

Copyright
by
José Martinez
May 2011

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FRUSTRATIONS, OBSTACLES, AND
RECOMMENDED CHANGES

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

José Martinez

May, 2011

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my family and my mother. For you, Miriam, because this work is a testament to your patience and sacrifices that you have made for me to do this for our family. For Aaron, because you always asked me how I was doing and the last to kiss me goodnight while I worked. For Alec, because you were the first to kiss me on those weekend mornings when I needed to work on the paper.

Para usted, mamá, que es la persona más sabia que conosco y que nos dió el regalo de no tenerle miedo al trabajo.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Busch, who was always ready with words of support and unyielding optimism that I could finish. I also want to thank the University of Houston and Dr. MacNeil for taking a risk and letting us pilot this program. I am forever grateful to my school family who carried more of the load as I worked on this. Finally, I want to say thank you to my cohort colleagues. Your company and encouragement, along with the many laughs, were instrumental in being able to finish this trek. The journey truly is the most rewarding especially when it is taken with such a special group of people.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FRUSTRATIONS, OBSTACLES, AND
RECOMMENDED CHANGES

An Abstract
of A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

José Martinez

May, 2011

Martinez, José. Assistant Principal Frustrations, Obstacles, and Recommended Changes. Unpublished Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Houston, May, 2011.

Abstract

Educational research suggests that assistant principals encounter frustrations and obstacles which impede them from fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the research also shows there are changes that can be made which would improve job satisfaction and effectiveness for assistant principals as well as reduce frustrations and obstacles. Considering these ideas, the purpose of the study is to identify frustrations and obstacles assistant principals encounter in their daily work environments and possible changes assistant principals envision and recommend for the profession. A survey was administered to assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas resulted in a comprehensive response from 371 current campus assistant principals. The study will focus on the following four questions: 1) What do practicing assistant principals report as frustrations that prevent them from effectively performing their job responsibilities? 2) What genuine obstacles or restrictions do practicing assistant principals identify as concerns in accomplishing their professional duties?; 3) What issue would practicing assistant principals change to enable them more in their role as assistant principal; and 4) Is there a statistically significant difference among assistant principal years of experience, school state accountability rating, district setting, grade level, and a school's economically disadvantaged status with regards to their perceived frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes?

The assistant principals' responses regarding their perceived frustrations, obstacles, and change recommendations will be tallied and analyzed for significant frequencies and trends in the responses using a One-Way Analysis of Variance(ANOVA). For this study, each factor that will be extracted via factor analysis will be examined according to five demographic variables (years of experience as an assistant principal, geographical setting, grade levels of school, socio-economic status, TEA Rating). This study will use the criterion of 95% confidence level ($p < .05$) to determine statistical significance.

The major findings from this study showed the lack of student motivation and lack of parental involvement as the primary frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes by acting assistant principals. This information will be useful for principals and administration preparation programs in designing coursework that can address these needs. In addition, recommendations from this study are for further research to emphasize how the daily issues faced by an assistant principal are symptomatic of a larger systemic failure in the organizational structure of American schools.

Systemic restructuring of schools will be suggested which allows for a transformation of the role of the assistant principal from the present reactive, managerial approach that has resulted from the industrial age to a leadership focused, proactive approach that is needed in the 21st century. Most campus principals are selected, interviewed, and hired from an assistant principal pool. Since assistant principals in most school districts do not have the opportunity to effectively develop as effective instructional leaders, many principals are assigned to lead schools without the necessary preparation of required skills. Considering these factors, it is critically important to begin

the process of transforming the role of the assistant principal by identifying the frustrations and obstacles assistant principals face.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose the Study.....	4
Research Questions	4
Definition of Terms	5
Significance of the Study	5
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	9
History and Role of Assistant Principal	9
Leadership and Management	11
Leadership and Student Achievement.....	15
Transactional Leadership	16
Transformational Leadership	17
Instructional Leadership Preparation	17
Instructional Leadership Practice	18
Systems Theory	19
Five Systems Approaches	20
Open Systems.....	21
Social Systems.....	21
Process Systems	21
Living Systems.....	22
System Dynamics.....	22
Systems Thinking and Schools	22
The Ability to See Systems	23
Collaboration across the Organization	23
Creating Desired Futures.....	24

III. METHODOLOGY	25
Research Design.....	26
Instrumentation.....	30
Data Collection Procedures	31
Data Analysis	33
Limitations	34
VI. RESULTS	35
Research Question One	38
Research Question Two	38
Research Question Three	38
Research Question Four	39
Research Question Four (b)	43
Research Question Four (c).....	47
Research Question Four (d)	51
Research Question Four (e).....	55
V. CONCLUSIONS	60
Limitations	64
Practical Applications	65
Conclusions	70
REFERENCES	71

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1	Demographics of Assistant Principals in the Survey28
2	Demographics of Campuses in Survey30
4.1	Factor Loadings of the 36 Survey Items and Cronbach Alpha Scales36
4.2	Mean and Standard Deviation for Years of Assistant Principal Experience as They Relate to the Six Factors on the Principal Survey40
4.3	One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for years of Assistant Principal Experience (N =371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey42
4.4	Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Schools' State Accountability Ratings.....43
4.5	Campus Accountability Rating Mean and Standard Deviation44
4.6	One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for State Accountability Rating (N = 371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey ...46
4.7	Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Districts Settings.....47
4.8	Rural, Suburban, Urban Mean and Standard Deviation.....48
4.9	One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for District Setting (N = 371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey50
4.10	Frequency and Percentage of Participants' School Levels51
4.11	Mean and Standard Deviation for School Level as They Relate to the Six Factors on the Principal Survey52
4.12	One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for Grade Level (N = 371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey54
4.13	Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Schools' Economically Disadvantaged Status (EDS)55
4.14	Mean and Standard Deviation for a School's Economically Disadvantaged Status Percentage as They Relate to the Six Factors on the Principal Survey ..56
4.15	One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for Percentage of Economic Disadvantaged Status(N =361) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey59

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Assistant principals spend their days resolving crises and lost in a sea of administrative minutiae. The continuous and constant reactive problem solving approach to events and issues (i.e., handling disruptive students, dealing with parental complaints, working with frustrated teachers, etc.) along with the general administrative duties (e.g. supervising lunch duty, scheduling class coverage, textbook inventory, etc.) associated with the position, leaves many assistant principals with a low morale and a general dissatisfaction with the position (Glanz, 1994). Typically, the reactive approach is exemplified in the primary responsibility of the assistant principal, which is the student discipline in a school (Marshall, 1985). Because this responsibility relating to this particular duty are often a pressing concern, student discipline interferes with any agenda item or schedule the assistant principal might have set for the day. The frustrations and obstacles associated with the position stem from the current educational emphasis on developing more leadership capacity in schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Liethwood, 2010). The proactive approach or global perspective in problem identifying that is being required of future principals is not aligned with the reactive or managerial perspective connected to the assistant principal position. Unfortunately, the latter approaches are generally focused on the assistant principal's ability to resolve problems. It is this misalignment of proactive expectations within an archaic reactive system that causes many of the frustrations and obstacles in an assistant principal's day.

The negative and stressful working environment in which many assistant principals find themselves operating in further contribute to the frustrations and obstacles many confront on a daily basis. For example, the assistant principal's daily interactions often include apathetic students, frustrated parents, ill-prepared teachers, and in general, unrealistic expectations from the district/state/federal level. The majority of an assistant principal's school day is spent with students who are disengaged or show very little motivation to be at the school (Buckner & Jones, 1990; Gerke, 2004; Kelly, 1987; Scoggins, 1993). The constant struggle of the assistant principal in finding ways to keep apathetic students in classrooms relies on the use of different agreements, understandings, and, at times, threats (Gerke, 2004). The assistant principal's dissatisfaction is further highlighted by working with the parents of these apathetic students, whose parenting skills are limited or non-existent, which leads to their own level of frustrations (Epstein and Dauber, 1993). Another obstacle assistant principal's face on a daily basis is working with teachers who are not fully prepared to work with students with a high variety of individual needs (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Vazquez-Helig, 2005). As many teachers reach retirement age, districts are now forced to hire greater number of alternative certified instructors. Such teachers are hired where there is a greater need, which is occurring primarily at the urban-secondary level (Darling-Hammond, 2000); yet, this is also the area where students have the highest degree of variant needs (Grant, 1999). Assistant principals' difficulties are further exasperated by unrealistic expectations at the federal, state and district level. Any new initiative (developing instructional leaders, creating leadership opportunities, etc.) introduced at any level fails

to account for the reality assistant principal's face on a daily basis (Pounder and Crow, 2005).

In recognizing the reactive, managerial mindset that assistant principals begin to develop due to their daily working environment, school districts have begun to gain a greater understand the assistant principals. Namely, it is become clearer that when assigned to a campus, many assistant principals are assuming a leadership position without the necessary skills to lead the school. Proactive principals are those who understand their role in developing future school leaders (Liethwood, 2010), and those who see the need to transform the assistant principal from a manager to leader. Further, a proactive principal also realizes that the role of the assistant principal does not exist in a vacuum. Such principals also understand that a transformation of the entire school's organizational structure must take place, and it is within this context, that the role of the assistant principal can also transform from process manager to instructional leader (Leithwood, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The challenges that assistant principals experience in their daily working environments does not allow the them to assume a more proactive approach in addressing 21st century educational expectations for school leaders, as embedded in the standards of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (Council of Chief State School Officers). This is particular observable when the structure of the educational system confines the role of assistant principal to a reactive mode. The misalignment of proactive expectations with a reactive organizational and belief system causes many of the frustrations, obstacles, and problems in an assistant principal's day. The lack of research

focusing on the frustrations and obstacles assistant principal's face in their daily working environments also limits the contextual framework to begin addressing the issues.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify frustrations and obstacles that assistant principals encounter in their daily work environments and changes that assistant principals envision in the profession. The study will use five variables (years of experience, district setting, school grade levels, state accountability rating, and economically disadvantage status) to filter those frustrations, obstacles, and envisioned changes to see which ones reveal the highest level. In addition, capturing assistant principals' perceptions is paramount in order to understanding what specific changes are necessary.

Research Questions

With the goal of more fully understanding the factors that keep the assistant principal's office from assuming more of a proactive approach to problem identification, this study will address several hypotheses:

1. What do practicing assistant principals report as frustrations that prevent them from effectively performing their job responsibilities?
2. What genuine obstacles or restrictions do practicing assistant principals identify as concerns in accomplishing their professional duties?
3. What issue would practicing assistant principals change to enable them more in their role as assistant principal?

4. Is there a statistically significant difference among assistant principal years of experience, school state accountability rating, district setting, grade level, and a school's economically disadvantaged status with regards to their perceived frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes?

Definition of Terms

In this research proposal, the Definitions of Terms will provide operational definitions for key terms having a specific meaning for the purposes of this proposed study:

Frustration: The term is a feeling of dissatisfaction, often accompanied by anxiety or depression, resulting from unfulfilled needs or unresolved problems.

Obstacle: The term is something that obstructs or hinders progress.

Change: The term is to make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., of something different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone.

Reactive The term is defined as of , relating to, or marked by reaction.

Proactive: The term is relating to, caused by, or being interference between previous learning and the recall or performance of later learning.

Problem Solving: The term is the ability to find a solution, explanation, or answer for a problem.

Problem Analysis: The term is the ability to separate the problem's whole into its component parts.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to identify the perceptions assistant principals see in their job responsibilities and using them to initiate the process of removing the

frustrations, obstacles, and implementing the changes the assistant principals are envisioning. The findings in the study will demonstrate how the role of the assistant principal originated and, subsequently, how it has manifested itself as managerial in nature. More specifically, this study will examine how this evolution took place once the industrial revolution reached the urban centers and as urban populations increased. The increased number of students in schools necessitated that the principal acquire assistance in managing the school's book inventories, furniture, building maintenance, and student discipline. Furthermore, during the 20th century, organizational theory developed and methods of organizational efficiency and effectiveness began to emerge. Hence, a distinction between managerial and leadership approaches also began to emerge. Also, this distinction led to a greater understanding of the role each approach played in the organizational success; but, more importantly to schools, it highlighted the critical role that leadership has on student achievement. This study will show how instructional leadership impacts student achievement, but it will also demonstrate how the emphasis on instructional leadership, and leadership in general, in the 21st century is causing many of the frustrations and obstacles assistant principals are facing today. The study introduces systems theory as a conceptual framework on which to initiate the process of transforming the role of assistant principal from a managerial one to a leadership position and, through this transformation, the alleviation of the frustrations and obstacles assistant principals face in their professional job duties.

The study will also document how the principal of large middle school, with approximately 1300 students, within a large school district in the Gulf Coast Region of southeast Texas, instigated a transformation of the school's organizational structure.

Furthermore, the study will document how this individual has also initiated the transformation of the role of the assistant principal from manager to instructional leader. Using John Kotter's (1996) eight step process for implementing successful transformations, the new alignment of the school's systems and procedures to a new vision and mission statement has led to an empowerment of the school's teachers. It is this empowerment, through the creation of thirteen teacher teams, which has started the transformation of the school. Consequently, the assistant principals have shifted from reactive, problem solving managers to proactive, instructional leaders.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The themes identified in this literature review include: (a) the history and role of the assistant principal and how its origins in managerial responsibilities have had limited changes for present day assistant principals; (b) the dichotomy between leadership and management and how the greater emphasis, in the late 20th/early 21st centuries, has been placed on leadership and its effect on organizations which has made many of the assistant principals' managerial skills obsolete which causes high levels of frustration; (c) a more direct focus on instructional leadership, beyond the general leadership organization impact, and student achievement in schools is explored – namely, by identifying how ill prepared assistant principals are in assuming instructional leadership roles as principals, which is a major obstacle for assistant principals to encounter; and (d) systems theory is introduced as a conceptual framework that could be used to transform the role of the assistant principal from manager to leader and begin the process of alleviating some of the dissatisfactions assistant principals have with their professional duties. For the purpose of this paper, the major concern is to identify those useful themes in the literature to better understanding what leads to the frustrations, obstacles and changes assistant principals would make to enable them to perform their job responsibilities more effectively and efficiently and with a greater instructional impact in schools.

History and Role of the Assistant Principal

The origins of the assistant principal as manager in schools are documented in the research; however, such documentation is limited in both scope and quantity (Buckner &

Jones, 1990). The role as the review of literature shows was created specifically to help principals manage schools. A larger amount of research focuses on how the role of the assistant principal is still undefined (Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). The research that does exist focuses on the principal or teacher leadership, and generally fails to mention the importance and/or effectiveness of the assistant principal in influencing student achievement. However, a small number of researchers (Buckner & Jones, 1990; Gerke, 2004; Kelly, 1987; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993; Mertz & MacNeely, 1999) have centered their research upon the assistant principalship, and they have worked to expand the available literature about the roles, responsibilities, and development of the assistant principal. The researchers detail that, while created at the turn of the century, the job of the modern assistant principal really began to flourish in the 1950s. This was when the demands of the principal's job began to increase exponentially and, due expanding educational bureaucracy, the acceleration and pace of the principal's role and duties were becoming impossible for just one person to maintain. Thus, the assistant principalship was created to help principals deal with this; however, "the role of the assistant principal, complete with duties and responsibilities, is, as yet, unsuccessfully defined" (Scoggins & Bishop, 1993, p. 1). The role of the assistant principal was quickly relegated to limited, managerial responsibilities, such as bus duty or discipline (Buckner & Jones, 1990).

Several other studies (Kriekard and Norton, 1980; Kriekard and Norton, 1987; Marshall and Greenfield, 1987; Potter, 1980; Fulton, 1987; Kelly, 1987) built on these competencies and validated the original subdivision into categories. While each of these groups used their own vocabulary for labeling the different categories, the most simple

description for the roles of the assistant principal were given by Scoggins and Bishop (1993) – specifically: drill sergeant, bully, mother superior, and empathizer.

Since a great majority of assistant principals seek higher positions, and since the assistant principalship is often seen as a temporary position, perhaps this role has expanded to include more duties including teacher supervision and, to an extent, instructional leadership (Scoggins, 1993). Kelly (1987) suggested that the assistant principalship is a gateway to the principalship, and that the assistant principal should be involved in as many aspects of running the campus as possible. He further suggests that the principal should take charge to prepare the assistant principal for this role. While many researchers and practitioners push for the expansion of the boundaries within the assistant principalship, the fact remains that the primary duties of most assistant principals are discipline and teacher supervision (Buckner & Jones, 1990; Gerke, 2004; Kelly, 1987; Scoggins, 1993). For instance, the average assistant principal generally spends a lot of his or her day working with students in disciplinary situations, as well as working with the teachers and parents of the same students. During this time they garner a very general, worldly view of discipline issues when compared to most other educators. The assistant principal is involved in all levels of student behavior, and has an opportunity to witness teacher reactions – or lack thereof – across the entire campus (Marshall & et al., 1990; Mertz & MacNeely, 1999).

The general consensus within the current literature is that the role of the assistant principal is much like that of the the campus principal; in that, it is a unique viewpoint in the school setting. They are active and involved in many different aspects of the day-to-day operations of the campus and, as such, are able to offer broad and generalized input

about the organization as a whole and on trends/patterns that may be present.

Furthermore, as a balance to this, assistant principals are far enough removed from the occurrences on the campus to allow them to be objective and balanced. This is especially true in disciplinary situations where emotions tend to be strong for the parties involved. The slight distance that the assistant principals' position affords allows them to be an accurate and informed observer on campus matters (Mertz, 2000; Michel, 1996; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993).

Leadership and Management

The lack of significant changes to the managerial role of the assistant principal in the last forty years and the greater emphasis on leadership in the last half of the 20th century and early part of the 21st century have contributed to the frustrations and obstacles assistant principals encounter in their daily working environments. With so many [if not all] of the duties and responsibilities of the assistant principal being assigned by the principal, the role of assistant principal is often relegated more to managerial duties rather than duties of leadership. Denmark and Davis (2000) described management as actions "to bring about [or] to accomplish", while leadership is described as "influence, guide, and action" (p. 7). The assistant principal is often relegated to the role of manager, or bringing tasks about to accomplishment, and the principal is bestowed the role of leader for influencing, guiding, or initiating action. Denmark and Davis concluded that if the principal places more emphasis on managing, the likelihood of the assistant principal's learning to be a leader is diminished. Principals face leadership versus management issues with managers as transactors and leaders as transformers (Daft, 1999; De Neuville, 1998; Golanda, 1991). The leader initiates the

development of a vision, and the management controls, arranges, and institutes it properly. Managers concern themselves with the procurement, coordination, and distribution of human and material resources needed by an organization; facilitating the work of an organization by ensuring what is done is in accord with the organization's rules and regulations (The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000).

An example of such assignments is described by Erlandson (1994), who points out that many high school assistant principals are involved with tasks, such as computer scheduling (i.e., management), but never involved with budget, teacher evaluation, or matters of curriculum and instruction (i.e., leadership). Erlandson listed the following domains as being leadership-related and not typically included under assistant principals' duties and responsibilities: leadership, information collection, problem analysis, judgment, organizational oversight, implementation, delegation, instruction and the learning environment, curriculum design, student guidance and development, staff development, measurement and evaluation, and resource allocation. Holmes (2001) described leadership as being about persuasion, motivation, and finely judged delegation, whereas management is more about orders, mandates, and instructions. He believed that leaders need excellent communication skills. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn here is that these communication skills must be developed at the assistant principal level as preparation for a principal role, where they are expected to already possess these skills.

The major difference between leaders and managers rests on the notion that employees willingly follow leaders because they want to, not because they have to. Leaders may not possess the formal power to reward or sanction performance; yet, employees give the leader power by complying with what he or she requests. On the

other hand, managers may have to rely on formal authority to get employees to accomplish goals (Holmes, 2001). In essence, the leader focuses on change and innovation, while the manager controls what is present and leaves things much as he or she found them when he or she departs. In fact, this management style invokes very little genuine engagement between parties.

According to Holmes (2001), the central theme of the comparison is that those who find themselves supervising people in an organization should be both good managers and good leaders. Research shows that administrators must be able to develop and implement sound policies, procedures, and practices. They must also be able to lead and shape the school's culture with the creation and communication of a vision and the ability to inspire others to follow this vision.

Golanda (1991) reported that because most assistant principals are assigned duties that are categorized as management rather than as leadership, any role they attempt to assume that is more leadership in nature would, in most instances, become of secondary importance. Golanda believed that the role of assistant principal is very limited in scope regarding responsibilities normally associated with leadership. Hogue (1999) also wrote that the assistant principal is not involved in leadership behaviors because the principal, not the assistant principal, is the key individual to initiate and be involved in school reform.

In a similar study, Fritzpatrick (2009) focused on the frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes; yet, this particular study centered on the principal's perspective, rather than the assistant principal's viewpoint. Nonetheless, this research could also help in delineating the differences between leaders and managers as well. Fritzpatrick

reported a statistical difference in principals' self-perceived frustrations, obstacles identified and recommended changes when referencing TEA rating, geographical setting, and principal grade level, but no statistical difference in gender and years of experience. The statistical differences can be viewed through a leader/manager perspective when comparing the results of this study to the Fritzpatrick study. But, the leader/manager perspective can also be used to analyze the Fritzpatrick study itself.

In the study, principals can be separated by their role as either leaders or managers as shown in their study responses. The principals in the low performing TEA schools reported greater frustrations with teachers, students, and parent involvement than those in higher rated schools. Therefore, it is safe to say that principals in lower performing schools have to react to the pressing obstacle of state accountability because of increased pressure from school boards and the affected community. These unyielding demands force principals to focus on reactive and short-term problem solving approaches, which are typical characteristics found in managers, because the environment does not allow for a global, long-term approach. Hence, the latter perspective denotes characteristics generally found in leaders. Immediate positive test results might alleviate symptoms but does not address the ailment.

The same leader/manager perspective can be observed when comparing principals by their geographical school setting. Urban principals reported a high degree of frustration with teachers, and not being able to control this valuable resource through termination when needed (Fritzpatrick, 2009). It is important to considering that the students groups with the highest needs attend urban schools, and these schools often have the lowest qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vazquez-Helig,

2005). In fact, many urban school principals do not have the necessary time, as many urban schools are also low performing, to offer adequate development experiences to their personnel. Suburban principals, on the other hand, have a greater opportunity to assume more of a leadership position in regard to developing their teachers and providing long term professional development. In addition, suburban schools, as a whole, tend to have a higher state accountability rating and do not have the pressure of immediate improved results required.

Fritzpatrick (2009) concluded that working conditions and lack of instructional leadership opportunities intensify the frustrations and desire to change in high school principals when compared to elementary principals. While elementary principals average more than 50 work hours per week, high school principals average between 60 and 80 hours per week (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Zeitoun & Newton, 2002). The NASSP (2001) agrees while citing that a typical high school principal works more than 62 hours per week on administrative duties exclusive of after school student activities and events. The principals reported that their most time-consuming duties were related to facilities management, community-related tasks, discipline, and parent issues (Fritzpatrick, 2009). Elementary principals have a greater opportunity to be instructional leaders since their smaller faculty and staff necessitate that the principal to take on this role. The need to change the principal's role is not as great at the elementary level since the opportunity already exists to impact student achievement as the instructional leader.

Leadership and Student Achievement

The greater emphasis on leadership in the last forty years, its impact on organizations, and, specifically for this study, instructional leadership's impact on schools

and student achievement is explored in the review of literature. It is this focus on leadership – and not on managerial skills – that contributes to the many of the frustrations, obstacles, and changes assistant principals envision for their job responsibilities. A review of transactional leadership, and how its characteristics align with a managerial philosophy, is detailed in this study. Furthermore, transformational leadership and how its characteristics can be used to impact student achievement are highlighted. Instructional leadership programs that have the greater opportunity of developing transformational leaders and those programs successful characteristics and practices are also reviewed.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership builds upon an exchange of rewards and punishments between the leader and the subordinate for the performance of desired behaviors and the completion of certain tasks (Zagorsek , Dimovski , Skerlavaj, 2009). A follower's compliance may result from this type of leadership, but only a limited amount of enthusiasm and commitment to overall task objectives. There are three components of transactional leadership: (a) contingent rewards refers to leader behaviors focused on clarifying role and task requirements and providing followers with material or psychological rewards contingent on the fulfillment of contractual obligations (Zagorsek , Dimovski , Skerlavaj, 2009); (b) active management by exception refers to the active vigilance of the leader, whose goal is to ensure fulfillment of the standards (Antonakis et al. 2003); and (c) passive management by exception occurs when the leader waits to take action until mistakes are brought to his or her attention - the leader fails to intervene until problems become serious (Antonakis et al. 2003).

Transformational Leadership

Extensive research has highlighted the impact of transformational school leadership on schools themselves (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Griffith, 1999; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992). Bass and Avolio (1997) indicated that transformational school leaders build a climate of trust, respect, and collegiality within their schools. They also inspire faculty and staff members to develop shared visions for accomplishing the goals of the schools. Barnett (2005) reported that transformational school leaders instill teachers with unwavering confidence to teach students. They accomplish this goal through instructional behaviors such as observing classrooms and conducting constructive teacher observations. Kirby, King, and Paradise (1992) related that transformational principals not only talk with children about their academic progress, but also create professional development opportunities on best practices for curriculum and instruction. These leadership behaviors transform the school into a professional learning community.

Instructional Leadership Preparation

In a review of research conducted by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute and commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (2005), *School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals*, four key findings were identified in effective programs and program structures, pre-and in-service, that produced the most highly qualified school leaders:

- Essential Elements of Good Leadership- student achievement is influenced through two indirect methods: (a) support and development of effective teachers and (b) implementation of effective organizational processes.

- **Effective Program Design-** the top programs are researched-based, curriculum focused, provide authentic contextual experience, use cohorts and mentors, and structured to ensure collaboration between the program and the area schools.
- **Multiple Pathways to High Quality Leadership Development-** four general types of preparation: (a) university based programs; (b) district initiated programs, third party run programs; and (c) partnership run programs between stakeholders.
- **Policy Reform and Finances-** policy reform and knowledge of program components and their systems are aligned to make certain implementation and sustainability is reached.

Instructional Leadership Practices

Leithwood (2010) found evidence in a review of studies that pointed to four sets of leadership practices which influence student learning and also provide the foundation for successful school leadership in the 21st century:

- **Setting direction-** articulating a vision, setting high expectations, and monitoring performance for a shared organizational purpose.
- **Developing people-** expanding building capacity though out the school by providing stimulating opportunities for learning.
- **Redesigning the organization-** transformation of the school culture to incorporate better organizational structures and practices that support the shared vision for effective teaching and learning.

- Managing the instructional program- staffing appropriately, monitoring of student and teacher work, filtering distractions from staff work, and providing and aligning resources.

Systems Theory

In his research findings, Leithwood (2010) details the major impact redesigning the organization's systems, procedures, and practices have on student achievement.

Systems theory is a means of redesigning the school's systems and procedures.

The assistant principalship as management position was predicated upon and sustained by an industrial age system (Scroggins and Bishop, 1983). Thus, assistant principals are grounded in the use of management skills sets in their daily working environments. Considering that most assistant principals aspire to become principals (Kelly, 1987), they are appointed to the new principal position with a limiting skill set. The 20th century managerial skills assistant principals develop in the present system are not aligned with the necessary leadership abilities the 21st century is requiring of principals. As such, an industrial era system created the assistant principal as manager and so a new system, as seen in the current global, interconnectedness system, will have to create the assistant principal as leader. Therefore, since the assistant principal position does not exist in a vacuum, and relies on other parts/positions of a system, the new assistant principal as leader has to be a part of a larger systemic transformation in a school, which is more aligned with the global perspective of the 21st century (Senge, 2000). This systemic transformation is based on Peter Senge's book, *The Fifth Discipline*:

- Personal Mastery: a discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively
- Mental Models: deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures of images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.
- Building a Shared Vision: a practice of unearthing shared pictures of the future that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance.
- Team Learning: starts with dialogue, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into genuine thinking together
- Systems Thinking: The deeper understanding that interdependency and change have on each other which leads people to deal more effectively with the forces that shape the consequences of their actions. Systems theory is a theoretical framework based on feedback and complexity which are the two tendencies in a system that lead to growth and stability over time.

Five Systems Approaches

Senge et al. (1999) states, " A system, in this context [organizational change], is anything that takes its integrity and form from the ongoing interaction of its parts. Systems are defined by the fact that their elements have a common purpose and behave in common ways, precisely because they are interrelated toward that purpose" (pg. 137). There are five forms of systems thinking that are applicable to the type of organizational change needed in moving assistant principals from a managerial approach to a leadership one.

Open Systems

Mark Davidson (1983) states that the open systems form is based on Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's work, which starts with the idea that the whole of a system is more than the sum of its parts. The here idea is that any human organization is not a machine and should not be seen as one; rather, instead a life form that transforms, its inputs and the inputs transform the entity. The ability to change an open system is dependent on learning to understand and impact the things it takes in, and its relationship with its environment.

Social Systems

Barry Oshry's work on social systems is based on the premise that relationships are everything and the basis for leading a sustained change. Social system theory consists of three parts: (a) the strong interactions among the social groups and within them; (b) the tangible or intangible perceptions people hold that shape the social interactions in the organization; and (c) the purpose and goals of the system and whether they are understood and shared by everyone.

Process Systems

Process system theory stems from the belief that all information flow is fluid and can be rearranged (Senge et al, 2003). The use of this system is dependent on people recognizing that their reactions to problems quickly feedback to influence the overall design. Process system theory can be seen in the successful implementation of it at GE: (a) involve and engage all stakeholders; (b) identify and transfer best practices from inside and outside the organization; (c) integrate these initiatives with key human resource practices; and (d) set "stretch" goals.

Living Systems

Living systems theory assumes human groups, processes, and activities are self-organizing (Senge et al., 1999). According to Senge et al. (1999), information moves through the organization in its own natural pattern. The pulse of the organization is consistently monitored and through this monitoring and increased awareness of the pulse in a particular part of the organization by the people, new behaviors will naturally emerge (Senge, 1999).

System Dynamics

System dynamics theory is based on interrelationships that are non-sequential and non-linear that interact over time and are accompanied with delays as part of the process (Senge et al. 1999). According to Senge et al. (1999), system dynamics is reinforced and sustained by three processes that build on each other: (a) enhancing personal results; (b) developing networks of committed people; and (c) improving business results. At the core to system dynamics, according to Michael Golman (1999), is the ability to anticipate, and not react to, inherent limits of growth to any organizational change. According to Golman (1999), these limits occur when a reinforcing process runs up against a balancing process. All systems, according to system dynamics theory, are continuously seeking a natural balance point and will arrive at it.

Systems Thinking and Schools

The five systems discussed above allow for an opportunity for organizational change to occur in schools and, as a result, to increase the chances that the assistant principal position is transformed from a primarily reactive, managerial position to a more

proactive, leadership role. Each system shares the same capabilities, according to Senge (2008), which allow for systemic change to occur and be sustained.

The Ability to See Systems

The 21st century is being defined, and will continue to do so, by a growing interdependence, which is exemplified in schools. Peter Senge (2008) posits the importance of learning how to expand the boundaries of normal management attention and concern in order to see the larger systems in which organizations operate. Senge goes on to state how failing to do so leads to policies whose side effects sabotage their intended effects. The ability to see a pattern allows the observer to discriminate between short quick fixes, which can hurt the organization in the long-term and pursuing deeper, more fundamental solutions. As a means to working toward a more profound change, Senge suggests that the organization develop a "pattern language" (Senge, 2008).

Collaboration across the Organization

In their book titled *The Power of Collaborative Leadership*, Bert Frydman, Iva Wilson, & JoAnne Wyr (2000) discuss how leadership needs to be distributed throughout the organization. In essence, sharing authority and accountability leads to a greater amount of collaboration. Senge (2008) also states the system intelligence to meet the problems of today will be collective and will need teams and networks at many levels, within and beyond the organization. Fritz (1999) states organizations need to develop a process known as telescoping in which the division of mental labor doesn't fragment the organization and the parts work together. This process allows everyone to have an overview and not get lost in obsessive detail.

Creating Desired Futures

Senge (2008) explains that the difference between problem solving, which is making what you don't want go away and creating, means bringing something you want become a reality. According to Senge (2008), the difference in both stems from their energy base. Creative energy comes from visions and dreams, and from a realistic view of the present, while problem-solving comes from crisis and the underlying fear of the consequences if the problem is not solved. Senge further states that the distinction between the two is not dualistic in nature. The difference is which is seen as primary and which is secondary. Senge posits that the creativity approach should be the primary perspective in organizations (Senge, 2008). Fritz (1999) calls this creative perspective approach in learning organizations the structural tension or the constant relationship between where the organization (i.e., the school) want to go and the reality of where the organization actually exists. The constant movement creates a tension between the two forces.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The results of this study were a part of the first stage of a large, multi-phase study being conducted by a large research university in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. This project, The Assistant Principal as Successful Leader Project (MacNeil, 2008), was designed to study practicing assistant principals in a variety of areas related to their day-to-day positions as campus administrators with the goal of improving their practice by developing a full and complete understanding of the issues and challenges they face daily. The results of this study were combined with the others and will directly influence the principal preparation and certification portion of the university's Master's of Education in Educational Leadership program and help in the design of continuing education programs for in-service school administrators. The Project (MacNeil, 2008) will consist of three phases:

Phase 1 – quantitative survey research of assistant principal's attitudes and perceptions.

Phase 2 – longitudinal study of how those attitudes and perceptions change over time.

Phase 3 –development, implementation, and evaluation of a new assistant principal development program based on the research from the first two phases.

This paper was a part of the first phase of this project that focused on the quantitative survey, which looked at multiple aspects of the assistant principal's job

including the following areas: parental involvement, student discipline, teacher supervision, obstacles and frustrations, leadership, and the usefulness of research in practice. The section detailed in this study focused on the frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes from assistant principals and was quantitative-based using personal interviews to answer a survey. This chapter was divided into the following subsections: (1) Research Design; (2) Participants; (3) Instrumentation; (4) Data Collection Procedures; (5) Data Analysis Procedures; and (6) Limitations.

The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What do practicing assistant principals report as frustrations that prevent them from effectively performing their job responsibilities?
2. What genuine obstacles or restrictions do practicing assistant principals identify as concerns in accomplishing their professional duties?
3. What issue would practicing assistant principals change to enable them more in their role as assistant principal?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference among assistant principal years of experience, school state accountability rating, district setting, grade level, and a school's economically disadvantaged status with regards to their perceived frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes?

Research Design

The method utilized in this study was a survey research design using personal interviews. This design was appropriate for the study because it described the characteristics of a large group of assistant principals with respect to their perceptions of

the frustrations, obstacles, and desires for change they encounter while carrying out their duty as assistant principal.

Participants

The respondents' answers that were analyzed in this study came from 371 active campus assistant principals. The survey results primarily represented the viewpoint of assistant principals at public schools. The demographics of both the assistant principals and the campuses where they worked are quite varied. The respondents include both males and females from a variety of ethnicities including White, African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and American-Indian. The ages of the assistant principals range from under thirty to over sixty-three years of age. The highest level of educational attainment for the vast majority of respondents is a Master's degree and, while the number of years of service in education varies amongst them, the majority of the respondents have worked between six and fifteen years. Their years of service as assistant principals range from less than five years to over sixteen years. A breakdown of the demographics of the schools and the assistant principals can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics of Assistant Principals in the Survey

Characteristics of Assistant Principals						
Gender	Male	Female				
	110	261				
Race	White	AA	Hispanic	Asian	A. Indian	Unreported
	190	93	70	11	1	1
Age Range	<30	31-37	38-45	46-55	56-62	>63
	21	112	103	92	36	5
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate			
	14	344	13			
Years in Education	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+	Unreported
	7	98	89	61	89	27
Years as Assistant Principal	0-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Unreported	
	236	90	26	11	8	

The Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010) ranks all public schools in the state based on student achievement, attendance, dropout rates, and other factors as a part of the state accountability system. The state considers the overall achievement level of all students in the school as well as the achievement of certain populations based on student demographics, economics, and participation in certain programs. Based on the performance of the campus, or the district, it is possible to receive one of four different rankings (presented in order from lowest to highest possible ranking): Academically Unacceptable, Acceptable, Recognized, or Exemplary. The respondents were asked to self-report their school's accountability ranking as a part of the survey; more than half of

the respondents worked at Acceptable schools, and nearly a fourth worked in schools who had earned a Recognized ranking. Ten percent of the respondents received the highest ranking, while less than five percent received the lowest.

The assistant principals surveyed for this study worked in all levels of schools. For this study, the schools were divided into four categories: elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and mixed grades. Furthermore, the schools are defined as follows: elementary schools are those who traditionally serve grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grades; middle schools are those who serve sixth through eighth grade; and high schools serve ninth through twelfth grades. And, there was a group of schools that fell under a special category: mixed grades. This group consisted of any special campuses that did not fall under the other three groups' criteria (K-4 schools, 5-6 campuses, ninth grade campuses, etc.). The schools were categorized based on the majority of the students served in the school with guidance by the name of the school. These schools varied in size from less than 200 students to more than 3,000 and were located in rural, suburban, and urban areas. A breakdown of the demographic information of the campuses in the survey can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of Campuses in Survey

Characterisites of Campuses	All	Elementary	Middle	High
Number of Schools	371	168	90	101
Mean Number of Teachers	83.42	58.44	69	143.97
Mean Number of Students	1258.27	773	1115.57	773
Location	Rural 12	Suburban 156	Urban 191	
Accoutbility Rating	Unacceptable 16	Acceptable 189	Recognized 102	Exemplary 35

Instrumentation

The portion of the survey that will be used for this study consists of three questions relating to frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes, which are part of a much larger survey (115 items) about the assistant principalship. Of these items, 22 deal with the assistant principal's background and the demographics of his/her campus, 62 are Likert-scaled items, and 31 are open-ended questions. All three of the questions (36 items) related to the frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes use a Likert-scale. The following are the questions in the survey related to the frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes:

- On a scale of **1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least**, rate the degree to which each of the following presents a feeling of frustration or being discouraged in being able to carry out your duties.
- On a scale of **1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least** rate the degree to which each of the following presents a genuine obstacle or restriction that cause you the most concern as you try to carry out your duties as assistant principal.
- On a scale of **1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least** rate the following for the things that you would change to make you more enabled in your role as assistant principal.

Data Collection Procedures

For the purpose of this study, archival data will be utilized since the surveys and interviews were completed before this study was undertaken. The data collection procedures are a reflection of the research collection conducted by the students seeking and completing master's degrees. Specifically, these students were involved in the data collection process under the supervision of professors at the university conducting the study.

As stated before, this survey was administered through cognitive interviews by students as a part of the master's degree program at the university. The decision to use cognitive interviews was made to strengthen the validity and reliability of the survey results. It was felt that, due to the length and complexity of the survey; if the survey were simply distributed to assistant principals by mail or email few would respond, and those that did would not be likely to devote the time needed to provide quality answers to all of

the items especially those towards the end of the survey as their interest and time lagged. It was decided that using an interview format would ensure that the number of responses was high and that the interviewee would have a higher level of motivation to answer all of the questions fully and completely. In their research, Desimone and Le Floch (2004) found that cognitive interviews were a viable method to increase the reliability and validity of surveys. By analyzing teachers' and principals' interpretations of survey items they were able to gain a better understanding of the thought process behind the respondent's answers and "unpack complex phenomena, and provide critical information for bridging the gap between policy/scholarly framing of the issues, and respondents' framing of the issues" (Desimone & Le Floch, 2004, p. 18). The understanding gained through the employment of this method allows for an interpretation of the results that is more in line with intent of the respondent.

With this in mind, master's degree students at the university conducting the survey were required to administer the survey as a part of a core course required for the Master's of Education in Educational Leadership and the principal's certificate certification program. Class time was spent familiarizing the students with the survey instrument and the goals of the study as well as training the students in both traditional study and cognitive interview techniques. The students' grade in the class was tied to the successful completion of the surveys in order to ensure their commitment, and they were allowed to choose which assistant principals they would interview. It was planned that this personal/professional connection would help to ensure the commitment of the assistant principal to completing the survey and allow for a more relaxed and open interview that would bring forth more honest answers.

Data Analysis Procedures

This section describes the following methods that were used to analyze data for the study: (1) exploratory principal axis factor analysis to identify underlying constructs and establish validity and reliability; (2) descriptive statistics in which percentages, means, and standard deviation were calculated for each item; also, mean scale scores were computed for each of the scales on the Assistant Principal Survey; and (3) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test hypotheses and compare the disparate samples on each discriminating variable.

Exploratory principal axis factor analysis. A factor analysis is an established means by which the complexity of data is collected into a small number of variables to answer research questions (Stevens, 2002). Using the data that were collected using the Assistant Principal Survey, a principal axis factor analysis will be employed as the extraction method to find the underlying factors in the scale. SPSS 17.0 software will be used to for this process.

Descriptive statistics. In order to address research questions that dealt with demographics, frequencies, percentages, item means, factor means and standard deviation were calculated. A table that describes the demographic data that were collected can be found in Appendix C.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). ANOVA will be used to eliminate the need for calculating three or more separate t-tests and guard against Type I error. For this study, each factor that was extracted via factor analysis was examined according to five demographic variables – specifically, years of experience as an assistant principal, geographical setting, grade levels of school, TEA Rating, and socio-economic status.

ANOVA yields an *F* ration that indicates whether the means are statistically different ($p < .05$). A multiple comparison, Tukey Gap test will be calculated to identify which pairs of means are statistically significant ($p < .05$). This study will use the criterion of 95% confidence level ($p < .05$) to determine statistical significance. To do so is common practice in educational research (Lomax, 2007).

Factor loadings. Factor loadings indicated the correlations of variables (items) on factors. The variables were analyzed to ensure factor loadings were $> .50$ on each factor. This indicated that the items correlated with common factors. Common factors are known as constructs thus factor loadings play integral roles in construct development

Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the *Principal Survey* sub-scales will be calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha to test for internal consistency. Devellis (2003) described Cronbach's Alpha as "an indication of the proportion of variance in the scale scores that is attributable to the true score" (p. 95). Cronbach's Alpha measures the latent variable and should be greater than .70. The Assistant Principal Survey will be tested for internal consistency and reliability using this test using SPSS 17.0 reliability analysis.

Limitations

The purpose of the study was to analyze data collected by the Assistant Principal Survey. First, the sampling was convenience sampling. There is no guaranteed way ensure that the assistant principals as a population were represented in the sample. Also, another limitation is that an accurate response rate could not be calculated. Assistant principals who chose not to participate were replaced by those who volunteered. The number of assistant principals who chose not to participate was not reported.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The present study sought to answer the following four research questions:

1. What do practicing assistant principals report as frustrations that prevent them from effectively performing their job responsibilities?
2. What genuine obstacles or restrictions do practicing assistant principals identify as concerns in accomplishing their professional duties?
3. What issue would practicing assistant principals change to enable them more in their role as assistant principal?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference among assistant principal years of experience, school state accountability rating, district setting, grade level, and a school's economically disadvantaged status with regards to their perceived frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes?

An Exploratory Principal Axis Factor Analysis used SPSS 17.0 software to find the underlying factors within the Assistant Principal survey. A factor analysis is an established means by which the complexity of data is collected into a small number of variables to answer research questions (Stevens, 2002). By clustering the questions into groups, a more focused analysis can be made. By conducting the factor analysis with this study, the 36 items on the assistant principal survey pertaining to frustrations, obstacles and recommended changes were clustered into six factors: State and Federal Bureaucracy, District/School Bureaucracy, Lack of Resources, Parent Involvement,

Teachers, and Students. The reliability of the clustered groups, using SPSS 17.0 reliability analysis, will be measured using Cronbach's Alpha to test for internal consistency. Devellis (2003) described Cronbach's Alpha as "an indication of the proportion of variance in the scale scores that is attributable to the true score" (p. 95). Cronbach's Alpha measures the latent variable and should be greater than .70.

Table 4.1 shows the loading of the factors and the Cronbach Alpha for each factor.

Table 4.1

Factor Loadings of the 36 Survey Items and Cronbach Alpha Scales

Factor	Items	Loadings	Cronbach Alpha
1	Change lack of teacher commitment	0.81	0.94
	Change poor instruction of teachers	0.8	
	Change poor preparation of teachers	0.77	
	Obstacle of poor instruction of teachers	0.76	
	Frustration with poor instruction of teachers	0.774	
	Obstacle of lack of teacher commitment	0.743	
	Frustration with lack of teacher commitment	0.737	
	Frustration with poor preparation of teachers	0.71	
	Obstacle of poor preparation of teachers	0.59	
	Obstacle of federal bureaucracy	0.8	
2	Frustration with federal bureaucracy	0.76	0.92
	Change federal bureaucracy	0.74	
	Obstacle of state bureaucracy	0.739	

	Change state bureaucracy	0.739	
	Frustration with state bureaucracy	0.7	
	Obstacle of lack of student motivation	0.76	
	Change lack of student motivation	0.75	
3	Change poor basic skill of students	0.73	0.89
	Frustration with lack of student motivation	0.7	
	Frustration with poor basic skills of students	0.67	
	Obstacle of poor basic skills of students	0.65	
	Frustration with lack of money	0.73	
	Obstacle of lack of money	0.72	
	Change lack of other resources	0.7	
4	Obstacle of lack of other resources	0.698	0.9
	Change lack of money	0.68	
	Frustration with lack of other resources	0.677	
	Change lack of parental involvement at home	0.76	
	Obstacle of parental involvement in the school	0.74	
	Change lack of parental involvement in school	0.72	
5	Obstacle of lack of parent involvement at home	0.713	
	Frustration with lack of parental involvement in the school	0.65	
	Change district bureaucracy	0.79	
6	Obstacle of district bureaucracy	0.79	0.84
	Frustration with district bureaucracy	0.8	

Note. The loading with a critical value of $>.50$

Research Question One

Research question one inquired as to what assistant principals report as frustrations that prevent them from effectively performing their job responsibilities. According to the results of the survey, the top frustration was the lack of student motivation at 47.7 % as the most frustrating of the ten factors, followed by lack of parental involvement at home at 46.8% as the second most frustrating of the ten factors, and finally, lack of parental involvement in the school at 40.7% as the third most frustrating factor of the ten factors.

Research Question Two

Research question two asked what genuine obstacles or restrictions do practicing assistant principals identify as concerns in accomplishing their professional duties. According to the results of the survey, the top obstacle was the lack of student motivation at 47.9 % as the biggest obstacle of the ten factors, followed by lack of parental involvement at home at 44.9% as the second biggest obstacle of the ten factors, and finally, lack of resources in the school at 39.1% as the third biggest obstacle of the ten factors.

Research Question Three

Research question one asked what issue would practicing assistant principals change to better enable their role as assistant principal. According to the results of the survey, the top recommended change was the lack of student motivation at 63.2% as the biggest recommended change of the ten factors, followed by lack of parental involvement at school at 57.6% as the second biggest recommended change of the ten factors, and

finally, lack of parental involvement at home 56.8% as the third biggest recommended change of the ten factors.

Research Question Four

Research question four inquires whether there is a statistically significant difference among assistant principal years of experience with regards to the six factors on the Assistant Principal survey (i.e. State and Federal Bureaucracy; District/School Bureaucracy; Lack of Resources; Parent Involvement; Teachers; Students).

The data in Table 4.1 provides a summary of the years of experience for the assistant principals in this study showing that the majority of assistant principals were in the 0-5 ($n = 231,64\%$) or the 6-10 age group ($n = 90,24\%$). Assistant principals were grouped into five groups. Groups were divided based on suggestions in literature when studying experience levels of educators. As assigned by TEA, the specific levels are as follows: the novice educator (0-5 years of experience), experienced educator (6-10 years of experience), veteran educator (11-15 years of experience), and the tenured educator (16+ years of education). The classifications are similar to the ones used to classify teacher level of experience.

Table 4.2

Mean and Standard Deviation for Years of Assistant Principal Experience as They Relate to the Six Factors on the Principal Survey

Factor	0-5(n =231)		6-10(n =90)		11-15 (n=23)		16+(n =11)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
State and Federal Bureaucracy	3.35	1.33	3.27	1.41	3.16	1.32	3.98	1.48
District Bureaucracy	3.26	1.47	3.07	1.39	2.74	1.17	3.18	1.46
Resources	3.3	1.33	3.2	1.35	3.17	1.4	3.5	0.99
Parent Involvement	3.5	1.33	3.41	1.29	3.45	1.31	2.94	1.01
Teacher	2.9	1.5	2.75	1.38	2.8	1.26	3.4	1.47
Student	3.47	1.33	3.47	1.3	3.56	1.18	3.58	1.02

Note. Scale anchors were 1 and 5, with 1 being the least and 5 being the most in terms of the degree of perceived frustration, perceived obstacles and desired changes.

An analysis of the mean scale scores (see Table 4.2) indicated that groups were very similar when rating all six factors. There were two groups that had the greatest difference in raw data. The novice group (0-5) at 3.50 and the veteran group (16+) at 2.94 had a difference of 0.56 in parental involvement and these same groups had a difference of 0.58 when comparing state and federal bureaucracy. The veteran group was at 3.93 while the novice group was at 3.35.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate group differences among assistant principals with varying years of experience (i.e., 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16+) in self-reported frustration levels. The six dependent survey variables were used: state and federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, resources, parent involvement, teachers, and students. The grouping variable used as the independent variable was coded to indicate

the category in which assistant principals were placed based on their reported years of experience (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16+).

As shown on Table 4.3, no statistically significant differences were found among the five groups on any of the six dependent variables; namely, on the scales of state and federal bureaucracy ($sig = .420, p > .05$), district bureaucracy ($sig = .345, p > .05$), resources ($sig = .840, p > .05$), parent involvement ($sig = .554, p > .05$), teachers ($sig = .496, p > .05$), students ($sig = .984, p > .05$). The data implied that, regardless of experience level, assistant principals rated items similarly. This phenomenon was consistent with what assistant principals generally report, which is, after the initial huge learning curve coming out of the classroom, most of the new learning stabilizes. An experienced assistant principal does and knows as much as a first year assistant principal in regards to information outside of the discipline realm (i.e., curriculum; instruction; assessment, instructional design).

Table 4.3

*One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for years of Assistant Principal Experience (N=371)
on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey*

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
State and Federal Bureaucracy	Between Groups	5.127	3	1.709	0.930	0.420
	Within Groups	643.088	350	1.837		
	Total	648.215	353			
District Bureaucracy	Between Groups	6.870	3	2.290	1.111	0.345
	Within Groups	721.382	350	2.061		
	Total	728.252	353			
Resources	Between Groups	1.482	3	0.494	0.280	0.84
	Within Groups	618.257	350	1.760		
	Total	619.739	353			
Parent Involvement	Between Groups	3.604	3	1.201	0.698	0.554
	Within Groups	604.001	351	1.721		
	Total	607.605	354			
Teacher	Between Groups	5.054	3	1.685	0.797	0.496
	Within Groups	741.865	351	2.114		
	Total	746.919	354			
Students	Between Groups	0.267	3	0.089	0.052	0.984
	Within Groups	598.618	351	1.705		
	Total	598.885	354			

Research Question Four (b)

Research question four (b) asked whether there a statistically significant difference among assistant principals from schools with different state accountability ratings with regards to the six factors on the Assistant Principal survey (i.e., State and Federal Bureaucracy; District/School Bureaucracy; Lack of Resources; Parent Involvement; Teachers; Students). Table 4.4 shows that assistant principals represented the following state accountability ratings: exemplary ($n = 34$, 9.1%), recognized ($n = 96$, 25.9 %), academically acceptable ($n = 184$, 49.6%), and academically unacceptable ($n = 20$, 5.4%). There was a ten percent non-reporting of state accountability rating($n = 10$) by the participants.

Table 4.4

Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Schools' State Accountability Ratings

Ratings	<i>f</i>	%
Not Reported	37	10
Exemplary	34	9.1
Recognized	96	25.9
Academically Acceptable	184	49.6
Academically Unacceptable	20	5.4
Total	371	100.0

School ratings were divided into four groups: exemplary, recognized, academically acceptable, and academically unacceptable. These four labels are consistent with language used across the United States in which states use a standards-based examination as a means to report to the general public a district and/or school's instructional efficiency.

Table 4.5

Factor	E(n =34)		R(n =96)		AA(n=184)		AA (n =20)*	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
State and Federal Bureaucracy	3.39	1.35	3.27	1.27	3.39	1.37	3.18	1.36
District Bureaucracy	2.86	1.56	3.05	1.30	3.33	1.44	3.23	1.53
Resources	3.50	1.26	3.42	1.35	3.22	1.32	3.17	1.30
Parent Involvement	2.61	1.23	3.27	1.25	3.76	1.20	3.83	0.96
Teacher	2.79	1.65	2.93	1.43	3.00	1.39	2.70	1.76
Student	2.57	1.39	3.54	1.22	3.70	1.20	3.60	1.26

*E= *Exemplary*; R=*Recognized*; AA= *Academically Acceptable*; AU= *Academically Unacceptable*.

Note. Scale anchors were 1 and 5 with 1 being the least and 5 being the most in terms of the degree of perceived frustration, perceived obstacles and desired change

A one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate group differences among assistant principals at schools with different state accountability ratings (i.e., exemplary (E), recognized (R), academically acceptable (AA), and academically unacceptable (AU)) in self-reported frustration levels. The six dependent survey variables were used as follows: state and federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, resources, parent involvement, teachers, and students. The grouping variable used as the independent variable was coded to indicate the category in which assistant principals were placed based on their school's accountability rating (E, R, AA, and AU).

As shown on Table 4.6, there was a statistical significant difference in two of the variables: parental involvement ($sig=.000, p < .01$) and students ($sig=.000, p < .01$). In the parental involvement group, the biggest statistical difference was between the academically unacceptable group at 3.83 and the exemplary group at 2.61, which had a difference of 1.22. The recognized group at 3.27 was also statistically significant from the exemplary group (2.61) with a difference of 0.56. Finally, the academically acceptable group at 3.76 and the exemplary group (2.61) was 1.15. Lastly, it is important to note that even though there was no statistical significant difference at .049 between the academically acceptable group (3.76) and recognized group (3.27), the mean was extremely close to 0.50. When analyzing the students factor, there were statistical significant differences between the exemplary schools and the others: E (2.57) and R (3.54) with a difference of 0.97; AA (3.70) with a difference of 1.13; and AU (3.60) with a difference of 1.03.

Table 4.6

One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for State Accountability Rating (N = 371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
State and Federal Bureaucracy	Between Groups	5.127	3	.516	.288	.834
	Within Groups	590.762	330	1.7790		
	Total	592.310	333			
District Bureaucracy	Between Groups	9.001	3	3.00	1.499	.215
	Within Groups	660.701	330	2.002		
	Total	669.702	333			
Resources	Between Groups	4.129	3	1.376	.784	.503
	Within Groups	579.169	330	1.755		
	Total	583.298	333			
Parent Involvement	Between Groups	46.165	3	15.388	10.565	.000
	Within Groups	489.642	330	1.456		
	Total	526.807	333			
Teacher	Between Groups	2.668	3	.889	.420	.739
	Within Groups	698.290	330	2.116		
	Total	700.958	333			
Students	Between Groups	36.938	3	12.313	8.166	.000
	Within Groups	497.579	330	1.508		
	Total	534.517	333			

The results of the Tukey HSD showed the statistical significant differences within the parent involvement factor where between the academically unacceptable group and the

exemplary group at .002; the academically acceptable group and recognized group at .009 and exemplary at .000; and the recognized group and the exemplary group at .031. When analyzing the Tukey HSD for the students' factor, the statistical significant differences were between the academically unacceptable group and the exemplary group at .016, the academically acceptable group and the exemplary group at .000, and the recognized group and exemplary group at .001.

Research Question Four (c)

Research question four (c) asked whether there is a statistically significant difference among assistant principals from schools with different geographical settings (i.e., rural; suburban; urban) with regards to the six factors on the Assistant Principal survey (i.e., State and Federal Bureaucracy; District/School Bureaucracy; Lack of Resources; Parent Involvement; Teachers; Students). Table 4.7 shows the frequency and percentage of the district settings.

Table 4.7

Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Districts Settings

Ratings	<i>f</i>	%
Not Reported	6	10
Exemplary	11	2.9
Suburban	154	41.5
Urban	200	53.9
Total	371	100.0

As shown in Table 4.7, assistant principals in the sample were predominately from suburban districts ($n = 154$, 41.5%) and urban districts ($n = 200$, 53.9%). Assistant principals from rural districts ($n = 11$, 2.9%) made up a smaller percentage of the total number of respondents ($n = 371$).

Table 4.8

Factor	Rural ($n=34$)		Suburban ($n=96$)		Urban ($n=184$)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
State and Federal Bureaucracy	3.39	1.04	3.33	2.37	3.31	1.37
District Bureaucracy	3.24	1.44	3.25	1.27	3.23	1.37
Resources	3.76	1.08	3.28	1.27	3.23	1.37
Parent Involvement	3.67	1.43	3.48	1.26	3.42	1.33
Teacher	2.76	1.60	2.87	1.49	2.91	1.42
Student	3.65	1.42	3.51	1.30	3.46	1.29

Note. Scale anchors were 1 and 5 with 1 being the least and 5 being the most in terms of the degree of perceived frustration, perceived obstacles and desired change.

An analysis of the mean scale scores indicated that groups were very similar when rating five factors except in the lack of resources and money that is perceived between the rural and urban districts (see Table 4.8). The rural districts had a mean of 3.76 when compared to the urban districts of 3.23, which had a significant statistical difference of 0.53. It is useful to note that there was not a statistical difference between a suburban district (3.28) and a rural (3.76) district at 0.48; nonetheless, it was close.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate group differences among assistant principals at schools with district setting (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) in self-reported frustration levels. The six dependent survey variables were used: state and federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, resources, parent involvement, teachers, and students. The grouping variable used as the independent variable was coded to indicate the category in which assistant principals were placed based on their school's district setting (rural, suburban, and urban).

As shown on Table 4.9, no statistically significant differences were found among the three groups on any of the six dependent variables; namely, on the scales of state and federal bureaucracy ($sig = .967, p > .05$), district bureaucracy ($sig = .676, p > .05$), resources ($sig = .435, p > .05$), parent involvement ($sig = .812, p > .05$), teachers ($sig = .928, p > .05$), students ($sig = .851, p > .05$). The data implied that assistant principals, regardless of setting, had no significant statistical differences which is contrary to the general belief that assistant principals in rural settings tend to work with less resources than their urban counterparts would have more frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes.

Table 4.9

One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for District Setting (N = 371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
State and Federal Bureaucracy	Between Groups	.125	2	.63	.034	.967
	Within Groups	672.247	362	1.857		
	Total	672.373	364			
District Bureaucracy	Between Groups	1.620	2	.810	.391	.676
	Within Groups	749.145	362	2.069		
	Total	750.765	364			
Resources	Between Groups	2.919	2	1.460	.834	.435
	Within Groups	633.573	362	1.750		
	Total	636.492	364			
Parent Involvement	Between Groups	.708	2	.354	.209	.812
	Within Groups	615.002	363	1.694		
	Total	615.710	365			
Teacher	Between Groups	.320	2	.160	.075	.928
	Within Groups	771.866	363	2.126		
	Total	772.186	365			
Students	Between Groups	.545	2	.273	.161	.851
	Within Groups	613.594	363	1.690		
	Total	614.139	365			

Research Question Four (d)

Research question four (d) asked is there a statistically significant difference among assistant principals from schools representing various grade levels (i.e., elementary school; middle school; high school; mixed grade levels) with regards to the six factors on the Assistant Principal survey (i.e., State and Federal Bureaucracy; District/School Bureaucracy; Lack of Resources; Parent Involvement; Teachers; Students). Table 4.10 shows frequency and percentage of the four different school levels represented in the study.

Table 4.10

Frequency and Percentage of Participants' School Levels

Ratings	<i>f</i>	%
Not Reported	9	2.4
Elementary School	131	35.3
Middle School	91	24.5
High School	109	29.3
Total	371	100.0

Table 4.10 shows that assistant principals represented elementary schools ($n = 131$, 35.3%), middle schools ($n = 91$, 24.5 %), high schools ($n = 109$, 29.3 %), and mixed grades schools ($n = 31$, 8.3%).

Table 4.11

Mean and Standard Deviation for School Level as They Relate to the Six Factors on the Principal Survey

Factor	Elementary (n =34)		Middle (n =96)		High School (n=184)		Mixed Grades (n=31)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
State and Federal Bureaucracy	3.36	1.33	3.38	1.35	3.26	1.34	3.30	1.62
District Bureaucracy	3.22	1.48	3.26	1.38	3.12	1.35	3.00	1.66
Resources	3.35	1.35	3.27	1.32	3.27	1.33	2.96	1.21
Parent Involvement	3.39	1.40	3.44	1.32	3.69	1.13	2.99	1.20
Teacher	2.83	1.50	2.90	1.49	2.97	1.39	2.82	1.44
Student	3.37	1.32	3.50	1.37	3.67	1.09	3.25	1.57

Note. Scale anchors were 1 and 5 with 1 being the least and 5 being the most in terms of the degree of perceived frustration, perceived obstacles and desired change.

An analysis of the mean scale scores indicated that groups were very similar when rating all six factors except with two groups within the parent involvement factor (see Table 4.11). The high school group with a mean of 3.69 and the mixed grades group with a mean of 2.99 had a difference of 0.70. All other groups showed no significant statistical difference.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate group differences among assistant principals in regard to their schools' grade level (i.e., elementary, middle, high school, and mixed grades) in self-reported frustration levels. The six dependent survey variables were used: state and federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, resources, parent involvement, teachers, and students. The grouping variable used as the independent

variable was coded to indicate the category in which assistant principals were placed based on their school's grade level (elementary, middle, high school, mixed grades).

As shown on Table 4.12, there was a statistical significant difference in one of the variables: parental involvement ($sig = .048, p < .05$). In the parental involvement group, the biggest statistical difference was between the high school group ($M=3.69/SD=1.14$) and the mixed grades group ($M=2.99/SD=1.20$), which had a difference of 1.22.

Table 4.12

One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for Grade Level (N = 371) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
State and Federal Bureaucracy	Between Groups	.896	3	.299	.161	.923
	Within Groups	665.992	358	1.860		
	Total	666.889	361			
District Bureaucracy	Between Groups	2.201	3	.734	.356	.785
	Within Groups	738.211	358	2.062		
	Total	740.411	361			
Resources	Between Groups	3.785	3	1.262	.717	.542
	Within Groups	629.684	358	1.759		
	Total	633.469	361			
Parent Involvement	Between Groups	13.233	3	4.411	2.657	.048
	Within Groups	595.940	359	1.660		
	Total	609.173	362			
Teacher	Between Groups	1.370	3	.457	.214	.886
	Within Groups	764.262	359	2.129		
	Total	765.632	362			
Students	Between Groups	7.168	3	2.389	1.433	.233
	Within Groups	598.437	359	1.667		
	Total	605.605	362			

The results of the Tukey HSD confirmed the statistical significant differences within the parent involvement factor were between the high school group and the mixed grades group at .048.

Research Question Four (e)

Research question four (e) asked whether there is a statistically significant difference among assistant principals from schools representing level of economically disadvantage status with regards to the six factors on the Assistant Principal survey (i.e., State and Federal Bureaucracy; District/School Bureaucracy; Lack of Resources; Parent Involvement; Teachers; Students). Table 4.13 shows the frequency and percentage of the five groups of economically disadvantaged status.

Table 4.13

Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Schools' Economically Disadvantage Status(EDS)

EDS Percent	<i>f</i>	%
Not Reported	43	11.6
25% and below	50	13.4
26-35%	23	6.1
36-50%	17	4.6
51-75%	68	18.3
76-100%	170	45.8
Total	371	100.0

Table 4.13 shows the assistant principals in the survey represented the different percentages of economically disadvantaged levels: 25% and below ($n = 50$, 13.4%), 26-35% ($n = 23$, 6.1%), 36-50% ($n = 17$, 4.6 %); 51-75% ($n = 68$, 18.3 %) and 76- 100% ($n = 170$, 45.8%).

There were 11.6% of the respondents who did not report there economically disadvantaged status ($n=43$).

Table 4.14

Mean and Standard Deviation for a School's Economically Disadvantaged Status

Percentage as They Relate to the Six Factors on the Principal Survey

Factor	>25 ($n = 30$)		26-35 ($n = 84$)		36-50 ($n = 46$)		51-75 ($n = 48$)		75-100 ($n = 70$)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Teacher	2.73	1.10	2.67	1.32	2.73	1.38	2.46	1.23	2.57	1.20
State and Federal Bureaucracy	2.99	.95	3.26	1.10	3.05	1.18	3.34	1.07	3.51	1.24
Student	3.29	1.00	3.13	1.09	3.36	1.01	3.23	1.17	2.96	.99
Resources	3.01	1.14	3.28	1.18	3.31	1.12	2.91	1.27	3.32	1.15
Parent Involvement	3.29	1.15	3.13	1.05	3.24	1.08	2.87	1.10	2.86	1.04
District Bureaucracy	3.13	1.27	2.93	1.10	3.12	1.23	2.94	1.13	3.07	1.31

Note. Scale anchors were 1 and 5 with 1 being the least and 5 being the most in terms of the degree of perceived frustration, perceived obstacles and desired change

An analysis of the mean scale scores indicated that there were multiple significant statistical differences among the various groups in economically disadvantaged status (see Table 4.14). The data shows that five of the variables (state and federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, parent involvement, teachers, and students) had multiple significant differences between the groups. Parent involvement had the difference in all five groups while students had them in four of the five groups. The only variable that showed no statistical significant difference was the lack of resources and money factor.

In analyzing the mean scale scores further, parental involvement between the groups 36-50 (3.71) and 25 and below group (2.73) had the greatest difference of 0.98. The 51-75 group (3.70) and the 25 and below group (2.73) had a difference of 0.97. The subsequent groups, 75-100(3.62) and 25 and below (2.73), had a difference of 0.89. The final groups within the parental involvement variable that showed a statistical significant difference were the 26-35 group (3.41) and the 25 and below group (2.73) at 0.68. Within the student variable, the 26-35 group (3.91) and the 25 and below group (3.03) showed the greatest statistical significant difference at 0.88. The next two groups, 36-50 (3.78) and 25 and below (3.03), had a difference of .75. The last groups in the student variable with significant statistical difference were the 51-75 group (3.71) and the 25 and below group (3.03) at 0.68. There were also significant statistical differences within the teacher variable: 26-35 group (3.10) and the 25 and below group (2.44) had a difference of 0.66 while the 75-100 group (3.02) and the 25 and below group (2.44) had mean of .058. In terms of frustrations, obstacles, and changes recommended with bureaucracy, both district and state /federal, there were also significant statistical differences. The 26-35 group (3.43) and the 25 and below group (2.80), within the district bureaucracy

variable, had a mean of 0.63. Also, within this variable, the 51-75 group (3.38) and the 25 and below group (2.80) had a difference of 0.58

Finally, there were groups within the state and federal bureaucracy variable that also showed significant differences: 36-50 group (3.67) and 26-35 group (2.90) were at 0.77 and the 51-35 group (3.41) and the 26-35 group (2.90) had a mean of 0.51.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate group differences among assistant principals in regard to their schools' economic disadvantaged status (i.e., 25 and below; 26-35; 36-50; 51-75; 76-100) in self-reported frustration levels. The six dependent survey variables were used: state and federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, resources, parent involvement, teachers, and students. The grouping variable used as the independent variable was coded to indicate the category in which assistant principals were placed based on their school's grade level (25 and below; 26-35; 36-50; 51-75; 76-100).

As shown on Table 4.15, there was a statistical significant difference in two of the factors: parental involvement ($\text{sig} = .000, p < .01$) and students ($\text{sig} = .015, p < .05$). In the parental involvement group, the biggest statistical difference was between the groups 36-50 (3.71) and 25 and below group (2.73) at 0.98. Within the student group, the 26-35 group (3.91) and the 25 and below group (3.03) showed the greatest statistical significant difference at .88.

Table 4.15

One-way Analysis of Variance Summary for Percentage of Economic Disadvantaged Status(N =361) on the Six Dependent Variables on The Principal Survey

Source		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
State and Federal Bureaucracy	Between Groups	6.958	4	1.740	.958	.431
	Within Groups	586.684	323	1.816		
	Total	593.642	327			
District Bureaucracy	Between Groups	11.966	4	2.991	1.469	.211
	Within Groups	657.839	323	2.037		
	Total	593.642	327			
Resources	Between Groups	6.047	4	1.512	.867	.484
	Within Groups	563.384	323	1.744		
	Total	569.431	327			
Parent Involvement	Between Groups	35.312	4	8.828	5.911	.000
	Within Groups	483.923	324	1.494		
	Total	519.236	328			
Teacher	Between Groups	14.457	4	3.614	1.732	.143
	Within Groups	675.987	324	2.086		
	Total	690.444	328			
Students	Between Groups	19.597	4	4.899	3.151	.015
	Within Groups	503.717	324	1.555		
	Total	523.314	328			

The results of the Tukey HSD showed that the statistical significant differences within the parent involvement factor were between the 25 and below group and three other groups: the 36-50 group at .039; the 51-75 group at .000; and the 75-100 at .000. When analyzing the Tukey HSD for the students' factor, the statistical significant differences were among two groups and the 25 and below group: the 26-35 group at .037 and the 51-75 group at .027.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This study allowed a glimpse into the understanding of the perceived frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes of an assistant principal's daily work life. First, the findings provide the top three frustrations, obstacles, and recommended changes assistant principals face in their daily work life. Second, the findings provide insight into the extent assistant principals with varying levels of experience, geographic setting, state accountability rating, grade levels, and level of economically disadvantaged status rate their degrees of frustration, perceived obstacles, and recommended changes. In the remainder of this chapter, each of these findings will be discussed with their accompanying literature review. In addition, the study's limitations, and implications for future research will be reviewed. Finally, a practical application based on the study's findings will be reviewed as well, and how these findings assisted in framing a transformational process at a local middle school.

Top Frustration, obstacles, and changes recommended. The findings from the research showed the top frustrations identified by the assistant principals were lack of student motivation and the lack of parental involvement at home and school. The top perceived obstacles were also lack of student motivation, the lack of parental involvement at home, but as well, the lack of resources. Again, the top three recommended changes by the assistant principals in the survey were the hope to increase the lack of student motivation, to increase the lack of parental involvement, and to increase the resources available to their schools. The lack of student motivation and parental involvement identified in the survey is aligned with the current research on

assistant principal research on frustrations and obstacles (Buckner & Jones, 1990; Gerke, 2004; Kelly, 1987; Scoggins, 1993, Epstein & Dauber, 1993).

Years of assistant principal experience. The findings from the research showed there were no significant statistical differences in relation to rate of perceived challenges between years of experience of an assistant principal. There is research that shows all administrators, regardless of years of experience, share similar challenges (Kruger et al., 2005; Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2006). This was confirmed through the findings; which, at first, glance is a surprising finding. This finding is particularly surprising given that school districts attempt to mentor new assistant principals with experienced assistant principals who, according to these findings, are having the same type and degree of frustrations as those they are mentoring.

A recommendation, based on the findings of this study, would be not to allocate resources (time, energy, and funds) on mentoring new assistant principals, but for a more inclusive approach to mentoring and/or professional development in relation to the six factors identified in this study (i.e., state/federal bureaucracy, district bureaucracy, resources, parent involvement, teachers, students).

State accountability rating. Finding that assistant principals from lower performing schools report higher degrees of frustration in regards to parent involvement is not surprising. The accountability ratings of schools on the federal and state levels are determined, in large part, by student success on standardized tests as mandated by the United States Department of Education and the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The state accountability ratings in Texas are also a primary means of issuing a "school report card" for the parents and community on neighboring schools.

The higher degree of frustrations experienced by assistant principals in low performing schools with regards to parental involvement was expected. Assistant principals in the lower performing schools, academically unacceptable, are more frustrated with the lack of parental involvement. While the assistant principals schools who are academically acceptable and recognized (lower performing on the school report card in the local paper) than the exemplary group could have a different type of frustration, obstacle, or recommended change in regards to parent involvement. The challenges here would be from a more demanding group of parents wanting their child's school to be at the top of the categories, or at the exemplary group

A recommendation, based on the findings in this study, would be to equip assistant principals in the academically acceptable group and recognized group with information on what instructional plans are in place to move the school's lower accountability ranking to a higher one. Since most assistant principals, especially at the secondary level, do not have much input on instructional planning, a general overview of what is going to be done would help in bringing the frustrations down of working with demanding parents.

Geographical setting. The most surprising finding in this study was the lack of significant statistical difference among assistant principals in regards to the geographical setting of their school. VanderJagt, Shen, and Hsieh (2001) found that urban principals reported more severe and frequent problems than did those in rural schools. This study found that the urban and rural principals might perceived challenges (Kirkpatrick, 2010) that the assistant principals do not. This would make sense if the principal is seen as an instructional leader and the assistant principal is seen as a discipline manager. The

instructional frustrations found in the rural setting with regards to lack of resources/money, per se as a problem, are higher than in an urban setting. The assistant principals, as discipline managers, in each of the above mentioned schools would have the same type of frustrations, for example, the classroom disruptions with students.

Grade Levels. The grade level findings in this study were not statistically significantly different in any of the groups, other than the high school group and the mixed grades. The largest statistical difference related to parental involvement. This would make logical sense given that high schools would more likely be frustrated with the lack of parental involvement while parental involvement found in mixed grades would be higher since 41% (12/23) of the mixed grades were elementary schools in the study.

Economically disadvantaged status. The findings from this study in relation to economically disadvantaged status had the greatest significant statistical difference in regards to parental involvement. In relation to the 25 and below group, all groups (26-35; 36-50; 51-75; 76-100) had statistical significant difference. The assistant principals with the higher percentage groups' (51-100) frustrations with parental involvement deal with the lack of parental involvement. The lower percentage groups (26-50) frustrations dealt with the parental involvement in terms of too much community pressure to move to the higher state accountability rating associated with the lower economically status schools

Limitations

There is not a study that could capture all of the possible frustrations experienced by assistant principals on a daily basis. The measure in this study limited assistant principals to a predetermined set of frustrations, obstacles, and desires for change. Also,

sample sizes in regard to equal representation of assistant principals in groups were examined but were not ensured. A convenience sample was used and, therefore, did not lend itself to equal representation in the groups studied. Elementary assistant principals, for example, far outnumbered their counterparts. In two cases (i.e. geographic setting and grade level) rural assistant principals were outnumbered by suburban and urban principals while mixed-grades assistant principals were outnumbered by elementary, middle and high school principals. Ensuring a sample size for all demographic groups may lead to more generalizable results in the future.

Practical Application

This study utilized the basic premise of having identified the need to transform the role of the assistant principal from a reactive, managerial position to a proactive, instructional leadership one. In light of this premise, a principal of a large middle school, with approximately 1300 students, in a large school district in the Gulf Coast Region of southeast Texas, initiated a transformation of the school's organizational structure which would also initiate the transformation of the role of the assistant principal from manager to instructional leader. Using John Kotter's (1996) eight step process for implementing successful transformations, new school systems and procedures have been aligned to a new vision and mission statement, which has led to an empowerment of the school's teachers and other faculty and staff. It is this empowerment, through the creation of thirteen teacher teams and other examples, which has initiated the transformation of the school and, as a consequence, created the shift for the assistant principals from reactive, problem solving managers to proactive, instructional leaders.

John Kotter (1996) has identified eight steps needed to increase the chances that a successful organizational transformation could occur which are: acting with urgency, developing a guiding coalition, developing a change vision, communicating the vision buy-in, empowering broad based action, generating short term wins, not letting up, and making change stick. Within the greater context of the school's ongoing transformation, the role of the assistant principal as an active member of the change and a beneficiary of the change is discussed.

Acting with urgency. The urgency on this particular campus was created by having the staff arrive at the realization that the student demographic had changed. Statistics were shared comparing the school's demographics when the school was designated a US Blue Ribbon school eleven years ago to the demographics in the present. Reenactments and role playing were shared of students' lives. In addition, there were faculty and staff neighborhood tours conducted showing how much the community had changed in eleven years with a count taken of the number of Hispanic focused businesses in the area. High school dropout statistics and the high correlation to Hispanic and minority students were pointed out. Projections for the future and the need for 21st century skills were presented by teachers who were part of the guiding coalition. Student testimonials were recorded and shared on how they learn through high levels of interaction with technology and collaboration. The assistant principals served as presenters, tour guides, collaborators, and overall participants in creating the initial sense of urgency.

Developing the guiding coalition. A team of teachers, support staff, and administrators, named the Penguin Group, was formed by the principal to help guide the

change that would be needed to transform the school. The Penguin Group meets periodically to discuss where the school is on its journey of transformation. One of the three assistant principals is a member of the Penguin Group.

Developing the change vision. The Penguin Group identified a new vision of delivering instruction and building stronger relationships with students to reach the entire child that was based on a learner-centered approach for the student, as well as the teacher and other educators in the building. A new mission statement was designed and created that would become a living document by guiding and being embedded in all systems and procedures in three areas of the school: safety, instructional, and operational.

Communicating the vision buy-in. The new vision is consistently and continuously mentioned discussed, advocated, nurtured and supported through initiatives and projects that only entail short-term yields and successes. The assistant principals, along with other staff members, lead many of the short term projects and initiatives.

Empowering broad-based action. All teachers and faculty are encouraged to join the 13 teams (PIECE) that are transforming different systems of the three areas of the school (safety, instructional, and operational). Eighty-nine percent of the faculty and staff are on one of the thirteen teams.

Some of these teams of teachers and faculty are having a direct impact on the assistant principals' day to day responsibilities and as a consequence reducing their daily frustrations and obstacles. A couple of examples are shared below:

- Behavior Intervention PIECE team- a group of teachers who are working with the 3% of the student population with high emotional needs who are also the "frequent flyers" to the assistant principal's office. This team has created

accountability coaches, high affective domain teachers, who serve as parent in residence roles for these students. This intervention has reduced the number of visits to the assistant principal office from this group of students which allows the assistant principals to visit more classrooms and lead other projects and initiatives within the transformation. By having the time to lead some of the short-term projects, the assistant principals have an environment in which to practice leadership skills.

- Planning PIECE Team, Assessment PIECE Team, Classroom Management PIECE team, Instructional Design PIECE team collaboration- teachers are being trained through ongoing professional development modules on how to deconstruct the state standards, how to do assessments off the deconstructed standards, and how to align cognitive and affective strategies with those assessments and deconstructed standards. This training is allowing teachers to have more engaging classrooms which in turn reduces the number of referrals coming down to the assistant principal's office. This also allows time and opportunity for assistant principals to practice instructional leadership strategies. Two of the three assistant principals are leading the professional development module which also elevates their status on the campus as instructional leaders.

Generating short term wins. There have been a number of recognitions and short-term wins that have occurred in conjunction with the school's journey of transformation. Office referrals have decreased, discipline data shows a decline in overall discipline behavior, the school has had three showcase visits by other schools in the district, and one of the visits being visitors from the state and national level. The visits assisted

personnel come and see what the school has implemented so ideas can be generated and taken back to their campuses.

Don't let up. There is a continuous sense of urgency that has been created, supported, and encouraged by the faculty, staff and students. The short-term wins, along with constant reminders with student testimonials for the need to continue the transformation, keeps the transformation moving forward. Planning for the summer to keep the momentum going, the August return, the professional development for the fall and the 2011-2012 school year is taking shape as well.

Make the change stick. There are some components of the change that are becoming the norm but overall, the change is still taking place. All the pieces to the transformation have not been completed and have not been identified yet; nonetheless, the sense of urgency is ever-present. The belief that only through risk taking and learning from mistakes is embedded in the culture of the school now. A safe learning environment has been created for the faculty and staff and it is within this environment, and a matter of time, that the transformation will take hold.

Conclusions

Overall, this study provides a salient glimpse into the understanding of the frustrations, perception of obstacles, and recommended changes of current assistant school principals. The study has been researched and written from the perspective that much work still needs to be done. Questions should now have been raised by the reader as to what exactly needs to be done. Yet, the fact remains that the need for an exemplary education for the students is becoming more of a necessity as means of survival for many, especially considering the rising rates poverty in this country, and as other countries are

making significant strides in raising their own levels of quality education. Thus, assistant principals will play a pivotal role in meeting the needed to raise the level of education in this country; a task that is virtually impossible unless research is conducted into what is keeping them from playing a more active role in raising that level of education. This study, in a most humble way, was written to contribute what it could in raising the awareness of what keeps talented professional educators from playing a more active role in elevating the necessity of an exemplary education in this country.

References

- Antonakis, J., Avolio, B. J., & Sivasubramaniam, N. (2003). Context and leadership: An examination of the nine-factor full-range leadership theory using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14, 261-295
- Argyris, C. (1994). Good communication that blocks learning. *Harvard Business Review*, 72(4, July-August), 77-85.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Baumrind, D. (1991). Parenting styles and adolescent development. In J. Brooks-Gunn, R. Lerner & A. C. Peterson (Eds.), *The encyclopedia of adolescence* (pp. 746–758). New York: Garland.
- Avolio, B.J., Bass, B.M., & Jung, D.I. (1999). Reexamining the components of transformational and transactional leadership using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 72, 441-462.
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (1996). *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards for school leaders*. Washington, DC: Author. Available: www.ccsso.org/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf
- Dauber, S. L., & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents' attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In N. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society* (pp. 53-71). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2007). Building a system for powerful teaching and learning. In R. Whiehling (Ed.), *Building a 21st century U.S. education system*, pp. 65-74. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- Darling-Hammond, L.(2004). Standards, accountability, and school reform. *Teachers College Record*, 106, 1047-1085.
- Davis, S.; Darling-Hammond, L.; LaPointe, M.; Meyerson, D. (2005). School leadership study: Developing successful principals (Review of Research). Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Day, C., Leithwood, K., & Sammons, P. (2008). What we have learned, what we need to know more about. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(1), 83-96.
- DuFour, R. (1998). Why look elsewhere? improving schools from within. *School Administrator*, 55, 24-26.
- DuFour, R. (2003). Building a professional learning community: for system leaders, it means allowing autonomy within defined parameters. *School Administrator*, 60 (5), 13-18.
- Epstein, J. L., Simon, B. S., & Salinas, K. C. (1997). Involving parents in homework in the middle grades (Rep. No. 18). Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Center for Evaluation, Development, and Research.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76, 701–712.
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, community, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Epstein, J. L. (2005). School-initiated family and community partnerships. In T. Erb (Ed.), *This we believe in action: Implementing successful middle level schools* (pp. 77–96). Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.
- Epstein, J. (2007, October 1). Improving Family and Community Involvement in Secondary Schools. *Principal Leadership*, 8(2), 16-22. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ779572) Retrieved December 22, 2008, from ERIC database.
- Frydman, Bert, Wilson, Iva, & Wyer, JoAnne. (2000). *The Power of collaborative leadership*.
- Fritz, Robert. (1999). *The Path of least resistance for managers*. Berrett-Koehler Pub
- Fullan, Michael. (2010). *All Systems go*. Corwin Press.
- Gardner, Howard, & Laskin, Emma. (1996). *Leading minds*. Basic Books.
- Glanz, J.(1994). Redefining the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals. *The Clearing House*, 67, 283-287
- Grant, C. A. (1989). Urban teachers: Their new colleagues and curriculum. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70, 764-770
- Gerke, W. (2004). More than a disciplinarian. *Principal Leadership*, 5(3), 39-41.
- Heuwinkel, M. K. (1996). New Ways of Learning = New Ways of Teaching. *Childhood Education*, 73(1), 27.
- Hogue, T., Perkins, D., Clark, R., Bergstrum, A., Slinski, M., & Associates (1995). Collaboration framework: Addressing community capacity. Columbus, OH: National Network for Collaboration.
- Kelly, G. (1987). The assistant principal as a training ground for the principalship. *NASSP Bulletin*, 71(501), pp. 13-20.

- Kerrins, J. A. (2001). Take this job and fill it [Electronic version]. *Leadership*, 30(5), 2024.
- Kruger, M. L., van Eck, E., & Vermeulen, A. (2005). Why principals leave: Risk factors for premature departure in the Netherlands compared for women and men [Electronic version]. *School Leadership and Management*, 25, 241-261.
- Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 30(4), 498-518.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management*, 28(1), 27-42.
- Leithwood, K., Seashore-Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom. (2010). Investigating the links to student achievement (Learning from Leadership Project Executive Summary). New York: Wallace Foundation
- Lezotte, L. (1997). *Learning for all*. Okemos, MI: Effective Schools Products.
- Lunenburg, F. C., & Ornstein, A. C. (2004). *Educational administration: Concepts and practices* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Marshall, C. (1992). *The assistant principal*. Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.
- Marshall, C., & et. al. (1990). *A typology of the assistant principalship: A model of orientation to the administrative career*. Boston, MA: Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
- Manning, M. L., Lucking, R., & Macdonald, R. H. (1995). What Works in Urban Middle Schools. *Childhood Education*, 71(4), 221+. Retrieved September 4, 2010, from Questia database: <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5002225929>

- Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Mertz, N. T., & MacNeely, S. R. (1999, April). *Through the looking glass: An up front and personal look at the world of the assistant principal*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Montreal, Quebec.
- Newcomb, A. (2003). Peter Senge on organizational learning. *School Administrator*, 60(5), 20-25
- Pounder, D. & Crow, G. (2005). Sustaining the pipeline of school administrators. *Educational Leadership*, 62, 56-60
- Scoggins, A. J., & Bishop, H. L. (1993, November). *A review of the literature regarding the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA
- Schlechty, P. C., & Atwood, H. E. (2001). The student-teacher relationship. *Theory into Practice*, XVI(4), pp. 285-289.
- Senge, P., (2000). *Schools that learn*. Broadway Business.
- Senge, P., Rothwell, W., Hohn, C., King, S., & Goldsmith, M., (2003). *Global leadership*. Basic Books.
- Senge, P., (2008). *The Necessary revolution*. Broadway Business.
- Sparks, D. (2001). Why change is so challenging for schools. *Journal of Staff Development*, 22(3), 42-47

Walker, K., & Carr-Stewart, S. (2006). Beginning principals: Experiences and images of success. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, CCEAM, 34 (3), 17-36.

Zagorsek, H., Dimovski, V., & Skerlavaj, M. (2009). Transactional and Transformational Leadership Impacts on Organizational Learning. *Journal for East European Management Studies*, 14(2), 144+.