insight into factors that contribute to the high attrition rate amongst charter school leaders.

Implications of Findings

The study's findings suggest that there are several factors that contribute to the high attrition rate of charter school leaders; they include lack of experience of the principals and burnout due to wearing several leadership hats within the charter school setting. The majority of the participants ultimately agree that the attrition rate is due to the multitude of demands that are associated with charter school leadership. These responsibilities include the identification of a location, securing various funding sources, hiring personnel, and instructional leadership. This finding supports the results of a study conducted by The National Charter Schools Institute (2003). In the study, it was determined that charter school leaders and staff experienced a high rate of burnout due to the workload of charter schools.

In addition, one study participant noted another factor for high attrition rates among younger charter school administrators. The participant suggests that younger charter school administrators use the charter school sector to gain administrative experience. Therefore, administrators who are in the beginning of their administrative careers may be likely to leave after a few years for an organization/institution that can offer long-term financial benefits.

Overall the study participants conclude in order to be a successful charter school leader, one must have previous experience as a regular public school administrator in addition to having entrepreneurial or leadership experience in the not for profit sector. This insight proves to be significant as many charter school leaders enter the respective positions with limited knowledge or experience in this educational setting. This notion supports federal data that contends approximately 30 % of charter school leaders have led a school for two years or less. (Campbell et al., 2008). This finding also supports Cobb and Suarez's (2000) notion that a combination of skills must be in place for leaders of charter schools, including entrepreneurial skills and small business skills.

This study identifies numerous personal characteristics that are important to the participants in leading a charter school. These characteristics include having a sense of humor, flexibility, and being a risk taker. The study also suggests that having advanced or terminal degrees decreased the turnover rate for charter school leaders as all of the research participants' have earned doctorates or are doctoral candidates and have maintained their leadership roles as either executive director or principal of their institutions for three years or more.

The study indicates that characteristics and/or experiences of the study participants supported concepts evidenced in transformational and/or transactional leadership styles. Transactional leadership appears as the dominant leadership style evidenced by the participants as many of them discussed the concept of rewards and consequences/punishments in respect to their charter school leadership roles. Transactional leadership correlates to the themes of autonomy, entrepreneurial experience, administrative experience, and financial experience. Transformational leadership was evidenced in the theme administrative experience and autonomy as a participant recognized the responsibility to develop and cultivate the next generation of the organization's leaders through succession planning.

Limitations

This study examines factors that contribute to attrition of charter school leaders and to determine if transformational and/or transactional leadership theories are evidenced in the characteristics of the study participants. However, there are two limitations associated with this study. According to Baron (2013), limitations are factors that may affect the results of the study or how the results are interpreted. One such limitation in this study is the number of participants who were interviewed was relatively small. The small sample size (n=5) limits the transferability and generalizability of the study's findings. Therefore, the study's findings are not be transferable to all charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public school leadership positions.

An additional limitation is in regard to the selection of the research participants. Due to the lack of volunteers from the intended charter school network, the study participants who met the study's criteria, that is having administrative experience in

traditional public school and are currently serving as either a charter school executive director or principal, were referred by the researcher's associates and/or colleagues.

Recommendations

Leading a charter school is very different from leading a conventional district school, given the unique combination of autonomy and contractual performance accountability at charter schools. These characteristics require leaders with educational expertise and business skills that are substantially broader than current leadership development programs deliver (National Alliance of Public Charter Schools, 2008). To meet the challenge of filling thousands of leadership positions in charter schools, there are several recommendations that will support the successful transition of charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public school leadership positions.

As the demand for effective charter school leaders continues to grow there are significant implications for schools of education. The findings from this study suggest that charter school authorizers need to support school leaders surrounding the concept of entrepreneurial readiness. Authorizers should consider engaging potential charter school principals in a series of workshops and trainings focused on in-depth requirements and responsibilities of operating a not for profit organization. In addition, considering the demand for effective charter school leaders continues to grow, schools of education should include more curriculum specific to opening and operating a charter school. The focus of this training would be to explore the entrepreneurial process of charter school development, with a specific emphasis on instructional development, securing finances and financial management, and charter school leadership. These institutions should include more curriculum specific to opening and operating a charter school. The focus of

this training would be to explore the entrepreneurial process of charter school development, with a specific emphasis on instructional development, securing finances and financial management, and school leadership. This recommendation would also involve the creation of a national credential in the executive management of public charter schools that recognizes critical areas of preparation. This credential for executive management would replace reliance on traditional principal-preparation programs. This credential could be developed in collaboration with top-tier executive management programs at graduate business or management schools, and graduate schools of education. The concept of "charter executives" would replace the role of the traditional principalship.

The second recommendation involves the concept of succession planning. Most school districts wait for leadership talent to emerge by posting job openings and then seeing who applies. However, some districts and charter-management organizations are starting to take a more active role in identifying and supporting future principals earlier in their careers. Succession planning is the process of developing and training candidates from within schools, particularly teachers, who have the aptitude and desire to transition into a career path to leadership. Current charter school leaders are required to identify these potential leaders and begin to strategically serve as a professional mentor. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013) also argues that succession planning is essential to widen the applicant pool for school leadership and increase the quantity and quality of future school leaders as a way to counteract the principal shortages that are looming and to ensure that there is an adequate supply of qualified personnel to choose from when the incumbent leader leaves the position. Olson

(2008) furthers that having a plan for the succession is a good way to ensure that an organization's culture, values, and mission stay intact.

The third recommendation involves the need for future research. This includes a replication of this study on charter school leaders across the nation and/or other charter school stakeholders providing their insight using the same research methodology on charter school leadership. Also, future studies could also focus on developing hiring future charter school leaders based on some of the following competencies such as integrity, honesty, flexibility, creativity, people skills, communication skills, multitasking, management skills, and public relation skills as currently there is not a substantial body of research that identifies the competencies needed for future charter school leaders. This study can bridge the gap in the research literature.

Conclusion

Based on the historic and dramatic growth trend of public charter schools, the next five to 10 years is likely to produce an acute shortage of well-prepared leaders for these schools (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2008). This fact, combined with anticipated retirements of current leadership provides a unique opportunity for charter school leadership.

Chapter 1 provides a foundation and understanding of the educational climate that ultimately created an opportunity to address urban school reform efforts. Charter schools represent one such effort as an entrepreneurial reform strategy designed to improve the educational outcomes for students and to give parents another option (Hess, 2007). In Chapter 1 the problem statement is introduced in addition to the theoretical perspectives, study significance, purpose of the study, research questions, and definition of terms

associated with this study. The research in this chapter discusses increased opportunities for charter school leaders since there will be a higher demand for these leaders within the next 5 to 10 years. Considering charter school leaders tend to leave their charter school leadership positions within three to five years, the study identifies factors that contribute to the high attrition rate of these leaders.

Chapter 2 begins with an overview of various organizational models and the paradigm shift from an organizational culture that reflected a pyramid of power and/or hierarchical design to an organizational model that recognizes the importance of decentralizing leadership power. This shift supports less top down decision-making practices and instead supports team efforts with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The chapter then continues with a discussion of the evolution of various leadership theories. Despite varying leadership perspectives, the resounding sentiment in the literature review is that leadership matters. Transformational and/or transactional leadership theories are identified as the theoretical framework in which the role of educational leaders who have transitioned from regular public school leadership positions is examined. In addition, currently there is limited research that examines the leadership perspectives of this distinct population of charter school leaders.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology is introduced as a qualitative study. The chapter discusses the rationale of using a case study approach to examining the leadership affects of charter school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public school leadership positions. A qualitative approach is used because according to Manela and Moxley (2002) case study methods allow the researcher to identify and investigate experiences for deeper understanding. Considering charter school leadership

opportunities are increasing, it was important to ascertain factors which contribute to the attrition rate of charter school leaders and to explore if transformational and/or transactional leadership styles are characteristics of the charter school leaders. The research questions that guides this study are as follows:

1. What are the factors or concerns that may affect the turnover rate of charter school leaders?
2. How are transformational and/or transactional leadership styles evidenced in the roles and responsibilities of charter school leaders?

Chapter 4 discusses the themes elicited through the data collection process. The researcher has identified factors associated with the high attrition rate of charter school leaders. These factors include burnout experienced by many charter school leaders as they contend with the many hats they wear. (e.g., staffing, curriculum, securing a location, fundraising, etc.). With respect to younger administrators, attrition can be attributed to long-term financial concerns (e.g., pension and retirement benefits). These benefits are afforded to them in the traditional public school educational system.

There are six themes that arise from the data. The theme of opportunity is introduced as the research participants indicate that opportunities to enter into their respective charter school leadership positions presented themselves. These opportunities included personal and/or professional relationship these leaders have with key stakeholders in the charter school sector.

The second theme of autonomy is present in respect to the freedom or liberties experienced by these charter school leaders that were not afforded or available to them within the regular public school educational system. Examples of autonomy include the

ability to make major decisions at the building level and not at the school district level. These decisions include selecting the curriculum for their respective schools, establishing the school schedule, and personnel choices.

The third theme involves the role entrepreneurship experiences play in the research participants ability to address all of the demands associated with operating a charter school. The participants also report a lack of effective training and preparation towards developing the entrepreneurial skills essential for taking on their new roles. The research participants agree that prior experience as an entrepreneur coupled with having experience as a traditional public school administrator supported their transition into the charter sector.

The fourth theme of administrative experience spoke to the experience prior to assuming the role as a charter school leader. Prior to acquiring charter school leadership positions, the charter school leaders noted that their experience as traditional public school leaders was instrumental in their new role. These experiences included serving in the capacity as instructional leaders, managing resources, and hiring and assigning staff members. One participant also noted that prior administrative experience supported his understanding that part of his responsibility, as a leader is to cultivate and develop new leaders. It is also noted that the absence of these experiences may also contribute to the attrition rate.

The fifth theme references the role prior financial experience plays in the attrition rate of charter school leaders. The lack of a financial background makes the multi-faceted task of charter school leadership even more complex. These leaders are challenged with establishing and meeting fundraising efforts to supplement the income generated from

their local school districts. The fate of some charter schools depends on additional funding as these schools offer options such as extended school time and extracurricular activities.

The sixth and final theme of multi-tasking is discussed in relation to the multitude of responsibilities placed on charter school leaders. Leaders who are not equipped to manage operational, instructional, and financial responsibilities experience burnout or fatigue in their leadership roles. A level of stress and sacrifice is also noted as one participant shared that it is difficult to have a family and meet all of the demands associated with charter school leadership.

Transactional leadership appeared as the dominant leadership style evidenced by the participants as many of them discussed the concept of rewards and consequences/punishments in respect to their charter school leadership roles.

Transformational leadership is evidenced in the themes of autonomy and administrative experience. The participants recognize the responsibility to develop and cultivate the next generation of the organization's leaders through succession planning efforts.

The final chapter in this study identifies implications, limitations and recommendations. In order to minimize the attrition rate associated with charter school leadership, charter school leaders must understand the complex role that their leadership entails and receive the necessary support to be successful in their roles. This support could include graduate level coursework geared specifically towards potential charter school leaders that would be a fusion of concepts for creating and maintaining a not -for profit business with educational leadership content. In addition, considering the predicted turnover of charter school leaders in the near future, the incorporation of

succession planning can assist future charter school leaders avoid some of the foundational pitfalls experienced by their predecessors.

It is important for the field of education to develop a richer and deeper understanding of the complex nature of successfully operating a charter school. Nationally, as more than four hundred charters are granted each year, these new charter schools are opening their doors while seeking principals equipped with the skills to complete the tasks of leading with more autonomy and increased accountability (Dakari, 2008). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) note that there's a perfect storm in the whole education profession, including in leadership--a massive demographic turnover, where the boomer generation is leaving and there's no intermediary generation immediately ready to take over. This coupled with the increasing expansion of the principal's role and responsibilities, and the changing job expectations of the younger generation means fewer and fewer people are ready or willing to take on the leadership challenge.

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Appendix A

Title of study: Charter school leadership: The Leadership Affects of the Transition from Public School Administration to Charter School Administration

Researcher: Colleen Seivright-Crawford

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Richard Maurer

Introduction:

You are requested to consider participating in a research study being conducted by Colleen Seivright-Crawford for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Richard Maurer of the Department of Education at St. John Fisher College. You are asked to participate because you are a charter school administrator who has transitioned from a public school administration position. In this study, charter school administrators who have transitioned from public school administrative positions will be interviewed to obtain information on their experience as charter school leaders. It is hoped that charter school administrators will be willing to share their charter school leadership experiences during the interviews.

Please read the form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose of study:

The purpose of this qualitative, participatory research study is to gather, analyze, and interpret data about charter school leadership experiences among school leaders who have transitioned from traditional public schools to charter schools. Considering the number of charter schools has grown dramatically, this has resulted in a greater need for developing and hiring effective leaders; many of those leaders are transitioning from traditional public schools to the charter school setting. These leaders need to exhibit certain leadership traits and abilities aligned with promoting high achievement and the overall successful implementation of their schools' charters. Therefore, it is important to ascertain factors that contribute to the high attrition rate of charter school leaders and to identify additional professional development opportunities needed for charter school leaders.

Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in a thirty minute interview. The interview will involve gathering information on your experiences as a

charter school administrator. The interview will take place at your school or a mutually agreed upon location and will be audiotaped in order to be transcribed off-site. You will have the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview for accuracy and to amend statements. The audiotape will be destroyed once the interview has been accurately transcribed.

Approval of study: This study has been reviewed and approved by the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Risks and benefits: The researcher will protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all research data. There are no risks involved in participating in this research.

Confidentiality/privacy: All information gathered in this study will remain confidential. No data will be released identifying the participants or their schools. All research will be conducted with the highest ethical standards of confidentiality. The names of the participants will be coded when the interviews are coded and the master coding list associating participants names with the interview results will be destroyed once the interviews are complete. The researcher will retain the coded interview material in a locked cabinet for a period of four years following the completion of the research and then it will be destroyed by shredding these records.

Your rights:

As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read and understand the above and agree to participate in the above named study.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher Colleen Seivright-Crawford at 914-699-2988 or cs06290@sjfc.edu.

Appendix B
Interview Data Sheet

Date of Interview: _____

Name: _____

School: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone: _____

Background Demographic Information

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Highest level of completed degree: _____

Number of years previous education administration experience: _____

Appendix C

Demographic of School Sites

| <u>School</u> | <u>Grades</u> | <u>Enrollment</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|

Appendix D

Demographics of Participants

Age Gender Highest level of degree # of years previous admin experience

Appendix E
Data Collection Tool

The following interview questions are anticipated:

1. What factors influenced you to transition from a public school administrator to a leadership position within a charter school?
2. What are some concerns or issues that you have experienced with your transition from a traditional public school leadership position to a charter school leadership position?
3. What type of previous administrative experience would you recommend a charter school leader have in order to contribute to the success of his/her charter school?
4. How did your formal education training support your transition to a charter school leadership position? How did it not?
5. How did your experience as a public school administrator support your transition to a charter school leadership position? How did it not?
6. Why do you think charter school leaders leave their positions in three to five years?