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**DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES WITHIN A
TRADITIONAL MANAGEMENT PARADIGM: A CASE STUDY**

A Dissertation in

Educational Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

Rather than viewing leadership practice as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, democratic leadership espouses practices that promote interactions between people and their situation. Some discussions on leadership acknowledge the importance of multiple individuals taking responsibility for leadership in schools. This scholarship recognizes the importance of these interactions and acknowledges that leadership typically involves more people than those at the top of the organizational hierarchy.

The purpose of this study is to explore democratic leadership practices within a traditional organizational model in two mainstream schools within a suburban district. In addition, to discover how two principals enact these practices, and determine if they are aligned with democratic ideals of leadership praxis. Guided by Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Analytical Framework, this study considers principals' educational views, philosophies, leadership styles and decision-making processes as well as the perceptions of the teachers and students and determines to what extent those members feel like they are taking part of the decision-making process. This study is grounded on the discussions regarding traditional school organizational arrangements and contrasting them with notions of democratic schooling. I argue how the role of an educational leader is paralleled with the concepts of democracy. The implications of this study focus on leadership practices that promote a more democratic process of governance such as the application of active dialogue, engaging in reflective practices and acquiring an understanding of the political trends, issues and forces within the U.S. education system in professional training.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore democratic leadership practices within a traditional organizational model in two mainstream¹ schools within a suburban² district; furthermore, to discover how two principals enact practices, and determine to what extent they are aligned with democratic ideals of leadership praxis. This study considers the perceptions of the teachers and students with regards to the principals' decision-making processes.

The rationale for this study is grounded on examinations of traditional school organizational arrangements and contrasting them with notions of democratic schooling. It is guided by the literature on the democratic school movement, beginning with the important works of John Dewey, A.S. Neil and others who pioneered progressive education. I establish a history as to how the movement began and compare it to the traditional organizational arrangement of education in the United States. I include a timeline of important educational reforms, referencing the work of Tyack & Cuban (1995) and denote the major differences between both the democratic and traditional organizational structures of schooling and governance.

After detailing various aspects of school administration from both organizational arrangements, I proceed to focus on the notion of educational leadership, as it has been

¹ For the purpose of the study, the term *mainstream* refers to a regular public school that is part of a school district system.

² The District has a suburban/urban classification according to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

delineated in both contexts. Although there is not a clearly established definition for democratic leadership, and the dynamics that surround the detailed nature of democratic leadership are variegated, I cite the works of Phillip Woods (2005) and J. Gastil (1994) who attempt to ground the conceptual ambiguity of the term, and how it applies to the field of education. I formulate and align my argument of how the role of an educational leader is paralleled with the concepts of democracy. I transition into implications the findings bring forth regarding leadership practices that promote a more democratic process of governance. My focus is on leadership and decision making processes citing work by Begley & Zaretsky (2004), Lambert (2002) and Starratt (2001) among others. By identifying several implications of democratic leadership practices such as the application of active dialogue, engaging in reflective practices and acquiring an understanding of the political trends, issues and forces within the U.S. education system in professional training, I aim to discover and understand democratic notions of education and to what extent they are employed in decision-making.

In this study, I present research on democratic practices and decision-making from a critical theory perspective. I discuss the concept of knowledge construction through the critical lens, current practices and realities for educational leaders, the concepts of authority and power relations, in light of Michel Foucault's Panopticon. I proceed to narrow down several critical theory ideologies, particularly those pertaining to education, democratic values and practices and discuss pieces of influential scholars like Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Henry Giroux, David Purpel, Paul Mcklaren and others, who are known for urging educators to rethink their roles and the politics of schooling.

With a solid theoretical framework in place, the concept of “democratic ideals” is examined and discussed in the context of institutional education, along with the inner contradictions of democratic schooling embedded within the traditional educational philosophy and existing practices in the United States. I explore and discuss current trends in the educational system regarding the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and other federal and state government-mandated and politicized movements of accountability; mapping out and analyzing institutional hierarchical structures of power within the current system, and the confusion and contradictions that the rooted democratic goals often pose for educational leaders in their practices and decision-making processes in order to frame my understanding of my observations.

This qualitative research study’s aim is to gain insight into two school principals’ leadership activities, especially their decision-making processes and evaluate the extent to which they are aligned with notions of democratic leadership practices.

This first chapter discusses notions and ideals of democracy in education and contrasts them with traditional schooling practices within the U.S. public education system. Alluding to concepts and traits of shared decision making, collaboration and participation related to democratic practices in school leadership, this chapter highlights the tensions that exist in principals’ decision-making processes when adopting these democratic practices in a highly bureaucratized top-down system.

Educational Leadership

Principals struggle under the weight of accountability. They are accountable for their school's success, measured by test scores, achievements gaps and all the while they seek to empower their school community with the ideals of a democratic society that call for equity and freedom. Blase & Blase (1999) focus on principals' perspective regarding shared governance practices, collaborative decision-making and democratic schooling. They discuss previous research (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991, 1993; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Glickman, 1993, 1998; Kreisberg, 1992; Lieberman, 1990; Maeroff, 1988; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1983 as cited in Blase & Blase 1999) in educational administration which mostly explored quasi-participatory approaches to leadership but they ascertained that these practices were not consistent with the current goals of schooling for democracy. Later efforts to challenge traditional leadership orientations (Allen, 1993; Apple & Beane, 1995; Blase & Blase, 1994, 1995, 1996; Blase, 1995; Bredeson, 1989; Chapman, 1988; Duke, 1980; Freeman, 1994; Glickman, 1994; Hallinger & Richardson, 1988; Kirby and Colbert, 1992; Melenyzer, 1990 ; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Prestine, 1991a, 1991b; Silins 1994; Glickman, 1998; as cited in Blase & Blase 1999) stemmed from acknowledging the benefits and values of shared school governance. This scholarship established a positive relationship between shared school governance and advancement of school improvement, teacher empowerment and student achievement. Adding to this scholarship, Blase & Blase (1999) research on principals' perspectives explored power sharing in the implementation of shared governance, the processes of relinquishing authority, and how

principals reflected on the accountability dilemma of not being in charge but still feeling solely accountable. Their study suggests that principals who take on a shared governance initiative,

“...reject a preoccupation with self, they avoid imposing their personal vision on others, and the traditional authoritarian quest for power over others. These principals appear to have the courage and skill to work with others as equals, to be one among equals, and to place school vision and empowerment on the group above their personal needs and goals. They seldom seek the limelight; their lives are characterized by honesty and courage. Moreover, data suggests that the principals are the primary force in attaining conditions in the school that allow shared governance to occur” (Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 492)

In order to become involved in shared governance practices, Blase & Blase stress that principals have to reflect on their readiness to enact a dramatically different leadership role, reflect on their beliefs about teachers and pedagogy as well as on their own knowledge and skills. They should also reflect on school contexts so they can consider all the benefits and challenges (i.e. bureaucracy, traditions, school conditions) throughout the enactment of these practices as well as teacher and staff receptiveness.

Democratic Education and Shared Governance

One of the struggles that our education system faces today is the bureaucratic structures that define educational decision making, and often hinders the efforts for collaborative endeavors towards democratic leadership practices. Often, a principal is considered to be an effective leader if his or her school ‘achieves progress’ as measured by the adequate yearly progress (AYP) through state testing. Those leaders who align themselves with democratic practices of shared collaboration and decision-making have to juggle demands of top-down bureaucracy and accountability. The implications of this

philosophy on education are significantly tangled with the concepts of democratic processes where value is placed on personal voice, open critical dialogue and public space; where the role of society is defined by its citizens through dialogue and striving for consensus, as opposed to values imposed by an authority. The practices of knowledge construction, critical thinking, experiential and reflective practices contradict the concepts of a 'one size fits all' education. Within the democratic schooling approach, learning is shared and is seen as a result of collective human experiences. This shared process of learning and education is embodied by the practices of shared governance.

Ideas of democratic practices within schooling and governance stem from the notion that power and decision-making should be shared between other members of the community, where students and school staff participate freely and equally.

Democratic Leadership and Decision-Making

Democratic leadership strives to gain consensus through collaboration. As discussed by Begley & Zaretsky (2004), democratic leadership comprises the nature of the school leadership role, the social contexts of the community and an ideological social mandate. They state:

Democratic leadership processes are desirable for schools not only because they reflect socially mandated ethical commitments to collective process. They can be professionally justified as the necessary, as much as appropriate, approach to leading school effectively in our increasingly culturally diverse communities and a world transformed by the effects of technology and the forces of globalization. (Begley & Zaretsky, 2004, p. 641)

The focus of Begley & Zaretsky's (2004) argument on democratic leadership is in terms of how parent advocates use the democratic process to enable change in current practices within school administration. It illustrates the valuation process that exists within individuals as well as the organization in decision-making and what conflicts may arise that could hinder the efforts to achieve democratic leadership. There are certain motivational bases within an individual's arenas of valuation (Figure 1.1: Begley's Onion Figure, 2004) that can create conflict in decision-making within a democratic framework.

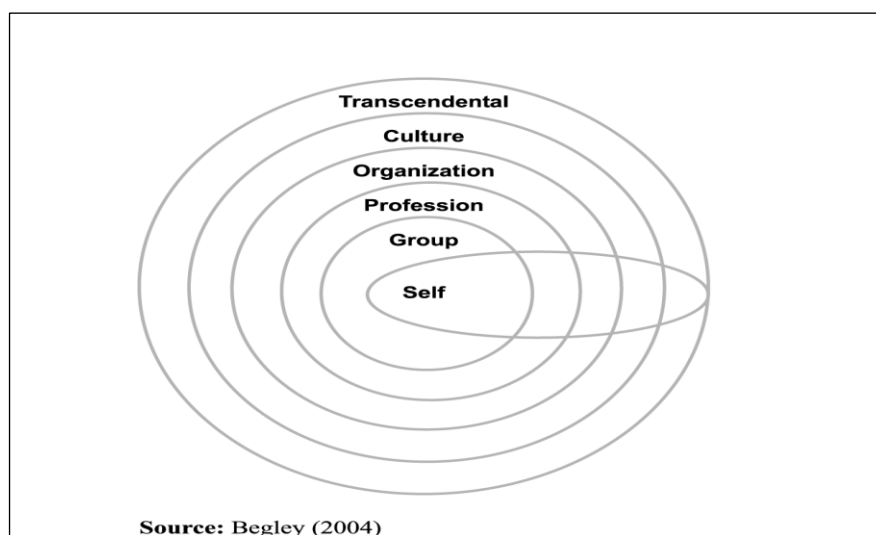


Figure 1.1: Begley's Onion Figure (2004)

These motivational bases include personal preference or self-interest; an inclination towards or concern for consequences and consensus and an inclination towards trans-rational ethics or principles ³(Hodgkinson discussed in Begley & Zaretsky 2004, p.646). Begley & Johansson, (1998) (in Begley & Zaretsky 2004) suggest that the normative motivational bases for administrative decision-making are the rational domains of consequences and consensus. They argue that school leaders often gravitate towards

³ Values that go beyond the rational or values adopted on principle.

values grounded in consequences and consensus. Although this may appear to be part of a democratic process on the surface, there is such a prominent tendency to rely on “rationalized processes that one could describe as a ritualized rationality” (Begley & Zaretsky, 2004, p.642).

Research on the routine decision-making processes of leadership, in other words, the “how” of leadership, with a focus on the school leadership, including the principal, and other members of the school community such as teachers and students within their perspectives and perceptions on school climate and effectiveness would be of value for new empirically grounded knowledge.

Emphasis on a type of leadership that upholds the democratic ideals that were intended for the educated American citizen is crucial at this point in time where the accountability movement threatens the welfare of democracy by placing strong emphasis on student achievement outcomes (test scores and hard data assessments) rather than on the processes of human relationships and shared learning. However there is not a clearly established consensus for defining democratic leadership and the dynamics that surround its detailed nature are variegated. This is due to the fact that democratic leadership encompasses abstract concepts that are susceptible to perceptions and constructions by different contexts and individuals. There are scholars (Furman and Shields, 2003; Gastil, 1994; Klinker 2006, Maxcy 1995; Starratt,2001; Woods 2005) who attempt to ground the conceptual ambiguity of the term, and how it applies to the field of education.

Democratic intelligence was strongly espoused by the progressive movement, particularly Dewey, as a social process; but because the ideas of what constituted educational progress were consistently in tension, the notion of democratic schooling did

not gain enough momentum to overthrow the business model reforms of the last century. However, the efforts made by these advocates for democratic schooling were significant. Following the lead of Dewey, Furman and Shields (2003) and Maxcy (1995) support the practice of deep democracy within the school context. Within a school community, microcosm of society, is where the ideals of individual worth and dignity, the value of respect for and dependence on others, and the process of free and open inquiry and critique, all centered around the common good, should be ratified. Starratt (2001) also incorporated Dewey's rationalities as a foundation to inform his own theories regarding democratic leadership. He takes on the argument about humans as intrinsically social beings whom, as part of a democratic way of life, enact moral leadership. In this sense the priority of cultivating a democratic environment "which supports participation, sharing of ideas and the virtues of honesty, openness, flexibility and compassion" (p. 338) is intrinsic in a life of civic virtue. Among the numerous activities of the democratic leader, Starratt envisions remaking US schools into miniature democracies (in Klinker, 2006). This alludes to Deweyian philosophy of schools being the place to enact democracy. Yet this endeavor may appear implausible, given the constraints of accountability and the motivations that are entangled within a standardized management paradigm.

Woods (2005) examines democratic practices after a comprehensive look at democratic theory from the religious, anthropological and political evolution of the democratic ideology. Adhering to the developmental model of democracy, he underlines the implications for democratic leadership. Inherent in the developmental model is "the interconnection between social action, people and the structures which order social

living” (p.8). Translating this into a broad conception of democratic practices and leadership it implies “what it means to be active in a democratic society, organization or group” (p.11). In tandem with Deweyian pragmatism in his discussion (and mirroring Starratt’s rationalities) Woods also espouses the developmental model, recognizing that students as social beings “continually engage in creative social action, influenced by and influencing others... unfolding humanistic potential—in a social order in which they are actively and self-consciously engaged” (p.17).

Democratic practices in schooling disrupt hierarchy. Woods refers to von Weltzien Hoivik (2002) when explaining these disruptions;

“There are two directions from which this disruption travels. One is from a concern with interests---the inequities and distribution and access to material resources, social capital, cultural acceptance, status, and so on. This centers both fair distribution and is the crux the concern of social justice. Another direction is the positive and optimistic view of humanity, centering on humanistic potential, in which all have the spark of goodness and wisdom that enables and entitles everyone to have their say in the conduct of social life. This spark is confined neither to those in positions of authority, nor to the oppressed and powerless. The process of disseminating opportunities to share leadership, accordingly, turns ‘the hierarchical pyramid upside down to discuss vision and values (as cited in Woods, 2005, p.17-19)

From the onset, educational leaders may be discouraged by the ambitious undertaking of re-conceptualizing their schools into scaled-down models of democracy, along with the demands for accountability that are needed. Woods (2005) underlines the significance of this mission when he states that “The conception of democracy challenges the dominant economic relationships and instrumental rationality of contemporary society and is in turn ‘cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in by these social forces and existing hierarchies” (p.xv).

The purpose of this case study is to explore democratic leadership practices within a traditional organizational ⁴model in two schools within a suburban district; furthermore to discover the extent to which two principals enact these practices, and determine if these practices are aligned with democratic ideals of leadership praxis. This study considers the perceptions of the teachers and students to determine if those members feel like they are taking part of the decision-making process.

The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How do two principals in a suburban school setting employ democratic leadership practices within a traditional management paradigm?
2. What are some of the teachers and students' perceptions with regard to the application of these democratic leadership practices?
3. Utilizing Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework, how do these leadership practices fit within a democratic approach to leadership?

⁴ Traditional organizational model refers to public schools that belong to a school district and that do not fall under the category of charter school or alternative education programs funded by the district.

By seeking to answer these questions, more insight can be gained as to what extent some leaders are able to employ democratic practices within a traditional management paradigm as well as the perceptions of teachers and students with regards to these practices and the implications that these practices can have on the concept of educational leadership as a product of not merely individual actions, but a collective endeavor.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

“To determine where we are going, it is vital to remember where we have been” –

Goodlad & McMannon (1997)

American public education has had the tendency to use a blend of political, bureaucratic, and professional accountability. In a traditional school, the leadership lies within the headmaster or principal, making the lines of authority clear, and it is often assumed that a school's values are aligned with community values. Teachers are expected to conform to those values and maintain the status quo. While an important quest of traditional schools (mirroring the first schools in the country) has been the continuation of democracy, the dominance of administrator authority in traditionalism obscured this purpose (Lambert 2002). Teaching and leading in the educational enterprise on all levels has become an increasingly and unavoidable political activity. Larabee (1997) argues that the central problems in education in the United States are fundamentally political. Recent domestic policy events like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the impact on state standards and accountability legislation and the concern for a strong democratic citizenry have directed attention to reconsidering leadership for schools concerned with democratic ideals (Freire, 1998; Giroux, 1994; Starratt, 2001; in Jenlink, 2009). Giroux (2002) addresses this problem by “rethinking the role of educators and the politics of schooling as America faces cataclysmic political, economic and legal changes” (p.1138). The idea that schools are places of cultural reproductions “wherein a ‘hegemony of controlling ideologies continues to advantage some populations while disadvantaging others” (in

Jenlink, 2009, p.3) takes on greater significance when assessing current issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the context of an already uncertain political, troubled and even dire economic landscape.

Schools exist in a democracy that is marked by an undemocratic economy, undemocratic communications and media industries, by undemocratic cultural institutions and by a form of representative government many see as serving special interests and itself more than the broad needs of the people (Apple & Beane, 1995; Giroux 1992; Starratt, 2001). But at the heart of education in a democratic society should prevail a commitment to maintain and expand democracy itself. Any lesser goal will ultimately fail to maintain public support for the enterprise of public education or foster a dynamic and self-critical democratic society (Fraser, 1997). With such inextricable ties between education and society, schools face many challenges in educating citizens within a democratic society.

John Dewey, author of *Democracy and Education* was at the forefront on the voices towards democratic education and leadership. He argued that,

“Leadership will be that of intellectual stimulations and direction, through give and take with others, not that of an aloof official imposing, authoritatively, educational ends and methods...[Rather, the leader will]be on the lookout for ways to give others intellectual and moral responsibilities not just for ways of setting task for them...and realize that public education is essentially education for the public; directly through communicating to others...ideals and standards, inspiring others with enthusiasmfor the function of intelligence and character in the transformation of society” (p.10)

As Dewey (1916) argues, education that is democratic facilitates the convergence and exchange of ideas and experiences between individuals in the public sphere, serves to foster the open dialogue of pertinent social issues, and may even facilitate the enactment

of social action in order to address these issues. In this instance the barriers of class, race, ethnicity, language and culture may be understated or altogether overcome. Seen as a daily occurrence, democratic education requires both, social structures and personal relationships that may encourage the active participation of all students and faculty, all while embracing the full spectrum of multicultural perspectives, experiences and ideas of what defines a citizen and the characteristics of a truly democratic community (Jenlink 2009).

It seems that when there is discussion pertaining to education, the purpose of schooling becomes relevant in shaping the discourse. But of course, this is very difficult to define as time passes and contexts change. To complicate matters, there are also the expectations of schooling: what schools are expected to do, what they actually do and what they should do. Nevertheless, the constant reexamination of these issues is essential for the renewal of the education system and the welfare of the educated citizen.

Traditional School Governance Contrasted with Shared Governance

As we study modern educational affairs it is also important to keep sight of the past. Examining the past can provide a sense of history from which we can learn. If we examine the path we have travelled, understand it and learn from it, we can be informed and guided towards the future with a sense of understanding and purpose.

Tyack & Cuban (1995) argue that a careful examination and a deep understanding of the history our nation's education system can reveal a clear picture of where we have been and we are headed. Hasty conclusions and assumptions of a 'catastrophic failure' of the U. S. educational system denote a lack of examination of the history of our

educational institutions. In order to engage in a serious and effective critique towards change, it is important to set the stage by looking at the history of school reforms in the US.

Tyack & Cuban's *Tinkering towards Utopia* (1995) is an important contribution towards this endeavor. The word 'Tinkering' in the title alludes to the gradual educational changes that have occurred within the apparent stagnancy of what they term as 'the grammar of schooling'. The grammar of schooling refers to "the regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction" (Tyack and Tobin, 1994, p.454). Looking at the standardized management paradigm that has dominated the 'machinery of instruction' and the frustrated efforts of critics and reform seekers, Tyack & Cuban shed light on the piecemeal educational changes since the beginning of the Twentieth Century.

In 1848 Horace Mann, the Secretary of the Board of Education in Massachusetts, referred in his twelfth annual report to the implications of education in a democracy and made an argument towards placing the blame of all social ills in public education. The first reforms of the Twentieth Century took to Mann's outlook. As Tyack & Cuban's timeline reflects, many of the important reforms suggest that societal utopia's inception should start within the educational system.

From the chronology presented in Tyack & Cuban's *Tinkering towards Utopia* (1995) it appears that technocratic control of schools set the pattern for school reform from 1900 to 1950. In ironic fate, *policy elites*⁵ wanted to decrease the politicization of schooling by centralizing control of school and delegating decisions about education to

⁵ Tyack & Cuban (1995) refer to, "policy elites" (administrative progressives)—to the people who managed the economy, who had privileged access to the media and to political officials, controlled foundations and were educational leaders in the university and in city and state superintendencies, who redesigned and led organizations of many kinds (including the NEA-National Education Association).

the “experts”. This created the opposite intended effect in praxis, for the authority was seized by this group; an inherently political trait.

According to Tyack & Cuban’s school reform timeline, the first systemic reform took place in 1920 when the Manual Educational Legislation sought to standardize schooling. They did this by consolidating school districts, increasing state funding, requiring state certification for teachers and assigning standard textbooks and curriculums. Most of the recommendations of 1919 were put into practice in the following six decades. By 1925, 34 state departments of education had managed to standardize more than 40,000 schools.

Tyack & Cuban (1995) discuss how private accreditation agencies also insisted on greater institutional uniformity, especially at the secondary level, all in the name of ‘educational progress’ (p. 20). This entailed upgrading the quality of the school infrastructure and qualification of teachers, having certified specialists and administrators as part of the school staff, the implementation of an elaborate fiscal counting process, having uniform student record cards and administering standardized intelligence and achievement tests. This resulted from the policy of grouping children by ability. Basic to the central educational authority of experts’ conception of educational science was a conviction that children had different abilities, interests and destinies in life. Hence, schools should treat them differently. This was their approach to equality of educational opportunity. They gave different labels to students who did not fit their definition of “standard” and they created tracks and niches for them- ‘a place for every child and every child in his/her place’ (Tyack & Cuban, 1995 p. 20). States and urban districts began

creating special schools or classes for physically and mentally handicapped students and as the population of students grew, the one room school became a vanishing breed.

Nonetheless, public opinion on education reinforced the propaganda of efficiency. Public opinion surveys conducted by Gallup in 1940 revealed that citizens' perceptions towards education were positive. Opinions on teachers were favorable and only one percent of those polled called for more discipline. Faith in the nation and its institutions was far higher in the aftermath of success in WWII than in the skeptical era of the Vietnam War and Watergate. There was a perceived sense of progress because of a steady rise in literacy, the increase in student population, and correspondingly, a tripling of per-pupil expenditures. The academic progressives were professed as the trustees of public interest. Yet, despite the positive opinions, the reality of midcentury American public education was not a seamless system of roughly similar common schools but instead a diverse and unequal set of institutions that reflected deeply embedded economic and social inequalities. Although most groups made some advancement in the quality of their schooling, the apparent progress, in truth, left many people behind. The people who suffered the most (low income families, blacks, working class immigrants, the disabled and females) had little influence over educational policy. In 1954, *Brown versus Board of Education* became the catalyst for the first major activist reform which led to Affirmative Action and the Civil Rights Movement. Social interest groups began to emerge and call attention to the social inequalities and the marginalized groups began to enter the arena of educational politics. Demonstrations and boycotts began to publicize and advance marginalized groups demands, seeking greater educational opportunities and to gain mainstream access in order to enact policy changes (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.20).

Media played up student unrest, violence, drugs and overcrowded schools. When the Gallup organization began systematic yearly public opinion surveys on public education in 1969 there was a significant shift in rankings and criticisms began to emerge. In 1978, 41 percent of Americans declared that schools were worse than what they used to be. Public opinion on teachers also decreased considerably (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.13). Yet the same perception that education was the solution to all social ills was still present. As Lyndon B. Johnson sought out to build the “Great Society,” he asserted that the answer to all our national problems came down to a single word: *education*. And just when poor and minorities began to gain access to more equal schooling, social scientists began to question the value of education. Like their predecessors in the progressive era the business oriented reformers of the 1960s and 1970s adopted managing and budgeting techniques. It was back to the rationale for cost effective management and efficiency. The reforms of these two decades demanded accountability and revived the cult for efficiency in education. As policy talk about decline shaped the politics of school reform beginning in the mid-1970s, the equity gains of the previous generation were increasingly downplayed or identified as the source of the problems. Beginning the decade of the 1980s emphasis was placed on IQ test scores and there was an increase in the endorsement for state graduation standards. But by far the most significant and influential school report emerged in 1984 with the reform report *A Nation at Risk*. As the title suggests, the data presented in this report asserted that regress, not progress was the trend in public education. It reiterated the paramount importance of schooling as the key to American society’s future, referring back to ‘the deeply ingrained utopian conviction about the importance of schooling showing that it is alive and well’ (p.14). Schools were

once again being blamed for social problems and this was a major call for reform in public schools. Since then, the mindset among the American public that "public schools are broken" can trace its roots back to the Nation at Risk report. The Nation's Report Card (National Assessment of Educational Progress) provides the current measure of student achievement in American public education. Data provided by NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) informs policy makers, researchers and the general public of the nation's educational condition.

Policymakers and *academic elites* have often dominated the discussion on reform. According to Tyack & Cuban, conversations regarding the purpose and ethos of schooling should not be left in the hands of academic progressives; instead this is where citizens should actively participate and have voice (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Education is a process of socialization, preparing each individual to take an active place in the specific society in which they belong. When education aims to lead individuals to a sense of citizenship, gain consensus on shared assumptions about individual freedoms and institutional needs and to perpetuate and reshape society, this becomes a collective endeavor (Goodlad and McMannon, 1997, p. 6).

During the twentieth century state and federal governance have exerted control in school classrooms. Even though teachers were leading the classroom every day under a thin veil of autonomy, content was regulated through standardized curriculums and textbooks. Later reform efforts through the Deweyian perspective vein tried to exert a more democratic approach to education consonant with the tenants of participatory ideology. As early as 1902, John Dewey argued that it was easy to dismiss the way schools are organized as something comparatively external and indifferent to educational

purposes and ideals (Tyack and Tobin 1994, p.454). As a critical response to the increasing systematic techniques of education-which relied heavily on scientific measures such as intelligence testing and managerial approaches to schooling, a group of educators sought to emphasize the importance of the creative and developmental aspects of human learning.

The Democratic School Movement

Educational Progressivism began with the belief that learners acquire knowledge best through experience and social interaction as opposed to what the educational progressives deemed *a top down authoritarian*⁶ model of education. The first efforts for progressive education can be traced back to the New School Movement in Spain in 1901 and a man called Francisco Ferrer Guardia. He was considered a "philosophical anarchist" promoting the Spanish revolutionary cause, which he endeavored to link to his

⁶ “The traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. Consequently, they must be imposed; even though good teachers will use devices of art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obviously brutal features. But the gulf between the mature or adult products and the experience and abilities of the young is so wide that the very situation forbids much active participation by pupils in the development of what is taught. Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders. Moreover, that which is taught is thought of as essentially static. It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future. It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule, not the exception. To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity; to learning from texts and teachers, learning through experience; to acquisition of isolated skills and techniques by drill, is opposed acquisition of them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal; to preparation for a more or less remote future is opposed making the most of the opportunities of present life; to static aims and materials is opposed acquaintance with a changing world.” (Dewey Experience and Education 1938)

educational crusade by means of an International League for the Rational Education of Children (Ligue Internationale pour l'Education Rationnelle de l'Enfance). His execution in October 1909 unleashed a protest movement on a massive and international scale, and brought him fame as a martyr to the cause of "rational" education. Modern Schools were set up in various locations in Europe and the Americas, though most (with the exception of New Jersey) had disappeared by the mid-1920s (Fidler, 1985). As a dissenter or idealist, Ferrer's educational goals were aligned with a socialist tradition. His Modern school movement favored the child centered commitment of the Naturalist school of Rousseau, Pestalozzin and Froebel, rejecting the social status quo.

The conception of education merely as "creative self-development" was indeed challenged from within the movement itself on the basis of demands for education directed at socio-political change; this was a dominant theme in Ferrer's work. He elucidated that if the institution of school was serving as a powerful instrument of control or oppression, then education had to be made instrumental or counter- hegemonic in the interest of the controlled or oppressed. He explicitly sought to "transform the school" ergo, transform society. His motivation was the illiteracy and poverty of his country. According to Ferrer, "Rational education is, above all things, a means of defense against error and ignorance" (as cited by Fidler, 1985 p. 258). In this perspective, education from the Modern School perspective was part of conception of learning which was transformative and spoke to "general features of human sociality: becoming aware of, competent within, able to change the definite social relations of a particular society" (p.258). In the United States, the first modern school-The Ferrer Center- was founded in 1911 in New York City.

The basic philosophical tenet of the free school movement t looks to question and challenge the traditional ideas and practices of the dominant pedagogy in favor of further expounding the conception of freedom and its meaning for childhood and education. To proponents of the free school ideology, knowledge and proficiency can be shared and developed independently from an established hierarchy and the institutional structures of formal schooling. An extension of Ferrer's Modern School Movement, free school advocates follow the non-institutional, non-authoritarian and counter cultural, child centered education that stemmed from the original Escuela Moderna (Graubard, 1972).

The first of these schools was the Summerhill School in Suffolk, England, founded in 1921 by Alexander Sutherland Neill. Personal Freedom challenges "social order" authoritarian educational model in place at the time. A reflective practitioner himself (Dominie's Log, 1916) Neill wrote his thoughts about education and his work as a leader in his school. He stated the purpose of education "should aim at bringing up a new generation that will be better than the old" (p. 12). This simplistic statement, yet enduring objective of schooling has driven both traditional and non-traditional educational movements, albeit through very different paths.

The Summerhill School project validated that an educational context that was unrestricted by the oppression of traditional schools, promoted student engagement and self-motivation. Neill strongly believed that the traditional model of imposed discipline actually hindered the internal self-discipline from developing and prevented the development of critical thinking skills. Neill's Summerhill School exemplified the concept of shared governance. His school model was the basis for later alternative education movements such as the democratic school movement which will be further

discussed in the subsequent section.

In the United States, the first free schools were modeled after Summerhill. The writings of Paul Goodman, John Holt, Jonathan Kozol, Neil Postman and others popularized the notion of the free school movement.

One of the most significant educational philosophers of this century who advocated for democratic practices within the school context was John Dewey. His educational philosophy developed as a critique to the dichotomous educational environment at the beginning of the century where schooling was highly mechanistic and failed to reflect the realities of the students' everyday lives.

After the Depression era began in the U.S., the 'progressive educators' led by George Counts, challenged schools to 'build a new social order' through reconstructionism and criticized what they deemed *laissez faire* capitalism. However, during the mid-century post war era, the movement for progressive education lost momentum. The ideas of traditional schooling seem to endure. Contradictory to John Dewey's ideas, which were the vanguard of the progressivist movement, the main purpose of schooling was to prepare young citizens of society through "organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skills" (Dewey, 1938). From his *Experience and Education* text, he states,

"Since the subject matter as well as standards of proper conduct pre handed down from the part, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity and obedience. Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils rue brought into effective connection with the material. Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct: enforced."

The development of public education coincided with the emergence of the progressive movement but initially schooling did not reflect the internal values of that movement (Handlin, 1959; Popkewitz, 1987 cited in Glassman 2001). Dewey's major arguments included that school was the appropriate space for democracy to be enacted, shaped and endorsed and that it was within the school that social reform should begin; that learning and the acquisition of knowledge occurred through experience and social interactions and the significance of transferring that gained knowledge into practice. The implications of his philosophy on education are significantly tangled with the concepts of democratic processes where value is placed on personal voice, open critical dialogue and public space; where the role of society is defined by its citizens through dialogue and consensus, not through an imposed fixed definition of an authority deems society should be. These practices of knowledge construction, critical thinking, experiential and reflective practices contradict the concepts of a 'one size fits all' education. Within the democratic schooling approach, learning is placed as a natural product of human activity. This shared process of learning and education is embodied by the practices of shared governance.

Leadership Practices that Promote Shared Decision-Making

As leaders look at the educational system to better provide for their students' best interest and simultaneously provide for a democratic education, the political variable often becomes a determining factor, not only with applying democratic practices within the decision making process, but as to how democratic education itself may be defined. Biesta (2007) revisits democratic education. He suggests that sometimes democratic

education is viewed as *instrumentalistic*—meaning that “education is seen as an ‘instrument’ for bringing about democracy”, and politics place the responsibility on the school to bring democracy to fruition. Biesta also questions the preparation of students as citizens of democracy and examines the relationship between education and politics.

He states:

“Many educationalists and politicians indeed believe that schools and other educational institutions have a crucial role to play in preparing the next generation for their future participation in democratic life... In this approach, the role of democratic education is considered to be threefold: (1) to teach about democracy and democratic processes (the knowledge component), (2) to facilitate the acquisition of democratic skills such as deliberation, collective decision making and dealing with difference (the skills component), and (3) to support the acquisition of a positive attitude towards democracy (the disposition and values component)” (p.746).

However, the conjecture lies in whether the role of the educational institutions should be to actively promote one or all three of the participatory components of democracy. This leads to the ever present question of the purpose or goals of democratic education and education itself. But is there such thing as a *singular* purpose? Biesta (2007) directs his attention to education through democracy. With regards to the evident political socialization through political practices and structures in the educational system in which students take part in, Biesta (2007) contends that “schools may have exemplary curricula for the teaching of democracy and citizenship, but if the internal organization of a school is undemocratic, this will undoubtedly have a negative impact on students’ attitudes and disposition towards democracy” (p.747). In other words, if we are teaching our students to be participants in a democracy in an undemocratic environment, we might be hindering the efforts of teaching for democracy.

Tensions between Democracy and Leadership

Dewey's philosophies when juxtaposed against the current accountability legislation (NCLB) present a critical tension between the democratic ideals of engaging in participatory discourse and shared governance versus the administrative misapplication of the legislative intent of NCLB (Jenlink 2009, p.188) which has led to high-stakes testing and data-driven accountability. This state led education with narrowed education agendas interferes with the true goals of education in a democracy. As Dewey (1916) Leonard and Stewart (in Jenlink, 2009) alluded to Meir and Wood (2004) in examining these tendencies,

“A very definition of what constitutes an educated person is now dictated by federal legislation. A well-educated person is one who scores high on standardized math and reading tests. And ergo a good school is one that has either high test scores or is moving toward them at a prescribed rate of speed. Period” (p.197).

Mullen (2008) argues that Deweyian democracy represents a much more effective model for education than does the current accountability model, which is based on narrowly defined competencies and standardized tests. Woods (2005) outlines the traditions stated by Furman (2002) that encompass the purposes of schooling and performance targets,

- The purpose of schools is instrumental, to serve national economic interests and supply the required workforce;
- The success of schools in this can be rationally determined by measurable student achievement;
- The individual's motivation for learning is instrumental; that is, to succeed on these measures of achievement and secure future financial prosperity;

- Teaching is a technical problem and teachers and schools can be held accountable for measurable student achievement. (p. 28)

A successful educational leader is identified by his or her ability and efforts to close the achievement gap. In spite of this, Gitlin (2004) asserts that “improving test scores does not automatically promote social or economic equality or equity. Improving test scores does not demonstrate to future citizens how to participate in and sustain their educational gains as citizens in a democracy. Reading and mathematics test scores are not the backbone of a democratic nation; reasoning is” (p. 13). This emphasis on accountability, focus on remaining globally competitive in the hard sciences for the economic wellbeing of our country “has placed the United States democracy deep into a political emergency, thanks to practices of distraction, demagoguery, and deception in politics” (p. 13). However, the outlook is not entirely pessimistic. Beane and Apple (1995) make a case for democratic schooling beginning their piece by referencing examples of democratic efforts in various public schools across the country since 1937. These instances exemplify democratic school reform efforts carried out by teachers and students and it is within the context of public education, where the emergence and formation of the educated democratic citizen transpires, that democracy should be sought. The authors argue that,

“Rather than giving up on the idea of the "public" schools and moving down the path toward privatization, we need to focus on schools that work. Despite some people's relentless attempts to make us think otherwise, we do not have to resign ourselves to choosing between a failing public school system and market initiatives such as voucher plans or for-profit "public" schools run by private firms like the Edison Project or Education Alternatives Inc. There are public schools throughout this country where the hard work of teachers, administrators, parents, community activists, and students has paid off. These are the schools that are alive with excitement, even in sometimes depressing and difficult

circumstances. These are the schools in which teachers and students alike are engaged in serious work that results in rich and vital learning experiences for all.”(p.3)

Many of today’s schools have lost recognition of educating future citizens to live in a democracy; and as outlined historically through the chronicles of school reform, there has been public pressure to do so. As previously stated, the Nation at Risk report instilled a sense of doom in society’s psyche regarding public education and pushed for a reform movement that held schools accountable for maintaining America’s economic vitality and global standing rather than stimulating interest in democratic ideals (Chubb, 2003 in Klinker 2006). This mindset has been perpetuated by the No Child Left Behind legislation resulting in a clear mandate for educational leaders. As the U.S. seems to have lost a sense of its democratic self (Diamond and Morlino, 2004 in Klinker 2006), it seems that, as Joseph Murphy (2002) writes, “our current practice of educational leadership has very little to do with either leadership or education. He argues that we need to base a new understanding of leadership on three metaphors: moral steward, educator, and community builder” (p.2). Citing the work of Osin and Lesgold (1996), Murphy concurred with the belief that moral stewards provide real learning opportunities to all students and create a moral order of shared values and beliefs. Community builders have an open door policy and honor community access and voice in decision making. These metaphors when combined with that of the educator are examples of educational leadership in a democracy (Klinker, 2006 p. 2). The combination of aligning leadership roles to democratic ideals seems to logically segue towards democratic leadership. However, this is a slippery slope as defining democratic leadership is very challenging and complex

within a context of clearly defined and highly politicized lines of authority and bureaucracy that exist in many traditional school settings. Aspects and concepts of top-down authority and power can be examined through the metaphor of Michel Foucault's Panopticism.

Panopticism: A Critique on Concepts of Knowledge, Power Relations and Authority

The work of philosopher Michel Foucault provides a modern and increasingly significant set of critical insights relevant to the construction of critique. Michel Foucault first examines knowledge in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and its translation from power. Looking at disciplinary powers and the creation of docile subordinates, his work contributes to the evolution of thought and social relations. Foucault refers to a metaphor of a panopticon, an architectural innovation by Jeremy Bentham, to explain internalized surveillance and the notion of *power/knowledge*. Bentham's stance on power is that it should be visible, yet unverifiable. He conceived a polygon shaped building with a tower at the center from which it was possible to see each cell where a prisoner was incarcerated. Bentham viewed his structure as a solution to control problems that arose from managing inmates; and extended his rationale to apply not only to convicts, but also to asylum inmates, factory workers, and even students. For Bentham, the panopticon offered benefits and solutions to a number of problems; raise the level of morality, preserve health, industry invigorated, public burdens lightened... its aim is to strengthen the social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, regulate discipline and facilitate progress (Foucault, 1977; McKinley & Starkey, 1998). However, Foucault's discussion of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon leads to his assertion

that visibility is a trap. The panopticon offered a powerful and sophisticated internalized coercion through the constant observation of prisoners, each separated from the other and allowed no interaction. The constant observation was seen to act as a control mechanism as consciousness of constant surveillance is internalized, much like the contemporary “hidden microphone” paranoia. Using this representation, Foucault states that the panopticon induces a sense of permanent visibility that ensures the functioning of power. The prisoner could see the tower but could not detect who was observing him or when, so the sense of constant surveillance was present. In this context, the panopticon was a ‘laboratory of power’ where experiments were carried out on prisoners and staff. Over time, surveillance became internalized and discipline was regulated.

The objective of Foucault’s use of the panopticon as a metaphor for a generalized model of society’s and human functioning of discipline was to represent the dynamics of power relations in a disciplinary society within the historical context of the seventeenth and eighteenth century; furthermore to illustrate how this ‘functional inversion of discipline’ is accepted, described as ingenious and taken as the effective way to police discipline and, thus, power. Panopticism, then, is the internalization of the surveillance; the process of ensuring order through power tactics that are economically effective and invisible, even though they are in plain sight. In a panoptic society, the need for surveillance and protection becomes ingrained in the collective psyche. The more functional and efficient the ‘structure’, the more effective the observation, thus enabling a sense of ‘security’. Foucault argues that societies that are more sophisticated provide greater opportunities to be controlled and observed. Referencing liberties and rights,

Foucault reiterates how a highly visible structure can be invisible in its blatant exertion of power. Along with the ideal of freedom, there must also be an acknowledgement of the mechanisms of power, control and observation of the modern 'free' citizen in schools, hospitals, factories and the street; making sure they conform to the norm to maintain order. The panoptic discipline, reinforced through society's institutions, results in an acceptance of regulations -even a demand for them at times- and this all stems from the internalized surveillance and the threat of discipline. The observer (central authority) has gained that power by accumulating the knowledge from the surveillance (observation) in a cyclical reinforcement (Mason, 2010). According to McKinlay & Starkey (1998), "Foucault reveals that behind the façade of efficiency, equity, or humanity which surrounds formal organizations of all kinds lie distinct concentrations of power and knowledge" (p. 167). From the Foucauldian perspective, truth and knowledge are weapons by which a society manages itself. Formal organizations (social institutions) have a foundation in the process of normalization at the beginning of the modern age. (McKinlay & Starkey, 1998; Mason, 2010).

Roth (1992) analyses scholarship on Foucault that pertains to the education field. He contends that in the application of Foucault's elucidations about knowledge, power and control to other social institutions, schools are central in the discussions, even though these institutions were not observed directly by Foucault himself. The efforts to apply Foucault's concepts and analytical procedures to school practices are not surprising given that Foucault "constructed an unsettling critique of both the cognitive structures and institutional arrangements of modern society"(p. i) Within the context of education,

Foucault's views on social regulation and discipline are referenced within the context of education, particularly when trying "to bare the ideology of reform and in the process exemplify 'Foucault's concern with the technologies of power and domination and the arbitrariness of modern institutions (Roth, 1992, p.i). Foucault's assertions that power resides in a network of relationships that are systematically interconnected is valuable when examining the dynamics of bureaucratic relationships within school organizations.

Organizational Politics within the Educational System

The asymmetrical distribution of power often taints the perspective of how we view organizations. Institutional politics is not about the manner in which schools are structured but rather the distribution of power both between society and the school and within schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2005 in Kowalski 2008, p. 36). As the U.S. public education system is directly linked to the government, it is important to look at these hierarchies of power in order to have a better understanding of how authority, control, influences and power play a role in decision-making within school organizations. Within this broad context of educational politics, groups at every level within the chain of command scramble to have authority or influence to enact change.

Hierarchies of Power

At the apex of the education system hierarchical pyramid is the U.S. Department of Education. This cabinet level department had an unsteady future since its conception in 1953 where it was a branch of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. After the data presented in the reform report *A Nation at Risk* in 1984, public response

demanded for the permanency of the Department of Education (Parkway 2006, p.54). The Department of Education is responsible for supporting educational research, disseminating the results of research, and administering federal grants. In addition, the Department of Education advises the President of the United States on setting a platform for his educational agenda. The federal government's stance on education is that the strength and well-being of the country are directly related to the quality of its schools. Their political agendas and initiatives have had strong influences in education and there are many examples throughout history (Lanhan Act in 1941, G.I. Bill of Rights in 1944, Federal funding for Science and Math after Russian launch of Sputnik in 1957 and NCLB in 2001 among many others). But perhaps the most important roles of the U.S. Department of Education are the formulation of funding programs and the enforcement of educational laws. It is the highest level of authority within the school education system (Parkay, 2006).

Next in the hierarchy is the State Department of Education which includes the state board of education and the chief state school officer (also known as commissioner of education or superintendent of public instruction). State departments have a broad set of responsibilities and they affect every school, school district and teacher education program in their state. The department is concerned with policymaking and implementation, distributing funds to school districts, reporting to the public the condition of education within the state, ensuring that school districts adhere to state and federal guidelines, accrediting schools, monitoring student transportation and safety as well as sponsoring research and evaluation projects to improve education within the state. The major role of the state department of education is that since the 1980s they are

“responsible for supplying the majority of funding for schools, thus its power and influence are extensive” (Parkay 2006, p. 49). The chief state school officer is either appointed or elected, depending on the state. He or she is responsible for selecting personnel, recommending educational policies and budgets to the state board of education, interpreting the state school laws and state board education policies, arranging studies, committees and task forces to address educational problems and recommend solutions and, reporting on the status of education to the governor, legislature, state board and the public.

States have power and legal authority to create and manage school systems. Almost every state in the nation has statewide academic standards and mandated standardized testing to assess student’s mastery of those standards. In addition, many states have exit exams as graduation requirements (Parkay 2006, p. 42).

Under state departments of education, at the district level, the superintendent is a key figure in determining educational policy. The superintendent is the chief administrator of the school district and “oversees that schools operate according to federal and state guidelines as well as policies set forth by the local school board” (Parkay 2006, p. 38). He or she serves as professional advisor to the board of education and makes policy recommendations for improving curricular and instructional programs. Superintendents must be accessible to the public and have close relations with the community in order to have an open dialogue about school policies between the school board and the community. The superintendent is also responsible for the development of transportation and placement policies of students within the district and to prepare an annual budget and adhere to that budget adopted by the school board.

School boards are responsible for approving teachers, administrators, and other school personnel hired by the superintendent. They are also responsible for developing organizational and educational policies and determining procedures for the evaluation of programs and personnel. School board meetings are usually open to the public. They are the level of hierarchy most accessible to the public. Its members are elected or appointed by the mayor and serve a short term of three to five years. School board meetings are optimum forums for discussion, debate and confrontations and as a result, very politically charged. Internal groups such as teachers' unions, administrators, and other educational employees as well as external groups from the community engage in discussions to promote their interests (p. 37). As Lindle (1996) states,

[W]hile school boards may be a form of local democracy; by that definition they are not apolitical. School boards are the only public forum where public and private interests are openly debated. But because boards are the middle ground between public and private interests, they are anything but non-partisan. (Lindle, 1996, p. 22)

These practices often lead to the community power structures. As McCarty & Ramsey (1971) state in Parkay (2006) there are four types of community structures. The first is the *dominated* power structure where one person or a few people from the "elite" control most of the political power in a community. A community with a *factional* power structure has two factions that compete for political influence. In a community with a *pluralistic* power structure, several interest groups compete and no one group dominates policies for the operation of the groups. Finally there are communities that have *inert* power structure where no power structure is visible and public interest in the school is low.

The relationship among federal, state and local governments is often tense. As the trend continues toward increased state control over educational policies, teachers and students may be increasingly affected by partisan politics at the state level. As opposed to functioning in harmony, these liaisons tend to be conflicted.

Decision-making Processes within the Hierarchy

The central authority within the educational organization is visible and accessible, as long as it is filtered through the proper channels of bureaucracy. One consequence of the standards and accountability movement in the American educational system today is that educators and administrators (at every level of the organization) are being asked to think very differently about educational decision-making. Accountability has had an effect in decision-making within the educational system. It becomes difficult for educators in their respective hierarchical level of power to make decisions within a democratic approach when there are many motivations, rationales and interests that prompt certain decisions. Kowalski states that research on educator behavior reveals that “many decisions including non-routine and important ones are shaped either by self-interests of formal or informal groups (p. 36). Kowalski also stresses the importance of looking at the internal politics within school organizations which ultimately have an effect on decision-making processes and behavior. Hoy & Miskel (2005) in Kowalski (2008) draw on Mintzberg (1983) to describe five types of internal political systems. (1) Personalized internal coalition: power is concentrated in the hierarchy of authority; (p. 2) Bureaucratic internal coalition: power is concentrated in policy, rules, and regulations; (p. 3) Ideologic internal coalition, low philosophical dissonance: educators make decisions

on the basis of shared values and beliefs; (p. 4) Professional internal coalition: power is determined by expertise and tension is high between position-based and knowledge-based power; and (p. 5) political internal coalition: power is distributed among one or more groups that may dominate administrators. Given the differences between these types of political systems, the effects politics can have on educators will depend on the configuration of the internal political arrangement they adhere to.

Politics address authority and control, including the distribution and limitations of power as well as the manner in which individuals and groups compete for power (Kowalski, 2008, p. 30). Ties that public education have with state government ensures that coalitions outside of schools can and will exert political influence. The parallelism of public schools as political organizations is grounded in three realities as stated by Kowalski et.al (2008),

“There is often disparity of values within members of the organization; the lack of resources within the organization to satisfy the needs of all of its members and; organizational goals and decisions emerge from an ongoing process of negotiations in which the various individuals and coalitions exercise power. In this context, educators are expected to make decisions in accordance with two standards: professionalism, meaning that their choices are made objectively and guided by professional knowledge; and public spirit, meaning that their choices are altruistically via a combination of emotional attachment (to others and the community) and a rational commitment to duty” (Kowalski 2008, p.31).

A disconnection exists between the preferred values and the reality in terms of what the community expects from educators—professional and objective decision-making while being sympathetic and “responsive to community’s needs as well as authority over schools” (Kowalski 2008, p. 31). Denoting Foucault’s emphasis on power existing within the network relationships, it is important to bear the place School within a

web of these symbiotic relations with other societal institutions and are influenced by wider societal norms and traditions, processes policies laws and practices (Jenlink 2009, p. 320).

As previously mentioned the critical perspective seeks out to explain, understand, challenge and transform current praxis that may seem conflicting with the ideals and purposes of schooling. In an effort to begin to challenge the current applications of power that clash with the ideals of freedom and democracy which were initially established as the educational goal for the U.S. democratic citizen, I have outlined the current hierarchies of power within the educational system and will proceed to delineate the conflicts between those ideals and the process through which schooling is carried out.

Power and Discipline: Establishing Transformation through a Critical Looking Glass

The social institution of School can take on the traits of social normalization as defined by Foucault when considering that schooling and educational reforms are ‘the very systems of reasoning that are to produce equality, justice, and diversity may inscribe systems of representation that construct “otherness” through the concrete principles of pedagogical classification that normalize, differentiate, and compare’ (Popkewitz, 1998, p.292). Thomas Jefferson said to James Madison of public education:

"Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. Enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve them. And it requires no very high degree of education to convince them of this. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty." (1787).

This quote represents both the consciousness of an internalized discipline between superordinate and subordinate logic that pertains to the discussion of THE educational intention. It pertains to the Foucault's analysis of power and ties in to modern critics' views of power, knowledge and domination. Part of his compelling assertion regarding the visibility of central authority being a trap, is that disciplinary power should not be viewed as a negative power. What's more, power should be seen in a positive sense as actively directed towards the body and its possibilities, converting it into something both useful and docile. Moreover, organizational superordinates do not create discipline through their actions or strategies. On the contrary, they are as much disciplined as their subordinates. Disciplinary power is invested in, transmitted by and reproduced through all human beings in their day to day existence. It is discrete, regular, generalized and uninterrupted. It does not come from outside the organization but it is built into the very processes of education (Donzelot 1980). Thus, the body of the individual is 'directly involved in a political field: power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs (Foucault, 1977, p. 27) In other words, the super ordinates exert power to "convert" the sub ordinates to acquire the same values they have. Subordinates have their own (internally driven and a product of their training and education) disciplinary power. Resistance is produced because of the difference between both disciplines. Resistance cannot be viewed as a "threat" to power, it provides a "target" so that a more concentrated effort can be used to make the necessary changes to remove or eliminate the resistance. There will always be social stress because there will always be differences between both levels of internally driven discipline. Resistance is produced

because the disciplining power of the subordinates is very different than the disciplining power of the superordinates. As this difference decreases, the resistance is reduced until it is eliminated. The symbiotic relationship is that resistance creates power and power creates resistance.

According to Foucault, power is seen as residing in the state and as filtering down to lower levels such as the school, the courts and so on. He characterizes this position as ‘juridic consciousness’ (McKinley & Starkey, 1998). In contrast, Foucault wishes to conceptualize power as located in the ‘micro-physics’ of social life in the ‘depths’ of society. Here, minute and diffuse power relations exist, always in tension, always in action. But it is from this level and from such small beginnings, that ‘a global unity of domination’ arises or the ‘globality of discipline’. So deeply entrenched is the disciplinary mode of domination, so pervasive is it in its operation, and so ubiquitous is it in its location, that changing any part of the power field leaves the basic form untouched. Discipline cannot be simply removed by challenging and overturning the state; it is part and parcel of the everyday life of the body of the individual and of the body politic.

Yet, this perspective on resistance does not refute Foucault’s perspective on prisons as being the archetypal organization of the disciplinary society. For him, ‘resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power’ (Foucault, 1980, p. 95). The very existence of power is seen as relying upon a multiplicity of points of resistance which play the role of adversary or target within power relationships; thus resistance is inconceivable without discipline. The existence of resistance does not mean that discipline is threatened. It means that discipline can grow stronger knowing where its

next efforts must be directed. In summary, Foucault maintains that the despotic character of the disciplinary mode of domination is built into the essence of contemporary society and affects the body of the individual, and is part of the political anatomy of society.

One of the most important and influential theorists of critical pedagogy is the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Much like Foucault he agrees that power can be a positive force. He contends that its character is dialectical and its mode of operation is always more than simply repressive. For Freire, power works both on and through people. On the one hand, this means that domination is never so complete that power is experienced exclusively as a negative force. On the other hand, it means that power is at the basis of all forms of behavior in which people resist, struggle, and fight for their image of a better world. In a general sense, Freire's theory of power and his demonstration of its dialectical character serve the important function of broadening the terrain on which it operates. Power, in this instance, is not exhausted in those public and private spheres where governments, ruling classes, and other dominant groups operate. It is more ubiquitous and is expressed in a range of oppositional public spaces and spheres that traditionally have been characterized by the absence of power and thus any form of resistance.

Freire understands that power as a form of domination is not simply something imposed by the state through agencies such as the police, the army and the courts (Foucault's juridic consciousness). Domination is also expressed by the way in which power, technology, and ideology come together to produce forms of knowledge, social relations, and other concrete cultural forms that function actively to silence people. But

the subtlety of domination is not exhausted by simply referring to those cultural forms that bear down on the oppressed daily; it is also to be found in the way in which the oppressed internalize and thus participate in their own oppression, much like Foucault's concept of internalized surveillance.

Through this important point in Freire's work he indicates the ways in which domination is subjectively experienced through its internalization. "This is an important attempt to examine the psychically repressive aspects of domination and, hence, the possible internal obstacles to self-knowledge and thus to forms of social and self-emancipation." (Giroux in Freire, 1985 p. xx)

Part of the process of engaging in critique is to first explain and understand in order to challenge and transform. Taking into account Foucault's discussion on internalized surveillance and discipline, having delineated and understood the mechanisms of power within the bureaucracy of schooling and acknowledging that both the superordinates and the subordinates have their own built-in disciplines, we can begin to recognize the cyclical dynamic between the two and begin elucidate on how a balance in power can be achieved and resistance decreased.

Paulo Freire on Domination, Resistance and Asymmetrical Power Relations

Utilizing the language of critique, Freire has fashioned a theory of education that takes seriously the relationship between radical critical theory and the imperatives of radical commitment and struggle. By drawing upon his experiences in Latin America, Africa and North America, he has generated a discourse that deepens our understanding

of the dynamics and complexity of domination. In this instance, Freire has argued that domination cannot be reduced exclusively to a form of class domination. With the notion of difference as a guiding theoretical thread, Freire rejects the idea that there is a universalized form of oppression. Instead he acknowledges forms of suffering that speak to particular modes of domination. By recognizing that certain forms of oppression are not reducible solely to class oppression, Freire steps outside standard Marxist analyses by arguing that society contains a multiplicity of social relations, which contain contradictions from which social groups can struggle and organize themselves (p.xii). Equally important is the insight that domination is more than the simple imposition of arbitrary power by one group over the other; similar to Foucault's perception that the State (institution of power) should not be targeted as the sole responsible of oppression or domination, but that the legitimate obedience is permeated throughout society through their consensual and coercive relationships.

For Freire, the logic of domination represents a combination of historical and contemporary ideological and material practices that are never completely successful, always embody contradictions, and are constantly being fought over within asymmetrical relations of power.

Underlying Freire's language of critique, in this case, is the insight that history is never foreclosed and that just as the actions of men and women are limited by the specific constraints and the possibilities that may follow from challenging them. It here that Freire introduces a new dimension to radical educational theory and practice, linking the process of struggle to the particularities of people's lives while simultaneously arguing

for a faith in the power of the oppressed to struggle in the interests of their own liberation. (Freire 1985, p. xiii)

Transformation within the Context of Critique: The Oppressor becomes the Liberator

Education is the vehicle for social culture and behavior. As a referent for change, education represents both a place within and a particular type of engagement with the dominant society (Giroux in Freire, 1985 p. xiii). Traditional schooling is merely the manifestation or exercise of delivering the knowledge or information. Education is more of a reasoning (analysis) of the issues that lead to the development of individual values, language and aspirations. “As a referent for change, education represents a form of action that emerges from a joining of the languages of critique and possibility” (p. xviii).

Against the claim that schools were only instructional sites, radical critics pointed to the transmission and reproduction of a dominant culture in schools, with its selective ordering and privileging of specific forms of language, modes of reasoning, social relations, and cultural forms and experiences. In this view, culture was linked to power and to the imposition of a specific set of ruling class codes and experiences. Moreover, school culture functioned not only to confirm and privilege students from the dominant classes but also through exclusion and insult to discredit the histories, experiences, and dreams of subordinate groups. Finally against the assertion made by traditional educators that schools were relatively neutral institutions, radical critics illuminated the way in which the state, through its selective grants, certification policies, and legal powers, shaped school practice in the interest of capitalist rationality. In Freire’s view, the

reproduction of capitalist rationality and other forms of oppression was only one political and theoretical moment in the process of domination, rather than an all-encompassing aspect of human existence. It was something to be decoded, challenged, and transformed, but only within the ongoing discourse, experiences and histories of the oppressed themselves.

Many of Freire's critics saw his vision as utopian, and it may very well be, but it carries the message that one should not surrender to the risk and dangers that come with challenging the dominant power structures and the transformation of internalized conducts and ideologies.

Democracy: The Inception of an Ideology of Transformation

An 'effective' critical theory, must give insight to what needs to be improved, and the mechanisms to make it "better". It follows from Horkheimer's (1972) definition of critical theory that it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation. In the case of contemporary capitalism (for Horkheimer), the defects (however they may be defined) can be improved by a process of consensus. This consensus can be obtained via a developed democratic system that can take into account all conditions or needs of the constituents. Given the emphasis among the first generation of critical theory on human beings as the self-creating producers of their own history, a unique practical aim of social inquiry suggests itself: to transform

contemporary capitalism into a consensual form of social life (*Critical Theory*, n.a., 2005) .

Ideologies Pertaining to Education, Democratic Values & Practices

For traditionalists, the language of crisis and critique becomes clear in their assertions that schools have failed to take seriously their alleged commitments for the demands of capitalist rationality and the imperatives to the market economy. The crisis pointed to in this case resides in the lagging state of the American economy and the diminishing role of the United States in shaping world affairs. Many of the radical left by contrast write off schools as simply a reflect of the labor market. As reproductive sites that smoothly provide the knowledge skills and social relations necessary for the functioning of the capitalist economy and dominant society, public education no longer provides the tools for critical thinking and transformative action (Giroux 1989). Like the work place and the realm of mass culture, schools have become a device for economic and cultural reproduction. “Within these contrasting, the language of crisis and critique has collapsed into either the discourse of domination or the discourse of despair.” (p. xi)

Discussions about democracy have often been tied to discussions about education. Because education has traditionally been viewed as the vehicle towards creating the social citizen, the dialogue veers towards the development of a democratic person through the process of schooling. Biesta (2007) contends that “in new and emerging democracies, schools are considered to have a pivotal role to play in the formation of a democratic citizen and the creation of a democratic culture” (Biesta, 2007, p. 741).

It is evident that due to the political nature of our educational system, dilemmas in democratic management and tensions within bureaucratic and hierarchical stratus will

arise within the educational system at all levels. The decision-making process will likely encounter conflicts between the personal values, relationships, interests and/or motivations of the individual, the community and the organization.

Critical sensibility is an extension of a historical sensibility. Providing a historical light when explaining or discussing pedagogical concepts provides a unique perspective to help understand the repercussions of critical thinking or awakening. As Giroux states,

“[Education] represents the need for a passionate commitment by educators to make the political more pedagogical, that is to make critical reflection and action fundamental part of a social project that not only engages forms of oppression but also develops a deep and abiding faith in the struggle to humanize life itself”(in Freire 1985 p. xiv).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Under the weight of the accountability movement and the demands of top-down bureaucracy, educational leaders find it challenging to engage in decision-making practices that promote collaborative endeavors which lead to democratic leadership practices. Nonetheless, there is no shortage of stories of the principal or “Messiah leader” (Woods 2010; Spillane 2006) who comes to save a failing school in a heroic turnaround, setting goals and achieving a new organizational routine and ends up transforming that school culture. Objectives are met, faith is restored and student achievement levels are accomplished. What is missing from these stories is how the hero was not alone in this endeavor. What roles do the other members of the organization (teachers, administration, students and parents) play in this turnaround tale? Schools are not lead to greatness just by one individual. Nonetheless, the heroics of leadership genre still persists even through there is ample literature that promotes the shift from focusing the attention from the apex of the hierarchical pyramid (Spillane, 2006). Focus is also often placed on defining what the leader’s roles, the objectives and functions are as opposed to looking at the daily processes and practices of leadership. Understanding leadership practice is imperative if research is to generate usable knowledge about and for school leadership.

This multiple case study looks at two principals’ decision-making processes and leadership practices and the perception of teachers and students regarding those practices. It explores to what extent teachers and students in these two mainstream schools feel like they are partaking in decision-making processes and to what degree these leadership

practices are aligned with notions of democratic leadership. This chapter outlines this study's purpose and rationale, detailing the methods used for data collection and analysis and the analytical framework adapted from Woods & Woods (2011). The findings are reported in the subsequent chapters.

Statement of the Research Problem

Within the traditional organization of school governance, political, bureaucratic, and professional accountability there are clear boundaries of authority. The school principal is legally the main leadership figure in a school, followed by the teachers who follow standards and maintain the status quo. Within a traditional bureaucratic organization, the hierarchical lines are visibly outlined. Recent scholarship on educational leadership (Apple & Beane, 1995; Gastil, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Blase & Blase, 1999; Biesta, 2003; Begley & Zaretsky, 2004; Woods, 2005; Klinker, 2006; Jenlink, 2009 ; Woods & Woods 2011) discusses the imperative endeavor leaders have to distribute leadership roles among organizational members in order to blur hierarchical lines into a more organic sense of belonging. This opposes ritualized practices built solely on action-consequence or '*quid pro quo*'. The call to contemporary leadership innovation and change points towards a more collaborative approach to leadership.

Democratic leadership strives to gain consensus through collaboration. As discussed by Begley & Zaretsky (2004), democratic leadership comprises the nature of the school leadership role, the social contexts of the community and an ideological social mandate. They state:

“Democratic leadership processes are desirable for schools not only because they reflect socially mandated ethical commitments to collective process. They can be professionally justified as the necessary, as much as appropriate, approach to leading school effectively in our increasingly culturally diverse communities and a world transformed by the effects of technology and the forces of globalization.” (p. 641)

The focus of Begley & Zaretsky’s (2004) argument on democratic leadership is in terms of how parent advocates use the democratic process to enable change in current practices within school administration. It illustrates the valuation process that exists within individuals as well as the organization in decision-making and what conflicts may arise that could hinder the efforts to achieve democratic leadership. Begley & Zaretsky (2004) state that in order for consensus and consequence oriented decision making to remain within the realm of a democratic process, and not just “ritualized”, it is essential to integrate effective dialogue among the members of the school community.

Research on the routine decision-making processes of leadership (the “how” of leadership) with a focus on the school leadership- effectiveness is valuable for new empirically grounded knowledge.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore democratic leadership practices within a traditional organizational model in two mainstream schools within a suburban district; in addition, to discover how two principals enact these practices, and determine if they are aligned with democratic ideals of leadership praxis. Guided by Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Analytical Framework, this study considers principals’ educational views, philosophies, leadership style and decision-making processes as well the perceptions of the teachers and students and determines to what extent those members

feel like they are taking part of the decision-making process. The rationale for this study originates by examining traditional school organizational arrangements and contrasting them with notions of democratic schooling. The research is guided by the following questions,

1. How do two principals in a suburban school setting employ democratic leadership practices within a traditional management paradigm?
2. What are some of the teachers and students' perceptions with regard to the application of these democratic leadership practices?
3. Utilizing Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework, how do these leadership practices fit within a democratic approach to leadership?

The Rationale for Developing a Case Study: The Paradox of the Standardized Management Paradigm and Democratic Aims

The latest wave of standards- based educational reform in the pursuit of school improvement places highly prescribed targets and standardized solutions as the focus for systemic change. Emphasis on national standards, prescribed curricula and testing have proven to create changes in teaching and learning practices, however, sustainable school improvement and educational performance with long term benefits seem to lie within the realm of student-teacher collaborative practices, professional development efforts and generating communities of practice that promote innovation, creativity and flexibility. The research evidence shows that effective leaders exert a powerful influence on the effectiveness of school and in student achievement, mainly in a reciprocal interaction and process that enable the construction of knowledge and meaning (Harris, 2005). Nonetheless the inescapable paradox is that while principals are held

accountable for their schools' success—which is measured by test scores—the intentions of empowering their school community with the ideals of a democratic society that call from equity and freedom fall behind these narrow metrics of success. The interactional processes of collaboration, reciprocal learning and conjoint agency are competing against the demands of policy-level priorities.

Significance of Study

Rather than viewing leadership practice solely as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, democratic leadership allows the space for leadership to be more a function of interactions between people and their situation. These interactions, rather than any particular action, are critical in understanding a more distributive type leadership practice. As contemporary scholarship acknowledges the importance of distributing leadership between members of the organization, it is important to look at the decision-making process of the principals, examine their relationship and interactions with the teachers and students, study other organization members perception of those leaders' practices and explore to what degree those teachers and students feel like they take part in those decision-making processes. By examining interactions and relationships between these individuals in a traditional school setting, the findings of this study can provide insights towards new forms of educational leadership practices that intend to blur bureaucratic assumptions and styles of management while acknowledging that leadership typically involves more people than those at the top of the organizational hierarchy. The exploration of the processes of decision-making and the school community as an inclusive type of leadership (principal, administration, teachers, students and parents)'s perspective can be a valuable contribution to the educational leadership discourse.

Researcher's Roles: Worldviews

Through my studies as a graduate student I have had the opportunity to visit schools in the area. I have been interested in exploring how principals can employ democratic leadership approaches within the framework and constraints of the standardized management paradigm that currently shadows the school district. Advocates for democratic leadership practices suggest that decision-making processes through consensus and collaboration seems to promote a positive learning environment where students take active roles in their school's governing process, teacher input is valued and there is a climate of equity and a sense of community. This qualitative research study gains insight on two school principals' decision-making processes, the roles of the teachers and students and evaluate if they are aligned with notions of democratic leadership practices.

When thinking about research design, I refer to the critical theory paradigm as a framework to think about measurement, analysis and personal involvement. It is important to shed light on the belief system I adhere to, so that my assumptions regarding this research are visible from the onset. The notion of paradigms as worldviews emerges from Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962/1996). This book presents paradigms are a way to summarize researchers' beliefs about their efforts to create knowledge (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). These paradigms are treated as world views or all-encompassing ways of experiencing and thinking about the world, including beliefs about morals, values and aesthetics (p.33).

Critical Theory developed from theorists from the Frankfurt School in Germany. Contributions by Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse shed light on the evolution of critical theory which began with critiques to traditional thoughts, particularly philosophies of idealist reality posed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Critical theory assumes that there are dialectic components to reality; a reality created and shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender-based forces that have been reified over time into social structures that are taken to be natural or real.

Regarding methodology, critical theory approaches tend to rely on dialogic methods; methods combining observation and interviewing with approaches that foster conversation and reflection. This reflective dialogic allows the researcher and the participants to question the 'natural' state and challenge the mechanisms for order maintenance. This is a way to reclaim conflict and tension. Rather than naming and describing, the critical theorist tries to challenge guiding assumptions. Critical theorists usually do this by beginning with an assumption about what is good (e.g. autonomy, democracy) and asking people in a social group, culture or organization to reflect on and question their current experience with regard to the values identified (e.g. To what extent are they an autonomous worker?) Critical theorists are not just trying to describe a situation from a particular vantage point or set of values (e.g. the need for greater autonomy or democracy in a particular setting), but that are trying to change the situation (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Discussing the meaning and implications of the concepts developed is imperative in the research discourse and researchers need to attend to tensions in competitive research orientations.

Research Methods and Procedures

Research, as defined by Kerlinger (1973) as the systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena (Kerlinger 1973, p. 76). Research has three characteristics in particular which distinguish it from experience. Whereas experience deals with events occurring in an arbitrary manner, research is systematic and controlled and it bases its operations on the inductive-deductive model.

Research is empirical, and scientists turn to experience for validation. As Kerlinger (1973) asserts, “subjective belief...must be checked against objective reality” (p.71). One of the traits of research is that it is self-correcting. Not only does the scientific method have a built in mechanism to protect scientists from error as far as is humanly possible, but also their procedures and results are open to public scrutiny by fellow professionals. As Mouly (in Cohen & Manion,1994) writes, “this self-corrective function is the most important single aspect of science, guaranteeing that incorrect results will in time be found to be incorrect and duly revised or discarded” (p. 4)

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. To learn about this phenomenon, the inquirer asks participants broad, general questions, collects the detailed views of participants in the form of words or images, and analyzes the information for description and themes. From these data, the researcher interprets the meaning of the information, drawing on personal reflections and past research. The final structure of the final report is flexible, and it displays the researcher’s biases and thoughts (Plano-Clark and Creswell, 2007). Within qualitative

design, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena” (Merriam, 2009, p.42). Case study research allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—in this case, organizational processes (Yin, 1984, p.4). Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Researcher Robert K. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2002, p. 23). Critics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Others feel that the intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings. Some dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool. Moreover, many social scientists still deeply believe that case studies are only appropriate for the descriptive phase, and that experiments are the only way of doing explanatory or causal inquiries. This hierarchical view reinforces the idea that case studies are only a preliminary research method and cannot be used to describe tests propositions. Distinguishing among the various research

methods and their advantages and disadvantages may require going beyond the hierarchical stereotype. The more appropriate view may be an inclusive and pluralistic one: every research method can be used for all three purposes—exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Yin 2002).

Another common concern regarding case studies is that they provide little basis for scientific generalization. But in fact scientific facts are rarely based on single experiments that have replicated the same phenomenon under different conditions. Case studies, like experiments are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense the case study, like an experiment, does not represent a “sample” and in doing a case study the goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). The goal is generalizing and not particularizing (Lipset, Trow & Coleman 1956, p. 419-420 as cited in Yin 2002 p.15) Researchers continue to use the case study research method with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems. For the purpose of this research, case study design is appropriate to examine a school community and its leadership to determine to what extent some leadership practices are democratic, considering principal educational philosophies, visions, and decision-making practices as well as perceptions from school faculty and students.

In a comparative case study analysis, data can be collected from several cases that can be distinguished from a single case study that may have subsets of cases embedded within. As Stake (2006) in Merriam (2009) explains,

“In multi-case study research, the single case is of interest because it belongs to a particular collection of cases. The individual cases share a common characteristic or condition. The cases in the collection are somehow categorically bound together. They may be members of a group or examples of a phenomenon” (p.5-6).

The more cases included in a study and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be (Merriam, 2009 p. 50). The inclusion of multiple cases is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity of the findings.

Analytical Framework

In order to determine democratic leadership practices and school community's views, I have adapted Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework. This analytical framework is founded on a *holistic conception of democracy*, which is a collaborative model with aims of participatory interests of all stakeholders. It is relevant to this study as it comprises of traits of participatory leadership discussed previously such as power sharing in decision making, transforming dialogue, voice and empowerment of the school community, moving away from the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy of schooling.

Woods & Woods' (2011) framework (Appendix A) was developed through years of researching and studying various academic institutions with the aim to contrast features that relate to two organizational ideal types. In their framework, the first ideal “represents the hierarchical, rationally focused bureaucratic school, with features that represents characteristics in their extreme form that do not necessarily exist in actual bureaucratic organizations” (Woods & Woods 2011,p111. This is contrasted with the

holistic democracy ideal represented by some of the key organizational practices and priorities associated with an ideal-typical concept of the holistically democratic school. By contrasting both of these ideals it intends to “facilitate an analysis of degrees of democracy” (p.112). For the purpose of my study I have adapted this framework in order to guide me in identifying democratic leadership practices according enacted in both research sites. The findings will be reported according to the variables presented in Woods & Woods’ framework. Each variable from Woods & Woods (2010) framework (Appendix A) is discussed in the following section.

The characteristics in the Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework give scope to the case study. These variables guided the data analysis and findings to determine to what extent the two principals’ leadership practices can be aligned with democratic ideologies as well as the perceptions and the level of participation by other members of each of the two schools.

The variables in Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Analytical Framework developed from previous research on holistic democracy in self-organizing systems. Woods & Woods adhered to the concept of holistic democracy which

“Views human beings as possessing inherent capabilities-intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual and so on-which in combination enable people to make progress towards the ethically good....draws on concepts and ideas such as creativity, self-transcendence and re-integration of human capabilities with the aim of challenging the dominance of instrumental rationality and the alienating character of the social order.” (Woods 2011, p.9)

Woods aligns with the ‘refashioning’ of the dominant discourse in organizations and his and Dr. Glenys Wood’s work developing the degrees of democracy framework is part of their contribution towards a paradigm shift with progressive views in educational

leadership vis à vis democratizing practices and decision-making. He argues that part of the contemporary outlooks on education require a ‘continual renewing’, an introspective look from those individuals, “humans who are organic beings....creative actors and interpreters of their personal and social trajectories and shapers of a political and ethical environment” (Woods 2011, p.6-8). Woods views holistic democracy as a concept that goes beyond democracy, beyond equal participation, consulting and voting rights. Holistic democracy explores the inner potential of human abilities of creating meaning and understanding,

“Aggregating different perspectives and areas of knowledge for practical decision-making, enabling organizations to be more flexible, innovative and effective and that it has intrinsic value in creating a more ethical culture that respects human needs and rights of organizational members...it goes further in explicitly recognizing the intimate relationship between participative decision-making and the development of holistic capabilities that include spiritual awareness and involve inner transformation.” (Woods 2011, p. 9-10).

In this outlook, individuals have the opportunity to voice different perspectives and discuss them in open dialogue, creating meaning in the process and engaging in a participatory type of decision-making process. This interaction has transformative effects for those individuals. Under the dimensions of holistic democracy are: holistic meaning (pursuit of truth and meaning), power sharing (active contribution to the creation of the institution’s culture and relationships), transforming dialogue (exchange and exploration of views, open debate and transcendence of narrow interest) and holistic well-being (social belonging, connectedness and feelings of empowerment embedded in democratic participation) (Woods 2011, p. 11).

Woods & Woods use holistic democracy as an ideal organizational type (Right side of the Framework, Appendix A). They contrast it with a rational bureaucratic organizational type (Left side of the Framework, Appendix A). The framework has two sets of contrasting features, each belonging to an organizational type. The features on the left side are represented in their extreme form and may not necessarily exist in actual bureaucratic organizations. Those features on the left side are contrasted with features of holistic democracy. Woods & Woods state that,

“The framework does not intend to make claims about individuals, but more what the organizational features appear to encourage and value. [Woods & Woods] do not conceive the features on each side as binaries, with organizations falling into one or another, but as poles of continua. The framework is an orientating device to holistic democracy as an organizational characteristic. By contrasting [holistic democracy] with an ideal-typical hierarchical, rational bureaucratic school, it facilitates analysis of degrees of democracy. The continua are not meant to be neat scales, along which schools or other organizations can smoothly move. They make up, rather, a conceptual lens for understanding the complex, often messy range of practices and ideas that constitute real life schools” (p.11-112)

Each pair of contrasting feature forms a variable expressed as a continuum. The variables are organized in the framework so that the features of a holistic democratic school are grouped according to which of the four dimensions of holistic democracy they relate to (holistic meaning, power sharing, transforming dialogue and holistic well-being). Given that these four dimensions in their framework are aligned with holistic democracy (which they state goes beyond the principal concept of democracy of just mere participation and voting rights), I take into account that the polar extremes of top-down bureaucracy and holistic democracy serve as adequate measure of degree (towards democratic leadership) for the leadership practices enacted by the principals. The variables are explained in the following section as derived from Woods & Woods (2011).

Organizational Purpose: This is the predominant kind of aim enshrined (implicit or explicit) in the philosophy that drives the organization. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, the principal purpose is competitive performance, and the overriding focus is the narrow metrics of success. The substantive aspiration is a feature of holistic democracy ideal type of organization, where the organization is led by values; the meaning and purpose of the organization is amplified so as to make organizational life genuinely and consistently committed to higher-order values beyond profitability and/or success measured in performative goals specifically. This is in relation to holistic democratic principles (freedom, equality, people's holistic development [substantive liberty], organic belonging and social justice)

Knowledge Goals: This refers to kinds of knowledge sought in student learning and professional development. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, cognitive-technical knowledge is the predominant focus; learning and professional development are concentrated on the acquisition of propositional knowledge, techniques and skills and progress equated with what can be measured by grades and quantitative criteria. In a holistic democracy ideal type of organization, holistic knowledge incorporates cognitive-technical knowledge and other forms particularly social, emotional, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual understanding concerned with meaning and values and awareness within and beyond the self. What counts as knowledge and understanding, especially in relation to areas such as meaning, values and spiritual awareness is not absolute and is open to debate, challenge and reflection.

Method of Teaching and Creating Knowledge: This is concerned with pedagogy and modes of professional development. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school Instruction within boundaries follows a transmission model in which knowledge is transferred from those with it to those without, often done within separate areas of expertise. At the other end of the scale as a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type is co-creation across boundaries where knowledge develops through the more complex and open process: dialectical movement between transmission of knowledge to learners and critique by learners; sharing of views, expertise and information amongst networks of learners; and constructivist learning.

Modes of learning: This concerns the modes of learning encouraged. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school Cognitive learning involves placing the main emphasis on left-brain activity (use of reasoning, logical analyses and rationalistic decision-making) and abstract learning. As a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type Embodied learning in its fullest sense uses spiritual, cognitive, intuitive, aesthetic, affective, ethical and physical capabilities.

Authority Structure: This concerns the predominating models of authority underlying the organization. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, the pyramid structure concentrates power in a single source of authority at the head of a hierarchical arrangement achieving organizational alignment through top-down direction and /or intense socialization, with upward accountability. As a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type Flat

structure denotes authority equally dispersed amongst an organizational membership, high degrees of self-organization and lateral accountability (responsibility to one's peers) with intrinsic rights to participation and freedom formally dispersed.

Spaces for Participation: This refers to the type of organizational spaces available for participation and how access to these is regulated. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school power concentrated in an individual or elite allows only for **exclusive** spaces for decision-making behind a closed boundary. Moving away from this, as a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type an organization creates spaces which open "boundaries of participation" and in the most democratic cases are **inclusive** of all.

Scope of Participation: This concerns the issues and activities open to independent initiative and participation. Participation may cover either or both of two levels of concern: Operational and higher order. The former is to do with the means and techniques to achieve given organizational goals and values. The later refers to the strategic direction, values and philosophy that underpin the organization and opportunities for organizational members to "reflect on and make meaning of their work together". **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the most strictly bureaucratic organization, the tendency is to make the scope as **minimal** as possible, restricting it to defined operational matters. In the most democratic organization, scope is **maximal** and covers both levels.

Communication flows: This refers to the freedom and direction of communication. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school **one-way flows** involve mainly one-way transmission of ideas

and views. As a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type, **multiple flows** involve openness of debate, free exchange of ideas and the practice of cultural justice (absence of cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect)

Key Purpose of dialogue: The focus of this variable is on the purpose of typical exchanges. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, **Information exchange** concerns functional passing of information, such as giving information or feedback, issuing or clarifying instructions. At the extreme end it involves strict hierarchical regulation over who has access to which information. As a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type,

Transforming understanding, as well as involving information exchange is about bringing different, sometimes conflicting views and perspectives to the surface, diverse sources of information and the fruits of different ways of knowing and out of these coming to a new understanding that advances collective knowledge and transcends differences. Complementing co-creative learning, this kind of dialogue ensures that the claims to holistic meaning are tested through sharing, dialogue and constructive critique.

Depth of Participation: This trait focuses on the kind of investment that people put in and which is valued by the organization. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, **Transactional engagement** is where the person seeks to maximize his or her own benefits in exchange for the efforts they expend (quid pro quo). It is consistent with a hierarchical organization focused on achieving alignment and staff engagement through material incentives and disciplinary sanctions. At the other end of the scale is **holistic participation** which involves the

whole person engaging, not just as a role-holder (Woods 2005) but as a personality with all their faculties and sense, including their spirituality and spiritual awareness.

Community: This refers to the nature of the social relationships in the organization. .

Features and polar extremes of continua: In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, **Instrumental belonging** is characterized by a set of instrumental associations involving relationships in which ego-centered and instrumental motives are dominant and commitment to collective goals and values is absent or observed only ritualistically. As a feature of a holistic democracy ideal organizational type, **Organic belonging** (Woods, 2005) is characterized by unity through diversity, rich caring relationships and strong affective bonds, in which ethical sensibilities are nurtured and cultural differences respected (cultural justice is practiced).

Personal: This aspect of well-being concerns the personal sense of connection which tends to be encouraged or facilitated by the organization. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school, **Alienation** (state of separateness) stands against **connectedness** (sense of unity with the self, other people and the natural world, and in its fullest sense, what we take to be the ultimate reality)

Mindset: Refers to particular aspects of the mindsets encouraged by the respective ideal typical organizations. **Features and polar extremes of continua:** In the rational bureaucratic hierarchy ideal type school a **Compliant mindset** is ingrained by the habit of relying on or deferring to authority as a source of direction and purpose and engaging in limited creativity and critical thinking. It is contrasted with **Democratic consciousness** which exercises and values critical, independent thinking, cooperative activity and the

nurturing of holistic capabilities to expand awareness in the pursuit of truth and social and cultural justice.

These features on the framework are organized and grouped according to the four dimensions of holistic democracy previously mentioned. The contrasting features are placed at opposing ends of each variable continuum. The data collected such as the perceptions of the teachers and students from the interviews and the focus groups, field observations and documents and artifacts collected throughout this academic year of research, is measured according to each continua to determine to what extent each principal's leadership practices align more with features from either rational, bureaucratic hierarchy or features of holistic democracy.

Each variable will be discussed in subsequent chapters where findings are reported. In the summary and concluding remarks after the discussion of each school principal, with the aid of the conceptual lens provided by the framework and a critical theoretical, emergent themes will be presented in an interpretation synopsis of the degrees of democracy.

Data Collection Procedures

In this case study research there are six primary sources of data collection. They are documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. Data were collected for this research through interviews, direct observation and artifacts.

Interviews

DeMarrais (2004 in Merriam, 2009, p. 87) defines interviews as a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. The most common form of interview is the person-to person encounter in which one person elicits information from another. Group or collective formats can also be used to obtain data. Both person-to person and group interviews can be defined as a conversation—but a conversation with a purpose (Dexter, 1970, p.136). Interviews are essential for attaining insight into a person’s behavior, feelings and how he or she interprets the world around them.

Interview Protocol

Principals

The school principals selected for this study were part of two schools that were perceived as institutions that seemed to be satisfying democratic purposes in education within the mainstream public education system. These sites were deliberately chosen within the rationale that this study would focus on schools that were not deemed as part of “alternative schooling” or “democratic schools”. When identifying the principals for this study the focus became to examine leaders who went beyond being mere administrators or leaders in name only. The participants distinguished themselves as true advocates for democratic endeavors in their schools. I have had previous interaction with the two principals that were chosen for this study from overlapping graduate experiences and interaction within the community.

Informal interviews were initially conducted to gather data regarding each principal's background and educational experiences. Initial formal interviews for both school principals included 15 open ended questions that targeted their leadership style, vision, beliefs about education and schooling, decision-making process and relationships with administration staff, teachers, students, parents and other members of the school community. Follow up interviews also include 5 to 7 open ended questions (Appendix B) that clarified/ corroborated information collected through field observations, data artifacts and documents and teacher and student interviews regarding scopes of participation, community engagement, professional development, relationships and communication flows.

Teachers

Interview data were collected and transcribed from 10 teachers (half of total faculty) at each school site. Participants were chosen at random depending on their willingness to participate and availability. Initial interviews were conducted and four open ended questions (Appendix B) targeted their perceptions of their school principal leadership practices and decision-making processes. Follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify field observations regarding professional development, professional relationships, engagement and communication flows.

Students

Student participants from each school site were selected after teachers from fourth and fifth grades from each school sent home consent forms for parents. The participants

that were consented to participate in this research study (15-20) on each research site were assembled in focus groups during available school hours arranged between the teacher and the researcher. Each focus group had duration of 30-35 minutes and questions regarding degrees of participation, sense of school community, quality of group interaction, academic self-esteem, sense of autonomy and group interactions (Appendix B) guided the discussion between the students and the researcher. The focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Observations

Observations can be distinguished from interviews in two ways. First observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs. Second, observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account, as obtained in an interview. In this research data collecting, informal interviews and conversations are interwoven with observation.

Observation is a research tool when it is systematic, when it addresses a specific research question, and when it is subject to the checks and balances of producing trustworthy results. Because observation is highly subjective, it is important to use other data collection sources in order to triangulate the findings.

Informal observations began the previous academic year when determining the research sites. Formal field observations (classroom visits, student activities, principals' meetings, faculty meetings and all school gatherings) and interviews began in early

October 2011 and ran until early April 2012. Filed notes were taken and transcribed to triangulate with interviews and artifacts.

Documents and Artifacts

Interviewing and observing are two data collection strategies designed to gather data that specifically address the research question. Documents however are usually produced for reasons other than the research at hand. Documents can be an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital and physical material relevant to the study at hand. The types of documents used in qualitative research include public records, personal documents and popular culture documents. Physical material as a form of document, broadly defined, consists of physical objects found within the study setting. Anthropologists typically refer to these objects as artifacts which include the tools, implements, utensils, and instruments of everyday living. Hodder (2003 in Merriam 2009, p. 146) includes artifacts and written texts that have physically endured over time as “mute evidence in the study of culture”.

District-wide data and site-specific data were also collected through documents and artifacts for analysis provided by the Mountain Laurel School district and both Cedar Heights and Emerald Lakes. District-wide documentation of regulations, policies, authority structure, district-wide vision, mission and philosophies which are applicable to each research site, building report cards, demographic information and district statistical data were collected through the district office and website. Site-specific data were

limited, but were collected through artifacts such as pictures, the school website and brochures.

Triangulation

One process involved in corroboration is triangulation. There are ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding. There is need for certain triangulation protocols or procedures which researchers and readers alike come to expect, efforts that go beyond simple repetition of data gathering to deliberative effort to find the validity of the data observed. We assume meaning form an observation, but additional observation can give ground to revise the interpretation. The triangulation of data between observations, initial interviews, follow-up interviews and collection of documents and artifacts was also guided in part by the variables of Woods & Woods (2011) *Degrees of Democracy Framework*. For this reason the following data matrix (Figure 3.1), guided by the analytical framework variables shows how findings were corroborated with several sources of data collection within a common scope.

Table 3.1 (Data Collection Matrix)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Participants:</i> PRINCIPALS			<i>Participants:</i> TEACHERS			<i>Participants:</i> STUDENTS		
Organizational Purpose	I	O	A	I	O				
Knowledge Goal	I	O	A	I	O		I		O
Method of Teaching/Creating Knowledge	I	O	A	I	O	A			O
Modes of Learning	I	O	A	I	O	A		A	O
Authority Structure	I	O	A	I	O	A			O
Spaces for Participation	I	O	A	I	O	A	I		O
Communication Flows	I	O		I			I		O
Key Purpose of Dialogue	I	O	A	I			I		O
Engagement	I	O		I			I		O
Community	I	O		I			I		O
Personal	I	O		I			I		O
Mindset	I	O		I			I		O

Research Site Overview

Carolina County⁷ is set in the heart of Pennsylvania. Nestled in a quiet university town, it affords the benefits of a small town with exposure to a myriad of cultures and transient population that enriches the town. Both Emerald Lakes and Cedar Heights Elementary Schools are part of the Mountain Laurel School District of Carolina County.

Mountain Laurel School District's Vision is "a boundary-less environment where learners are fully engaged in holistic development". Its mission is "to prepare students for

⁷ Pseudonym

lifelong success through excellence in education”. Every school in the district adopts the district wide mission and vision. District administrators contend that education at Mountain Laurel School District is about “engaging the ‘whole’ student – building relationships and enabling and encouraging our students to grow, explore, achieve and develop skills for life. This includes experiences within our vast array of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular programs”.

Mountain Laurel School district is comprised of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, one alternative education program and one virtual school program. They have a just under a 7,000 enrollment with an average teacher per pupil ratio of 23:1 at the elementary level and 24:1 ratio at the high school level. The district elementary schools outlined goals are: (1) emphasizing respect for self and others, (2) celebrating diversity, (3) providing a nurturing environment with active parent involvement, (4) holding children to high academic and behavioral standards, (5) providing an elementary failsafe support program and (6) promoting excellence for all children. They align within a holistic vision of community inclusion through a community service orientation, adopt leadership in technology applications, and adhere to and promote a local environmental consciousness.

Carolina County has an estimated population of just fewer than 145,000. The county has a total area of 1,112 square miles. The racial makeup of the county is 91% White, 4% Asian, less than 3% Black or African American, Over 1% Hispanic/Latino, 0.74% Other and 0.14% Native American/ American Indian. The languages spoken are 92% English, 2% Spanish, and 1.1% Chinese or Mandarin. There are 7 public schools districts in Carolina County, Mountain Laurel School District being one of those seven.

Chapter 4

Cedar Heights Elementary School: Mr. Blake Pierce, Principal

“Blake comes into the classroom, just wanders in. Sometimes I didn’t even know he was in here. He sits down. I say to myself “Oh, Blake is here, okay”. At first, as a new teacher it really caught me off guard because I would ask if everything was okay; if he needed anything. He would reply, “No I’m fine” and he would just sit down and hang out with the kids... and I got used to that, but then I would often find little post-it notes that would say things like “ You’re doing a great job!” or “ I really like the way you have your reading groups structured! Keep up the good work!” I mean how much effort did that take? That took no effort at all. But can I tell you... I saved that post-it note for two weeks. I sound like one of the kids! Almost like “Yay! I got a little gold star!” But it is that idea of someone noticing how hard I am working and validating that. And can I say that after he did that I started doing that with my kids. I saw how much that meant to me; I’d write a little post-it note and just have it on their desk and they’d come up and ask “Did you give this to me? And I would respond, “Yes”. And it really has made a difference for some of my students that have been struggling. The principal led by example” -Michelle Callaghan, Cedar Heights 4th Grade Teacher.

A colorful building sits on a small hill, with large windows that allow the fickle Pennsylvania sunshine to provide warmth to the long halls while its rays seem to pay a visit to the dozens of art projects that kids proudly display on the walls in their elementary school, Cedar Heights. The phrases “*Be Safe*”; “*Be Caring and Respectful*”; “*Be Responsible*”; “*Be a Learner*” seem to jump out in colorful letters from posters, brochures, and banners all over the school. When the sun fails to pop in, unfailing smiles and greetings from teachers and staff seem to echo in their footsteps in these hallways making up for the absent warmth on gray and dreary northeast winter days. Inside the fifth grade classroom, students are working on their math seated in groups of four, in

another classroom, second graders are gathered on the rug around the teacher while she reads *One* by Kathryn Otoshi and across the hall, first grade students are crowded around an aquarium filled with caterpillars learning about the life cycle of the butterfly. A typical school day at Cedar Heights seems like any other typical day in most public elementary schools across the country.

Cedar Heights is a public elementary school within the Mountain Laurel school district. With under 400 students, the demographics of the school are comprised of 73% white students, 14% Asian/ Pacific Islander students, 8% Black/African American students, 4% Hispanic/Latino students and under 1% other race/ethnicity (Figure 4.1).

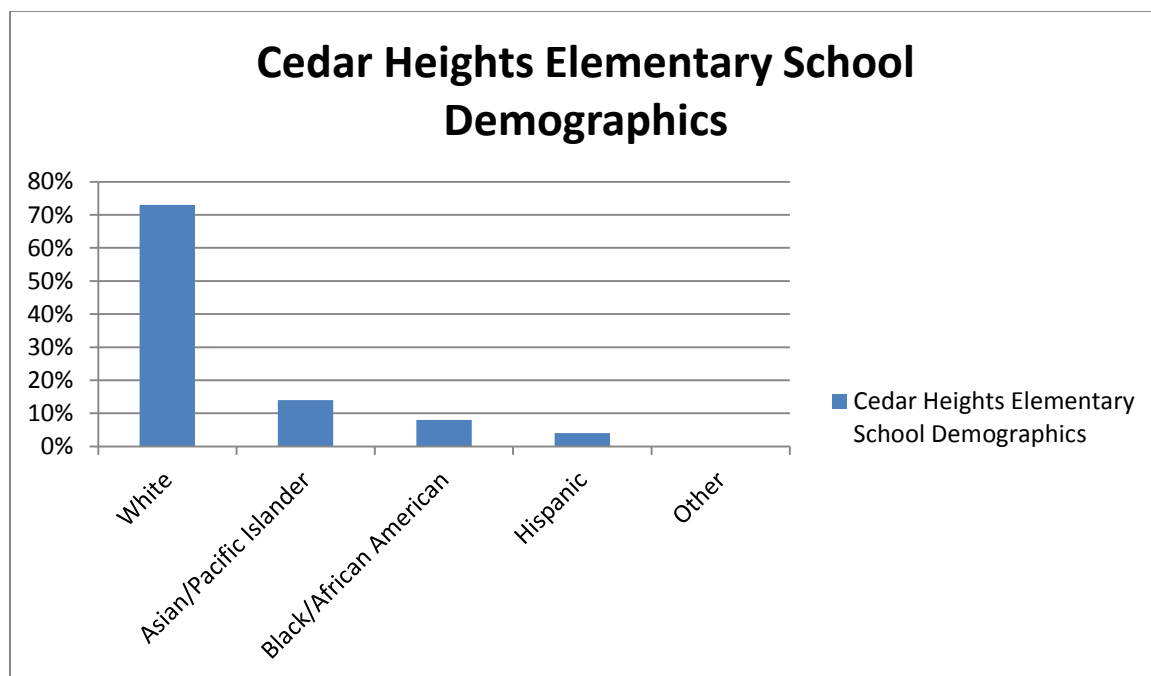


Figure 4.1: Cedar Heights Elementary School Student Ethnicity Breakdown

With 360 students in the K-5 school, the teacher to student ratio at Cedar Heights is 13:1. In 2011, 24% of the Cedar Heights student population is eligible for free or

reduced lunch. The eligibility for this National School Lunch program is based on parental income. Cedar Heights made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2011. Under The No Child Left Behind of 2001, a school makes AYP if it achieves the minimum levels of improvement determined by the state of Pennsylvania in terms of student performance and other accountability measures.

Mr. Blake Pierce is the school principal at Cedar Heights. He began this position six years ago. Prior to working as a principal he was a music teacher within the Mountain Laurel School District. He then moved to teaching at a regular elementary school classroom and then moved on to become a Curriculum Support Teacher (CRT). During his twelve years as a teacher he excelled as an outstanding educator and became a known and esteemed colleague. A few years after he began his principalship at Cedar Heights he also decided to pursue his doctorate in School Leadership. Blake is a dedicated and hardworking educator whose personal and professional qualities as a leader are transposed into the Cedar Heights school culture.

As Blake's lean and tall figure walks confidently to greet me, the smile on his face is almost as bright as his Marvin the Martian tie. He seems very personable and welcoming. It is the first of many meetings I would have with him. We walk together to a faculty meeting, which at Cedar Heights is known as a *sharing and learning* meeting. When he stepped into the school library, the *sharing and learning* meeting began with "compliments." The "compliments" part of the *sharing and learning meetings* are open for teachers who want to praise others on current projects or tasks that they found innovative or helpful. It is a collaborative feedback session and each teacher who gets praised has a chance to pick out an item from a bag that Blake is holding. I watch as the

teachers who get praised by their colleagues proudly reach into the treat bag and excitedly pull out school supplies, candy or stickers. After the compliments session, the meeting is led by the school's ESL teacher, Dr. Nina Greene. She discusses the district policies regarding school and classroom documentation that goes home to parents of ESL students. She communicates to teachers that some parents who speak Mandarin, Japanese, Hindi and Spanish have offered their assistance in helping teachers translate these documents if needed. She names the parents and points to the teachers who have children whose families are speakers of these languages. The teachers seem pleased with the assistance offered from the parents and the initiative taken on by Dr. Greene. The meeting moves on to teachers' discussion of the district website school safety guidelines and drill procedures at Cedar Heights. The concern regarded the student teacher interns at the school and a refresher of the "buddy system." It is Fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Laurie Kinsley's turn to discuss the literacy curriculum meeting and workshop attended by teachers and the principal at the district office that morning. Discussion of that district meeting agenda transitioned into Blake's leading of the professional development session of the *sharing and learning meeting*. He brought five short scholarly articles on questioning and critical thinking for the teachers to peruse. He then asked teachers to discuss the articles and look at the theories and teaching practices examples and explore applications to the teachers' particular subject areas. He broke the teachers into groups of five and led them to examine the article guided by three tasks. Each group of teachers had to then present to the rest of the group a general description of the article they selected; how the theories in the articles were confirmed in their teacher practices and finally each group had to come up with one new idea to put those theories into practice. The teachers

worked diligently, wholeheartedly and animatedly, regardless that the meeting was after a busy and tiring school day. Near the end of the meeting a general discussion ensued regarding the groups' presentations, Blake left copies of each article for teachers to pick up on the way out if they were interested in what other groups had done. The meeting lasted an hour and twenty two minutes.

The next week during my field observations as I wandered into Jill Cooper's First grade classroom, I realized she was applying what her group had discussed at the *sharing and learning meeting* to her vocabulary discussion during the reading block. This was one of the observations that may be interpreted as supportive of the multiple assertions made by faculty that Blake modeled learning and led by example.

Analytical Approach

This study compiled data from field observations, interviews collected from the school principal, faculty and students and document analysis and artifacts in the span between early October until early April of the 2011-2012 academic year at Cedar Heights elementary school. These findings are organized according to the variables from the Woods & Woods (2011) *Degrees of Democracy Framework*. Each variable is explicated and supported by interview, observational and document data. Degree modifiers in the narrative describe the gradability towards holistic democracy. An overview of the school principal's leadership practices decision-making processes and educational philosophy introduce the discussion of the findings. A synopsis of the findings and analysis concludes this chapter taking into consideration an overview of the variables to help determine the degrees of democracy of Blake Pierce's leadership

practices and the implications for Cedar Heights Elementary School through the conceptual lens of Woods & Woods (2011) *Degrees of Democracy Framework*.

Mr. Pierce's Decision Making Practices

Cedar Heights Elementary school is part of the Carolina County Mountain Laurel School District. Being part of the US education system, the decision making process follows the typical hierarchical flow. Mr. Pierce's role as a principal is to make most of the decisions regarding school operation, behavior management, staff supervision, school budget, curriculum and school community activities. Blake Pierce represents Cedar Heights Elementary school publicly in the community and interacts with district state and federal authorities. This study's scope focuses on the decisions made at the school site such as decisions that relate to the daily schedule, decisions relating to the choosing of instructional materials, decisions relating to the development of institutional rules and policies and decisions regarding professional growth and development of the school. Mr. Pierce's decision-making progress was regarded by faculty members as collaborative. Relationship building in Mr. Pierce's decision-making process was an emergent theme in the interview data. As John Mitchell, a fourth grade teacher states,

“ Blake has a way of making everyone feel as if they're a part of that decision making process even in the times they can't systematically be part of it. He just has that finesse and honestly most of the time people are involved. He will bring an idea and ask people “what do you think about this?”, or “how do you think this will work?” or “what do you think this would look like?” He definitely takes input from faculty or the various people who are involved in whatever it is that he's working on. I never really looked at him as saying “This is what we're going to do” or “this is how it has to be done”. It was more like “Hey, I have this idea, what do you think?” Or we have to do this, what do you all think about this?” and he would collectively take those ideas and he would churn them and mold them and then he would be the one to come back and say this is what WE came up with.”

Jennifer White, fifth grade Math teacher agrees. She says *“I just think he has such a unique leadership style in that he is very genuinely interested in what people think. He isn’t just saying that either. He really wants to know and he really takes that into consideration before decisions are made”*. Mrs. Betsy Logan, Third grade teacher who has worked at Cedar Heights Elementary for two years stated that she was very surprised at Mr. Pierce’s decision-making approach. *“Coming here as a new person”*, Mrs. Logan said, *“I would often remark ‘Wow I can’t believe how much freedom and how much input people do have in terms of decisions in this school!’”* and she said that all the other teachers would say, *“Well, that’s Blake. That is his leadership style”*. Mrs. Logan had five years of experience as a Fourth grade teacher in another elementary school in Carolina County prior to joining the faculty at Cedar Heights. She further stated that in terms of voice and agency, she knows that Mr. Pierce is “in charge” but that she feels that teachers *“are able to give our ideas freely and, and not have to be concerned about whether or not he won’t agree or that if he doesn’t agree, it is okay. There isn’t that feeling that there will be some sort of retribution later if there is a disagreement. I find that to be very unique.”*

Teachers collectively stated that Mr. Pierce valued relationships. He took the time to get to know each teacher very well. Ms. Anne Patrick, another second grade teacher who has been at the school for seven years teacher related that [Blake] *“knows his staff very well; he knows the strengths of each person and takes that into consideration, then with that input he moves on to the broader population of teachers. He knows who to involve and when to involve them and he does it in a way that when it comes out to*

everyone that it isn't just HIS idea or HIS decision. It is the effort of many people working together" and that had an overall impact on their perception of him as a leader.

Organizational Purpose

Although Cedar Heights Elementary School and Mountain Laurel School District do not have an explicitly articulated democratic vision, almost the entire staff at Cedar Heights Elementary school nonetheless agrees that the principal and the school culture promotes ideals and practices congruent with democratic principles and participation. And they come to an agreement that it is Mr. Blake Pierce's beliefs that promote these ideals.

Mr. Pierce states his three core beliefs about education: flexibility, transparency and continuous learning. In terms of flexibility he asserts that,

"Schooling can't be a factory model where one size fits every person. There has to be a lot of flexibility to meet the needs of students, their individual needs, at all levels. Once they enter the school system then you have to adapt to the students and not try to force the student to adapt to the system". Regarding transparency he said that *"schools should be open structures. Education is messy; and we shouldn't try to hide our mess. Transparency shows people this is what we do and this is how we try to do it"*.

And finally when discussing continuous learning, Mr. Pierce believes that educators should not only emphasize the importance and value of learning, but that it should be modeled as well.

"As adults we are learning, as educators we are learning, and we model that with our students. We show them how we are learning so that they see the value of learning. When you have a structure such as a school we have the idea here that everyone is an educator in the building, whether you are the secretary, someone who's working in the kitchen, teacher, paraprofessional, healthcare person, guidance counselor, we're all teachers. What we do teaches and what we

don't do teaches. What we say teaches and what we don't say teaches. And we are all teachers of every child, that each person may have their specialty. They may be a second grade teacher and they may have chief responsibility with those 20-some kids. But they are still a teacher of every child in the building".

One example of this open valuing and modeling of learning is reflected on a bright yellow sign on every classroom door in the Cedar Heights Elementary school building. It displays "**The adults in this room are reading:-** _____ by _____" and a blank to write the current books and respective authors that the teachers, inters and paraprofessionals are reading at home. The signs are also in the nurse's office, the main office where the reception staff works, in the computer room and in the cafeteria. One fourth grade student volunteered her excitement to be sharing the reading interests of one of the administrative staff. She stated that she burst into the main office carrying a copy of the book *The World According to Humphrey* by author Betty Birney and said "*Mrs. Woodward you are reading the same book I am!*" She said Mrs. Woodward smiled back and said she was reading it with her ten year old granddaughter at home and then the two began sharing their favorite parts of the story.

This modeled learning was also echoed by teachers regarding professional development as well. Diane Foster, Kindergarten teacher related that it was evident to her that Mr. Pierce guided the faculty towards collaborative learning and the sharing and building of ideas. "*Blake wants us all to be learners. His vision is for all learners, learning together. He wants collaboration. He brought inquiry in as an optional project for us to do, and we worked together to explore a question, and we might not find an*

exact answer to the question but we sure learn a lot going through that process". While

Ms. Foster discussed her perception of Mr. Pierce's vision, Blake outlined it as,

"As a leader I feel that modeling and focus are very important. I recall starting here six years ago and having certain beliefs of what I wanted the school to be like. But not, not verbally sharing that, not saying to the staff well this is where I want us to, to go. What I did was illustrating my beliefs with actions and behaviors. I told myself to 'walk, walk the walk and then later on you can talk the talk'. Another piece is focus because if one tries to do everything, you do nothing. That was another thing I did not verbalize. I didn't suddenly come in and say all right here's where our focus is going to be. It sort of evolved. What came out was having a focus on literacy; it became our determining factor as a school. Let's have that be what we continually talk about, continually learn about. I mean not that we ignore the other things but I think you have to have focus. And the focus unites everybody together because then we're all working on the same thing."

Mr. Pierce indicates that his leadership vision and beliefs are informed by experiences and pivotal people in his life. He also takes into consideration his own experiences as a student, and looks at the academic experiences of his children as well. He declares that he attempts to remain in a continuous learning mode. This prompted pursuing his graduate degree and he often shares coursework materials and articles with teachers and in the *sharing and learning meetings*. Together they discuss them and build on ideas. Mr. Pierce says these practices spill into professional development. Often times the teachers out of their own initiative will bring in articles or materials that they have gathered and share it with him or with each other. *"There is so much value in collaborative learning; it is more authentic when you learn from your colleagues. I think that in American schools we have to try and overcome this 'egg-crate' structure of creating knowledge"* referring to unidirectional sharing. He stated that his goal has been to break out of that with multidirectional sharing and modeling. Even though physically in the building the dividers still exist, the objective is to find ways to dematerialize those

walls through collaboration, sharing and modeling. Within the constraints of a building that does not have the structural mechanisms promote collaboration he adamantly believes it is up to educational leaders to encourage it.

As stated in the description by the Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy framework, the principal organizational purpose is the predominant kind of aim enshrined in the explicit or implicit philosophy that drives the organization (Woods & Woods 2011, p.113). The Mountain Laurel District stated belief and purpose is that,

“[The] education of youth is a shared task involving parents, community groups, the schools, and the students themselves. As a primary member of that education team, the district serves both directly in the instruction and guidance of its students and indirectly in assisting and supporting the efforts of the other members of the team. In fulfilling its responsibility, the district asserts an uncompromising commitment to educational excellence that will be reflected in the content, materials, activities, and methods employed in the classroom, in the fair and equitable treatment of all individuals within the school system, and in the maintenance of a flexible and responsive school system organization. Excellence cannot be attained unless the ideals of equality and human dignity are honored and promoted. Thus, the quest for educational excellence will be complemented by a corresponding commitment to the fundamental principles of our democratic society. Finally, in carrying out these functions, the district will seek to develop effective partnerships with parents, citizens, and the community, businesses, vocational training institutions, and the university to enrich the total education of its students.” Mountain Laurel School District⁸ Purpose Statement

Furthermore the district mission is *“to prepare students for lifelong success through excellence in education”* Analysis of these statements guided by the overriding focus espoused in Cedar Heights Elementary school and pairing it with the site specific rules of *“Be Safe”*; *“Be Caring and Respectful”*; *“Be Responsible”* and *“Be a Learner*, the meaning and purpose of the organization moves towards an amplification of higher-order values and success beyond achievement measured in performance goals. The practices of

⁸ District pseudonym

the district, however still tend to lean towards competitive performance valuing, reporting on scores dictated by standardized measures for performance achievements for public dissemination required by the state, and publicly ranking school success based on this data. Data on higher order values is reported informally on the school website. Although Mountain Laurel district practices are not within the specific scope of this, they are taken into consideration when examining some constraints that can affect the degrees to which leadership practices can move towards features of holistic democracy. Taking into consideration the specific purpose as stated by the district and adopted at Cedar Heights Elementary school, and in light of examining the school principal's leadership practices, taking into consideration the school adopted vision and philosophy from the district, and the perceptions of the students and the teachers at Cedar Heights Elementary, the specific purpose that drives the organization leans towards substantive aspirations and organic belonging.

Knowledge Goals

The kinds of knowledge sought in student learning and professional development reflect Mr. Peirce's focus on Literacy. According to Third grade teacher, Betsy Logan, she supports the organizational focus on literacy because "*literacy touches on every other part of the learning process, whether it's math or science or social studies, even writing. Everything is interconnected, ...having children who are good readers, who feel good about themselves as readers, and then that trickles down in helping them to feel good about themselves as learners in general.*" Teachers collectively expressed that a focus on literacy carries a goal beyond cognitive-technical knowledge. In one "whole school

gathering” session where the entire schools meets at the auditorium, the topic of bullying was presented first by students and teachers discussing the importance of the 4b’s of Cedar Heights Elementary School. The entire school shouted out the four rules in unison. Then, a group of fifth graders presented a video they made where they interviewed teachers, students and the principal on how important friendship and relationships are in their school and how each of them values respect for one another. The meeting concluded with Mr. Pierce grabbing the microphone sitting on the far left side of the stage and with the lights dimmed he read the story *One* by Kathryn Otoshi. Prior to this date I had observed Second graders discussing this book in their classrooms as well. I later spoke to Mr. Pierce and other teachers about the activity and they jointly expressed that their focus on literacy aims to make connections towards values of respect and awareness of themselves and others, encouraging learners to develop understanding, create meaning and internalize that the school body is interconnected in these values.

Analysis of these observations and interviews, paired with achievement goals set forth by the demands of district requirements, it can be interpreted that Cedar Heights Elementary schools is beyond cognitive-technical end to some significant degree. While the principal and teachers effectively carry out their responsibilities to guide students towards standardized performance achievement, there is also a collectively espoused duty to promote certain traits of holistic knowledge.

Method of Teaching and Creating Knowledge

Pedagogical approaches and professional development at Cedar Heights carry certain characteristics of a rational bureaucratic organizational model in that there are standardized performance goals sought and dictated by the district in accordance with

state mandates for both students and staff⁹. However, Mr. Pierce's leadership practices encourage a shifting towards the co-creation of pedagogical content and professional development within the teaching staff. His leadership practices denote a notable shift towards an ideas-generating culture. Regardless of the constraints of traditionally bound hierarchy, Mr. Pierce's approaches towards learning and creating knowledge demonstrate features of holistic democracy to a somewhat high degree. Evidence of this was observed consistently throughout the year, specifically with professional development in the *sharing and learning meetings* with the dissemination of scholarly articles, the multidirectional sharing of information, consultation and collaboration regarding content-based projects, building of instructional material and school-wide activities. Often staff would state that their input was sought and accredited in professional development activities. First grade teacher, Marla Harrigan's statement describing how innovative she thought Mr. Pierce's approach to teacher evaluation was illustrates how motivated she feels in carrying on her professional development through continuous learning. She states,

⁹ In 1999, Pennsylvania adopted academic standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and for Mathematics. These standards identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels. School districts possess the freedom to design curriculum and instruction to ensure that students meet or exceed the standards' expectations. The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based, criterion-referenced assessment used to measure a student's attainment of the academic standards while also determining the degree to which school programs enable students to attain proficiency of the standards. Beginning July 1, 2000, Act 48 of 1999 required persons holding Pennsylvania professional educator certification to complete continuing education requirements every five years in order to maintain their certificates as active. School entities are required to examine their student-level data, determine their professional education goals from the data, design an action plan with activities that meet their identified needs, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the training. courses taken outside of an area of certification or work assignment outside of the content area are deemed as *unacceptable activities* by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

“It wasn’t a mere assessment of my practice now, it wasn’t just another annual teacher evaluation; Blake making this into an inquiry project for us made me so interested my own question, it made me look at my teaching practice differently; it made me more reflective, constantly wanting to improve—not to effectively pass an evaluation—but as a long-term objective for myself, for my colleagues and for my students.”

Not only did teachers express their appreciation for this approach for professional development that Mr. Pierce carried out, but another teacher expressed how valuable it was for her to share her inquiry project with her colleagues and after sharing she was approached by teachers wanting to know more about her inquiry process and seeking to collaborate with her the following year. Diane Foster said,

“Teachers have come to me and said ‘I really liked what you shared. Can you tell me more about that?’ And there was a time where I would never have wanted to share, but [Blake] made us all feel like we do have something valuable that we can share with each other. He also values that collective aspect of planning and implementing programs that were going on in the school. He is always looking for ways to make things better, values taking things to the next level.”

This initiative to engage in shared learning was also observed with students taking on leadership in the anti-bullying promotion video presented at an all-school gathering. Supported by the teachers and Mr. Pierce, who was interviewed by one of the fifth graders for the video, this was a student-led project that presented values of respect, responsibility for one another, raised awareness of cyber bullying and promoted kindness towards others.

Modes of Learning

Although Cedar Heights has a clear focus on shared learning, the state mandated assessment of student performance indicates a strong emphasis on cognitive learning and data-led evaluation of student progress. Nonetheless, the decision-making practices at

Cedar Heights can't be labeled as ritualistic. Mr. Blake Pierce's emphasis on shared learning, valuing student self-esteem and holistic awareness are also present and espoused by the faculty and staff. These values find themselves woven into curricular applications.

Power Sharing/ Authority Structure

The authority structure in the school is a *pyramid structure* (Figure 4.2), concentrating power in a hierarchical arrangement through top-down directives and upward accountability towards district, state and federal mandates and stated policies compliance.

Yet the leadership practices that have been employed by Mr. Pierce in terms of his decision-making promote a collaborative process to take place before the final decisions are made and/or presented to the staff. As evidenced by observation and interview data, input is consistently sought by Mr. Pierce regarding decisions made at Cedar Heights. One statement such as this one made by First grade teacher, Michelle Callaghan echoed what others had stated about Mr. Pierce regarding authority, "*We always felt we had a voice... and he is always very interested and respectful of what we have to say. There is a sense of collegial partnership...not so much a top-down thing*".

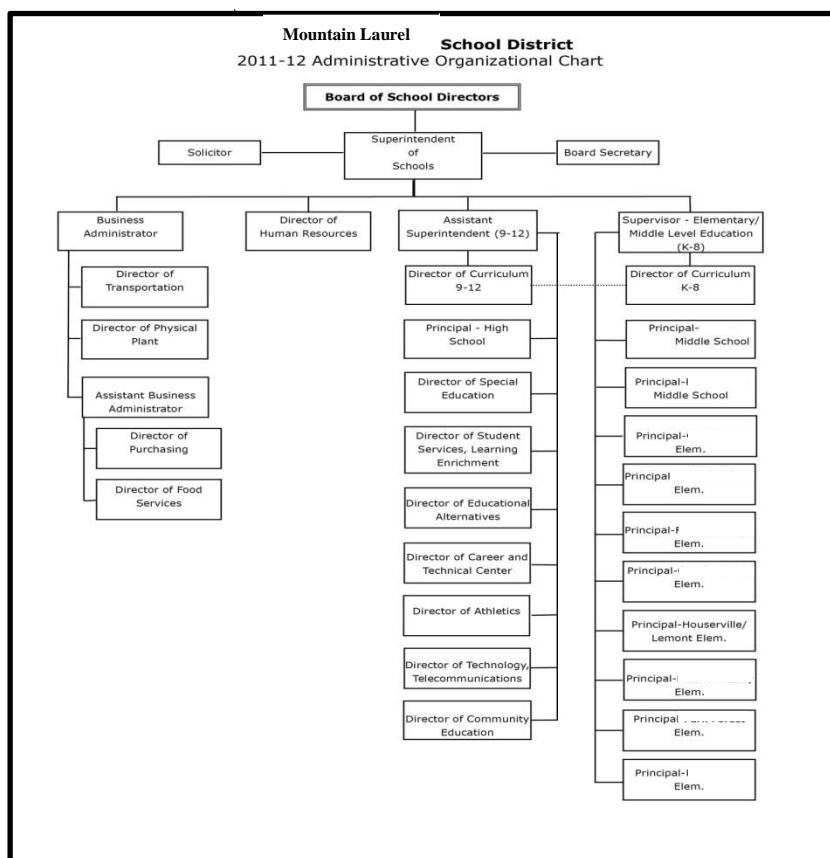


Figure 4.2 Mountain Laurel School District Organizational Chart

Veteran teacher Laurie Kinsley also discussed issues of authority and Mr. Pierce's leadership practices. She said,

“It feels democratic in a way here, especially with the staff. I do feel like in some ways we all have the reins of our school. Teachers certainly have the autonomy to take initiative in certain projects and we acknowledge and respond to that initiative and leadership with respect. When a teacher is leading a certain project or initiative, like the Helping Hands Fair¹⁰ for example, she or he calls a meeting and asks for volunteers or delegates without having to go through the principal. There is trust and respect in each other as professionals and colleagues. In those meetings we feel as if there is a continuation of how Blake models his own leadership style. I can tell you with certainty that is collective sentiment here at Cedar Heights. So even with some of the constraints we may have as a public

¹⁰ This was a teacher led activity that involved Cedar Heights Elementary students making crafts and items to help raise funds for charities around Carolina County. This activity also involved parents, Carolina County High School students as well as some student organizations from the state university local campus.

school, I come to work every day for the past six years to a place that does not feel constraining or limiting.”

More poignantly, Ms. Anne Patrick stated,

“I see it more as this umbrella, this overarching idea of all of us working together and coming together like the metal pieces in that umbrella and hold it all together. That is my vision of the structure of this school more so than a ladder structure where the principal is on top and there is a hierarchy of teachers that follow.”

Student interview data also suggest how voice and participation are promoted by the school leadership and it affects how authority is viewed differently at Cedar Heights. One fifth grader who had moved from Michigan to Carolina County two years ago pointed out that Mr. Pierce was very different from his old principal. He said,

“Mr. Pierce is not scary. When I first came here I was scared to see him come into the classroom all the time. I thought someone was in trouble. But then I got used to it because he would just come and sit to talk to us or check out what we were doing, just like the other teachers. I see him walk in the hallway and give us high fives. Then I wasn’t scared of him as I was of my last principal at my old school. One time a group of us went to his office because he liked some writing that we had done for Mrs. White’s class. He really liked our projects and we even had lunch with him in his office. My friend got to ask him some questions for a video our class did and he was really funny. He is very smart too!”

From the teacher interview data it is interpreted that Mr. Pierce’s approaches to leadership regarding his role in the school seem to move to a certain extent towards power sharing practices that indicate lateral accountability, somewhat blurring the lines from top-down hierarchical model in their school to a more distributed approach to leadership. The interview data and observation data indicated each member of the school—from the principal to the cafeteria and maintenance staff—was regarded and respected as an educator. As expressed by all the teachers interviewed this approach created a sense of

shared responsibility from everyone, and sense of ownership. Mrs. Diane Foster stated “*Blake wants every child to view every adult as a teacher in the building.*” Mr. Mitchell from Fourth grade also stated that “*the adults in the building set the tone for all of the children who are in the building. It is up to us to expose the kids to different kinds of thinking and different kinds of ideas so that they have this well-rounded view of the world.*”

Spaces for Participation

The Spaces for participation variable in Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework refer to the types of organizational spaces available for participation and how access to these is regulated (p.119). Within Cedar Heights Elementary there are site-specific groups that carry certain autonomy and are in charge of making decisions that are specific to their organizational role. Below is a list of teacher led organizations¹¹ at Cedar Heights Elementary with a brief description of each.

Teacher Initiatives

- *Reading Club* - Teachers choose books to read and discuss together on their own. Sometimes the titles are curriculum based. Other times the books may be based on behavior or creating a positive culture.
- *Service Learning Committee* - Teachers work with students to connect service projects with learning experiences. An example would be kindergartners and second graders from Easterly gathering materials to support the PAWS animal shelter program.

¹¹ This list is from a document compiled by Cedar Heights Elementary school staff

- *C.R.A.T.E.R.* - Crisis Response and Traumatic Events Response - This is a committee that plans for and responds to crisis moments such as the death of a student.
- *Positive Behavior Committee* - This committee plans and implements behavioral initiatives such as a reward system for the 4 Bs - Be Caring and Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, Be a Learner.
- *Social Committee* - Teachers meet for social gatherings outside of school approximately once per month. The committee also does things like setting up baby showers or sending flowers when a family member passes.

Student Initiatives in 2011-2012

- Diabetes Walk Fundraiser
- Crayon Drive to gather crayons for an art project that will be shared with older adults.

With regards to inclusive or exclusive access, there is limited participation given that the communities that are teacher-led do not automatically include all staff. Membership is dependent upon volunteering or delegation by the teacher leader of a particular group. Not all teacher-led organizations include Cedar Heights Elementary students and they are not open to members of the Carolina County Community, unless by prior arrangement.

Although the purpose of most of these organizations, such as the *service learning committee* is to make community connections and promote civic engagement, the planning meetings themselves have somewhat limited access. The Parent-Teacher Organization is open to all parents and teachers of Cedar Heights Elementary School. The initiative started three years ago by Mr. Pierce of having *whole school gatherings* approximately once a month during the academic year. The purpose of these gatherings is to have the whole school discuss important issues concerning Cedar Heights Elementary, present the outcomes of teacher and student led projects or activities, present community initiatives that are relevant to the school and share literacy events. In this space, there is inclusive participation since there is an open invitation to parents and other members of the community to attend and participate.

Even though Mr. Pierce's leadership practices encourage shared collaboration and leadership initiative within the staff at Cedar Heights, the boundaries of participations are still somewhat limiting. The overall spirit of the school, faculty members and staff is to continue to work towards developing more initiative and inclusive participation, beginning with collaborative approaches towards the co-creation of knowledge, innovative inquiry and professional development.

Scope of Participation

According to Woods & Woods (2011) participation can be examined through two levels of concern: operational or higher order. Within a minimal scope, participation is restricted to strictly operational matters that have been defined by the senior leadership. Within a maximal scope, participation is directed strategically to fulfill the philosophy and values that underpin the organization and towards opportunities "for organizational

members to reflect on and make meaning of their work together” (Woods & Woods 2011, p. 120). As previously discussed, Mr. Pierce advances the aims of shared learning for all members of the school. Dr. Nina Green, the ESL coordinator at Cedar Heights Elementary illustrated how she perceived that Mr. Pierce moved beyond goals that dealt strictly with operational matters when she said

“He isn’t just a manager. He is extremely involved in other matters, in content, in curriculum, in the entire goings on at the school. He wholeheartedly fosters participation and learning, in teachers as well as kids. I don’t think a lot of people do that. I think they manage a building and they deal with the troubles and they are just administering and he does more than that”.

Communication Flows

Regarding the direction of communication and the freedom for the transmission of thoughts, ideas advice and instruction, Mr. Pierce’s leadership practices reflect a high degree towards multiple communication flows. His practices as evidenced by observational and interview data promote an open exchange of ideas, recognition and respect for teacher and student voice and promoting participative practices, which is inconsistent with a top-down leadership styles. His views on shared learning promoted a free exchange of communication between students and staff, restricted only by the structural and organizational boundaries of grade division and class schedules.

The general perception is one of multi-directional flows of information and a valuing of voice. Mrs. Marla Harrigan specified how *“everyone is free to give their opinion and it’s valued. I mean, there’s definitely differences of opinion when people are working through things but this is a space where you can feel comfortable sharing that”.*

Mr. Mitchell echoed this by stating that,

“People just know that they have a voice. They have a voice and Blake and colleagues are going to listen to it. It is okay to disagree. And even though a decision was made and one does not agree, you still recognize that you are heard and in the end you come to accept that whatever decision is made was made under the consideration of ideas and other people’s opinion and I’m okay with that. I think most people are okay with that as long as they know they can be heard.”

Key Purpose of Dialogue

Regarding the key purpose of dialogue at Cedar Heights Elementary, information goes beyond mere transmission, and moved towards information exchange. As discussed above, sometimes conflicting views or perspectives were brought up among staff, but the opportunities for sharing and valuing voice allows for dialogue to become meaningful and rich. This can advance collective knowledge, co-creative learning and constructive critique, which are features towards a more democratic experience.

Engagement

Far from merely maximizing his or her own benefits in exchange for the efforts they expend, the principal, the teachers and staff at Cedar Heights Elementary engage wholeheartedly in their role as educators at the school. As previously presented through interview and observational data, teachers and staff share a genuine collegiality, professional connection and respect towards each other, their ideas and their voice. They claim collective ownership of the school, nurturing students in a communal objective. Contrasting to rational bureaucratic hierarchical organizational type of engagement, where achievement and staff engagement is incentivized by materials, compensation or

disciplinary sanctions, Mr. Pierce's effort in building relationships, trust and respect with the members of the school has resulted in whole-person engagement willingly and committedly.

Community

The nature of the social relationships at Cedar Heights Elementary has been promulgated by Mr. Pierce with a focus on collegiality, nurturing professionalism, the valuing of voice and participation. Mr. Pierce emphasis on community building has been through modeling respect, openness and communication. Supported by the stated district purpose, "*[The] education of youth is a shared task involving parents, community groups, the schools, and the students themselves*", Cedar Heights Elementary seems to move away from ritualistic practices that superficially promote community engagement. Rather there seems to be an organic sense of belonging within the school community. Coaxing all members to feel responsible for their school, encouraging students to regard every adult in the building as an educator, encouraging student initiatives, Mr. Pierce seems to have created through his leadership practices a communal sense of ownership for Cedar Heights Elementary. Ms. Patrick illustrated by saying

"We all want Cedar Heights to be a student centered environment where they have say in what's going on, feel like this is their school, not our school, and we're the teachers of the school; that they have ownership of it. This happens too with our lessons, with student led lessons...a lot of inquiry based learning as well as hands-on activities, and discovery and we want their input on what they want to learn"

Mr. Pierce's emphasis on the student as a whole carries responsibilities that all members of the organization have adopted thoroughly. Mr. Mitchell supports this by stating,

“For Blake, school isn’t just learning about reading and writing and math. Those are all really important but also learning how to function as a community. And I think that has been what I really enjoy about this school. And I’ve been in a lot of other schools too, and they were very different, although very productive. But this one is different than other schools. We have a transient community of students because we are close to a university.... We have to look out for the needs of those students, all of them different. We all work together towards a common goal—educate all of the kids and move everybody as far ahead as we can and come together as a community. So I think he has set the tone that we can do it all if we all work together. And I think the staffs feel that way and I think that the kids feel that as well.”

Dr. Greene echoed when she relates,

“Blake wants the curriculum to be relevant. I think he wants skills to be developed within an integrated manner from a holistic perspective. I don’t think he is a person who is really quite content with any kind of discrete instruction. I think he wants meaning to be the basis of the education experience for kids. I think he wants to develop the whole child. He cares about character building.”

Part of Woods & Woods (2011) description of the instrumental belonging feature that is consistent with top-down leadership is that ego-centered motives are dominant. Without prior discussion with participants regarding the framework or other literature used in this study, it was interesting that one teacher weighed on this in an interview remarking that *“Blake’s ego doesn’t ever seem to be a factor with the things that he is doing. Teachers can see that in a leader. When it is more of leaders that rule as top down management, I think ego gets in the way because they are so concerned about what everyone else is going to think... so for example a statement such as ‘so we need to make sure this is happening’ is very common. It is not like that here with Blake”*. This type of ritualized rationality is also discussed by Begley (2004), presented in Chapter 1, where administrators make decisions veiling real intention or obscures unintentional effects of the decision by highlighting values acceptable to stakeholders.

Creating a sense of community is a challenging endeavor at Cedar Heights Elementary, given that there is transient student population because the elementary school is so close to a major university. Students who come from different cities, states and even other countries come with a set of expectations, so the challenge exists to not just introduce those students to a new school culture where everyone is learning together, and they feel part of the school community, and that that is *their* school. Mr. Patrick also spoke on this issue enthusiastically commenting, “*that’s half the fun... we have the community changing so often that it’s constantly meeting and greeting new families, bringing them in, making them part of the family. So we really have to set the tone for the school and present to them right away that this is a school that really cares about kids and there are expectations of respect, working hard, doing our best and of working and learning together*”.

This aspect illustrates the organic belonging feature towards holistic democracy as stated by Woods & Woods (2011) which “characterizes by unity through diversity, rich caring relationships... in which ethical sensibilities are nurtured and cultural differences are respected (p.123).

Personal

Wholehearted connection to the organization was observed and attested to from the members of Cedar Heights Elementary. During the span of this study which began in early October 2011 and lasted until early April 2012 as well as prior visits to the school, relationships were explored between colleagues, the students and the principal and informally with parents, teacher interns and other members of the community. The sense of unity was apparent to a high degree. The Cedar Heights Elementary philosophy and its

values towards shared learning, building community and respect is grounded within the school's culture and context. Mr. Pierce declares his persistent mindset to transcend the structural separateness of classrooms by building connections and promoting interactions that go beyond achievement of performative goals, targeting the individual as a whole for the development of a well-rounded citizen. Teacher and student led initiatives such as service projects that aim to advance citizenship and relationships between the school and the larger community as well as a growing focus on raising environmental awareness go beyond the functional aspect of connectedness.

Mindset

Woods & Woods (2011) highlight particular aspects of the mindsets encouraged by the respective ideal typical organizations to facilitate contrast in their analytical framework. They state that characteristic to a bureaucratic hierarchical type of organization a compliant mindset refers to a compliant habit of relying or deferring to authority as a source of direction and purpose and engaging in limited creativity and critical thinking (p.125). Woods & Woods clarify however that “Not all the features on the left side- [of rational bureaucratic hierarchy organizational type] – are always negative: there are circumstances in which some may be positive and needed” (Woods & Woods 2011, p.111). A democratic consciousness mindset “exercises and values critical, independent thinking, cooperative activity and the nurturing of holistic capabilities to expand awareness in the pursuit of truth, social and cultural justice” (p. 125). At Cedar Heights Elementary School, Mr. Pierce's role as leader is clearly outlined and the perceptions of teachers and students indicate that members of the school categorically identify him as the highest authority in the building. Nonetheless the mindset in the

school cannot be described solely as compliant. There is a collaborative culture of decision-making processes that to a certain extent has an impact of blurring the lines of hierarchy. The collective sentiment expressed by faculty and students is that Mr. Pierce leads in a communal spirit nurturing collaborative action, shared learning and independent thinking. As Mrs. Callaghan states,

“I think of this setting from more of a community view. But I also think there needs to be someone who’s in charge so that we know there is a leader when we need someone to be a leader. When, when there, those tough calls of making decisions about curriculum or discipline or just whatever it is. I think there needs to be that go-to person that’s looked at as the leader—the person in charge. And that doesn’t mean we still don’t have a democratic community within the school.”

Features of democratic consciousness are advanced through collegiate endeavors of inquiry for an awareness—not just of performance skills—but, to certain extent, of democratic practices and values in order to create a culture of independent thinking and learning for the faculty and for the students.

Summary

The discussion above regarding the variables of Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework helps illustrate a rather complex range of leadership practices enactment that lean towards features of democratic practices within the traditional management paradigm of the US education system. Guided by the Woods and Woods framework help illustrate a quantification or range, but rather a conceptual representation of how certain practices have a shifting outcome from one organizational ideal type towards another. Cedar Heights Elementary school principal, Mr. Blake Pierce, promotes

certain practices that come close to Woods & Woods (2011) holistic democracy organizational type.

From the complexity that constitutes the realities of a traditional management paradigm, the posed questions of this research study aim to seek how some principals are able to employ leadership practices that are aligned with ideals of democratic schooling such as shared governance, collaborative decision-making, critical thinking in the inner work of the staff and students towards the development of the holistic citizen, aware of not just the self but of others and their context for the benefit of the society as a whole.

One of the major themes that emerged from the analysis was the concept of relationship building. Mr. Blake Pierce focused on his relationships with the staff, building rapport, respect and trust among the faculty. This practice of relationship building promoted collaborative endeavors that created a sense of inclusive leadership among the staff.

Another practice that Mr. Pierce employs that seems to promote a sense of empowerment among the staff and the students was the concept of “leading by example” through inquiry and shared learning. This paved the way for staff to feel they had agency and voice, creating and sharing meaning and understanding, building on ideas and setting the tone that is shared and valued by staff and members of the entire organization.

Organic belonging, a key feature of holistic democracy was also an emergent theme in the data collected for this research study. Mr. Pierce has managed to set a tone at Cedar Heights Elementary which focuses towards embodied learning allowing the possibility for connectedness, and for individual well-being as well as for the entire organization.

While there is an integral aspect of the school that has to concentrate on cognitive-technical knowledge as part of federal, state and district mandates, there is an awareness of the values that are aligned with democratic values. They are only present in the stated in the district overall vision, mission and philosophy but also adopted by the senior leadership in the school, the teachers and the students. This is what the organization led by Mr. Pierce seems to encourage and value.

In terms of participation the breadth and scope, Mr. Pierce identified that the aim was to shift away from the “egg crate model” of knowledge dissemination, but rather towards a blurring of separating boundaries of exclusion, this being an atypical reality in top down bureaucratic organizational systems; interactive pedagogies, the valuing of student voice which moves practice in the direction of co-creation of knowledge. These changes have their limitations in terms of degrees of democracy. Authority remains hierarchical and concentrated, priorities are transmitted down, and participation while it might be expected to remain at the operational level, Mr. Blake Pierce aims towards higher order concerns.

Some of the issues that emerge from this analysis which practitioners and policy makers might find useful to address include:

- The value of setting out a school vision of holistic democracy which explicitly articulates a strategy to develop democratic capabilities, increases participation in policy-level matters (both staff and students) and places skills such as enterprise skills in a wider educational aims to develop democratic consciousness.

- Making explicit in a school ethos not only the value of community and organic belonging but also of connectedness (the importance of the exploration of deeper meaning, and holistic awareness)
- Critically examining boundaries of participation and the rationales for excluding members of other groups.

This analytical framework invites people to consider questions of participation and meaning as part of its framework; furthermore to creatively adapt this so that it reflects the holistic democratic aspirations that they feel will best work in their content and community. Each organization or individual has different needs at any particular point in time striving towards holistic democracy. For some a priority may be to consider how to disperse decision-making, nonetheless holistic democracy is greater than the sum of its parts-shown in the right-hand column of the analytical framework. The ultimate aim is to find a configuration of them all which works for the school and its population and community.

The ability to develop degrees of democracy is integral to the possibility of organic governance and viable adaptive strategies that builds upon present conditions in order to create environments more in line with democratic values. The analytical framework is therefore relevant to other settings and institutions too. The framework is offered as a conceptual frame to support practitioner and academic research aimed at gaining better understanding of the expressive and participative aspects of democracy in diverse settings. A democratic self-organizing culture depends upon the reflection and finding practical ways of improving meaning and participation. The framework is a way

of helping to focus and raise awareness of how democracy can be deepened in order to guide effective adaptive strategies for change.

Chapter 5

Emerald Lakes Elementary School: Ms. Deborah Stone, Lead Learner

“Mrs. Stone doesn’t want for us to just learn math and reading and writing; she is interested in us learning about our world and our community. We do a lot of service learning projects here. She is really happy with all the things that we do in our community because she wants us to learn other things than just academics” 5th Grade Student

Nestled between lush woods is Emerald Lakes Elementary School. Earth tones seem to envelop this academic community known for its stance on environmental awareness, valuing community and initiatives on collaborative projects that include a schoolyard habitat creation, composting and service learning projects.

A tree surrounded by a bench seat greets visitors in the expansive foyer at Emerald Lakes. So does Ms. Stone every morning. She knows all of her student’s names. Some teachers are also gathered in the foyer expecting to have their students come in for another day of learning, activities and projects. As many students get off the school bus and enter the school, others ride their bicycles and some come walking from the surrounding neighborhood. They greet their principal and the teachers that are gathered in the foyer. As the day begins with Ms. Stone making announcements over the speaker system, some students also chime in during morning reminders letting the student body know about their upcoming Blood Drive that the Fifth grade class has organized as part of a service learning project. During the day, classroom doors are wide open and different scenes are developing inside. Ms. McNally’s First grade students are scurrying around the classroom with finger-paint making t-shirts for the field day. Outside of Mr.

Johnson's Fifth grade classroom is a cart full of plant pots made out of compost material. Students carrying computer tablets file into another room, while there is another group of fourth grade students seated at a table gathered around a laptop on the second floor discussing research for a class project.

Rows of hooks line the wide halls decorated with mosaics and hanging from them are the students' backpacks. Some of them are open. Ms. Stone explained to me that the practice was to encourage respect for other people's property and everyone at school feels confident that their belongings remain intact.

I venture outside where I find Mrs. Arlene Rogers and her Fifth grade class in the garden where students are happily shoveling soil into a wheelbarrow. They are enjoying the unseasonably warm spring morning. Mrs. Rogers, her assistant teacher, Laurie and assistant teacher Luke, are explaining where the soil is going to go and the long term plan of planting strawberries. Mr. Ron Jacobs assists with the landscaping at two other schools at Mountain Laurel School District and he is at Emerald Lakes Elementary today sharing with the students what the different plants are useful for and explaining how to pull out weeds. Most students are happy to be outside in the garden. However Mrs. Rogers asks, "Who genuinely wants to stay and help with the garden?" Those who do not want to help can go in the playground. She calls out, "*It's your choice*". A few students decide to head over to the playground while most of them remain in the garden. A group of five students are listening as one of their classmates shows them how they are supposed to plant a tomato plant on its side.

Back inside Ms. Stone is between meetings. She stops to talk to a second grade student who elatedly shows she just lost a tooth. Ms. Stone cheers and reminds her to make sure to collect a keep-safe box at the nurse's office for her tooth.

She walks to the teachers' lounge where several teachers are gathered. She briefly talks to them before greeting visitors from the school district for her next meeting.

Emerald Lakes is a public elementary school within the Mountain Laurel school district. With over 450 students, the demographics of the school are comprised of 84% white students, 7% Asian/ Pacific Islander students, 3% Black/African American students, 3% Hispanic/Latino students and under 1% other race/ethnicity (Figure 5.1).

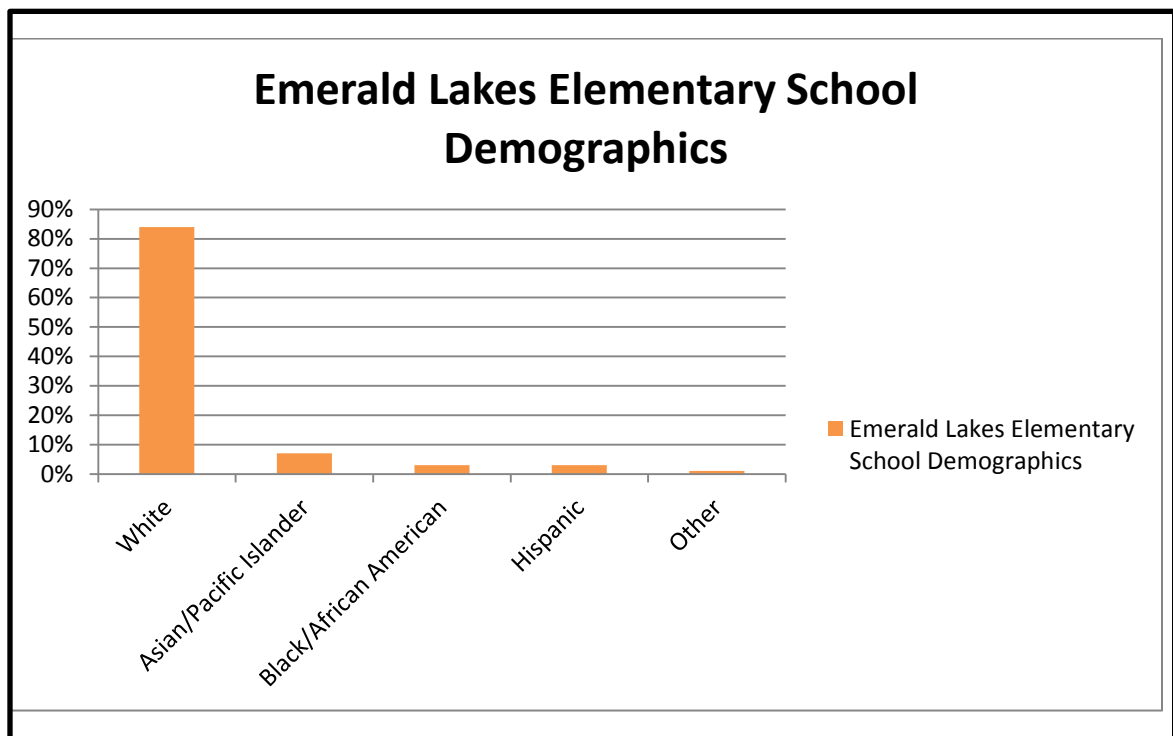


Figure 5.1: Emerald Lakes Elementary School Student Ethnicity Breakdown

With 476 students in the K-5 school, the teacher to student ratio at Emerald Lakes is 14:1. In 2011, 20% of the Emerald Lakes student population was eligible for free or reduced lunch. The eligibility for this National School Lunch program is based on parental income.

Ms. Deborah Stone is the school principal at Emerald Lakes. She began this position twenty three years ago. Prior to coming to Emerald Lakes Elementary, Ms. Stone was a sixth grade teacher and in that role she began to reach out to students who were struggling by getting them motivated with environmentally driven projects. She has worked with gifted students, became a middle school principal before assuming her position as an elementary school principal. Ms. Stone is pursuing her doctorate in Educational Administration. She has co-authored several scholarly articles and has earned many honors and prestigious awards in her educational career. But it is not these accolades that fill Ms. Stone with pride. It is talking about her school and her students. For Ms. Stone, Emerald Lakes Elementary is slowly shaping into the school she once envisioned leading many years ago.

“Back when I was an undergraduate I took on an independent study course and I talked about how I could start my own school and what I would need to do that and what I believed , what my core beliefs were at that time. It was called School and Seed. And amazingly when I go back to that it’s all the same thing; those core values, core beliefs, core visions, have all been in place, which to me is really cool. I mean, I’ve learned a lot of lessons along the way. You can’t be headstrong and you have to work with people around that. But you know, people will follow when they understand where you’re headed and what you’re trying to do about a school”

That core vision that Ms. Stone refers to above is the idea that everybody is a learner. She espouses this vision by carrying the title of *Lead Learner*, instead of

Principal Stone at the school. She believes that her school needs to be connected and engaged with the community. And although Ms. Stone mentioned that throughout her time as a leader and her experiences she has learned not be so headstrong in her collaborations, it is precisely her determination that has propelled her to achieve the outcomes at her school and with her students that make her so proud.

Lead Learner, Ms. Stone states that her vision is informed by life experiences and pivotal people in her life. She states,

“I was always told that I could do anything and be anything I wanted to be. And I never let things get in the way of my being successful at things. Sometimes they were harder than others, but you know, I always believed in myself and I wanted other people to believe in themselves. And so I wanted to be able to provide people opportunities where they could believe in themselves”.

For Deborah, the constancy of her convictions along with the people around her has helped materialize her vision, “her school” and, as she states, without “*being a private school or a charter school*”, but within the public education system. Essential to this endeavor are the people she has met along the way and building those relationships around the community with those who share her vision on democratic practices, community building and environmental awareness.

Speaking with Fifth grade teacher, Arlene Rogers, she describes Deborah Stone in two different lights,

“She obviously has the title of principal, but she also goes by lead learner. That is how I see her in two different lights. And I think that she recognizes that she plays two different roles in the grand scheme of our school and the school district. And with the title of principal come the responsibilities of the “administrator” and those things are very black and white and there are things that she has to do that are very much top down policy implementation and things that are imposed on her as the principal from higher ups and that just trickles down to us. As a lead learner I see her as someone who’s also continually

learning and reading and assimilating new knowledge into her brain and figuring out how she can always help us be the absolute best and how she can help us put children first, which is the ultimate goal of our school. And mine also. And I think that one of the reasons that Deborah hired me, because she was, she felt and knew about my beliefs coming into the teaching practice. And it wasn't about me coming here and kind of changing my ideas to fit into what she already had going on. I think that I may have been a natural fit into her ideas already”

Throughout the interviews collected from the principal and the staff, the data indicates that Ms. Stone enacts her educational vision in her school developing relationships with faculty, students and members of the community that share her convictions, beliefs and values. Her vision is openly democratic and consistently articulated as such. At times, however, she has to resort to strategic relationship building to try and persuade members who do not agree with her vision and her beliefs. On occasion, she has to resort to top-down decision-making when consensus is not reached. She expresses her frustration when these challenging moments present themselves.

There are many challenges to enacting purely democratic practices at Emerald Lakes Elementary School, and though these might be more visible in the realm between the school leadership and the faculty, when the students take the floor in the All Purpose Room for the All School Gatherings every week, the voices, the leadership and the empowerment is all theirs. Ms. Stone and the faculty support from the sidelines and every pair of eyes is on those students, who are actively learning, teaching and creating knowledge together. The pride in Ms. Stone's countenance is evident.

Analytical Approach

This study compiled data from field observations, interviews collected from the school principal, faculty and students and document analysis and artifacts beginning in October and winding down in May of the 2011-2012 academic year at Emerald Lakes Elementary School. These findings are organized according to the variables from the Woods & Woods (2011) *Degrees of Democracy Framework*. Each variable is explicated and supported by interview, observational and document data. Degree modifiers in the narrative are used to describe to what extent practices shift towards holistic democracy. An overview of the school principal's leadership practices decision-making processes and educational philosophy introduce the discussion of the findings. A synopsis of the findings and analysis concludes this chapter taking into consideration an overview of the variables to help determine the degrees of democracy of Deborah Stone's leadership practices and the implications for Emerald Lakes Elementary School through the conceptual lens of Woods & Woods (2011) *Degrees of Democracy Framework*.

Ms. Stone's Decision Making Practices

Emerald Lakes Elementary school is part of the Carolina County Mountain Laurel School District. Being part of the US education system, the decision making process seems to follow the typical hierarchical flow. Ms. Stone's role as a principal is to make most of the decisions regarding school operation, behavior management, staff supervision, school budget, curriculum and school community activities. Deborah Stone represents Emerald Lakes Elementary School publicly in the community and interacts

with district state and federal authorities. This study's scope focuses on the decisions made at the school site such as decisions that relate to the daily schedule, decisions relating to the choosing of instructional materials, decisions relating to the development of institutional rules and policies and decisions regarding professional growth and development of the school. Ms. Stone's decision-making process was regarded as democratic by half the faculty members that were interviewed. The other half of the faculty interviewed regarded Ms. Stone as authoritative. This discrepancy highlights one of the tensions that exist in Ms. Stone's vision enactment for her school. Observational data and analysis indicate that constant flow of information and strategic relationships in Ms. Stone's decision-making process was the central approach in her vision enactment.

In her own words,

“Sometimes it's a matter of opening an issue up for discussion and having people work through it. Sometimes it's we maybe step away from it and figure out what our priorities are and then let people look at how to best address that. And then it's just dialogue. They might say 'well, we believe this' and I say 'but this is what I am saying' and then they start to think about that. Sometimes it's giving them other information like student data around it and say for example 'This may be what some people believe, this is what others believe, here's what the students believe and do it through kind of an informal survey with them. And then just share that and see if that helps with any influencing of decisions. Some people it does, some people it doesn't.”

She concedes that she has to be understanding of opposing views and acknowledge resistance. Her strategy is,

“You have to start them where they're most comfortable and help them begin to move forward and offer opportunities for them to learn about it; see that some other people meet with success, and maybe have somebody else mentor them. So it's to keep coming at it in a different way. You don't stop. Whatever it takes. If it takes baby steps. With some people it takes baby steps, other people they start to get it or if you pair them with somebody else who gets it or you begin to have somebody model it. There are a bunch of teachers who get it and

understand and then there are other teachers that there's still some resistance. So kind of infiltrating them on one angle with the student interns who are eager and excited about new projects, another angle with colleagues and you know looking for other ways to, to help them. I know that I can't force somebody to do it. But I can say here are some things to try, and I believe you can't win everybody over. And at some point they'll see that they are alone in that and either they go with the system or they figure out somewhere else they might want to work. You can only help so much"

In making decisions sometimes her beliefs take priority, other times she relinquishes authority and goes by consensus. Ultimately she feels strongly about everyone's voice being heard, including her own. She states, *"Sometimes I have to go with what I believe too. I mean you know sometimes leading a school in a direction you have to take the leadership and do it. Other times you back off and let people do it. And so , and it's kind of making that decision which one you need to do. Teacher voice is important to me, my voice is important too. The kids' voices are also important. So I have to make sure there's a balance with those"*. Other times she says she completely removes herself from an issue so her administrative role does not have an influence on the decision-making process that includes the faculty. *"Some people will do things to please me and I don't want that to be the issue. With others, if I say that's what I want they'll say the opposite. So I step out of it"*.

Teachers' perceptions on Ms. Stone's decision-making practices were collected and according to these findings there is a divide between the participants who believe that Ms. Stone imposes her democratic views on them, which negates an actual democratic process, while others wholeheartedly agree with her vision and see her practices as wholly democratic.

First year Second grade teacher, Ms. Meredith Wolf says that she absolutely feels her voice is valued when she is presented with the opportunity to vote or decide on an issue and she values the autonomy she feels she has in her classroom. Veteran teacher Richard Lewis also feels he has autonomy and freedom in his classroom and he comes to work in a school he loves every day. He states he has seen Ms. Stone over the past 16 years evolve to a lead learner role where she values consensus and input from teachers, and acknowledges that some of his colleagues are not comfortable with the changes that have been transpiring in Ms. Stone's 23 year tenure. He states,

“I’ve seen her evolve in her position as principal over the years. I think early on it was more of a top down approach such as ‘okay this is what we need to do, this is how we’re going to do it’ and so we’re off and doing it, whereas now it is more of getting ideas from other people, giving freedoms and flexibility to staff and to children. There definitely has to be structure and there has to be someone saying no, this is just how it’s going to be done. And we have to be okay with that. There are some things that you have to come in and do. And some of those are the policies, the district policies and things like that. And that’s understandable. Can they always be looked at and, and maybe scrutinized and improved on? Some, sometimes yeah I think they can. But overall there’s just certainly some hard and fast rules that she has to make. And I don’t really hear people saying to me that they never have a say in this or that. So, Democratic? I think she’s doing it. And I see it. Is it all the time? I don’t think so. But she is the administrator and, there are things that we’re not privy to—some knowledge or information, and a decision has to be made sometimes. But by and large I think she does do that.”

Other members of the faculty struggle with seeing the democratic aspects of Deborah's leadership. Veteran teacher for 20 years, Tom Boyd, for example had very strong feelings about Ms. Stone's decision-making practices. He feels that Deborah runs with the “It's my way of the highway” autocratic philosophy. He says that some of her projects that she feels very strongly about are implemented and that they are “non-negotiable”. He concedes that faculty is invited to the meetings and discussions and they

receive plenty of information about it, but ultimately he says, *“If she wants to do something, she just does it. I do not feel my expertise is valued here sometimes”*. Marilyn Corey also feels that some aspects of Ms. Stone’s vision enactment are not purely democratic, even though she asserts that they both share similar educational philosophies. When interviewed, she stated that,

“From my perspective I feel like Deborah cares a lot about children and wants what’s best for them. She’s more interested in doing what’s best for the kids than following the rules sometimes. I like that about her. State testing for example, a lot of principals right now would have us do nothing but test practice with the test coming up in a couple weeks. Here, priority is more that the kids are learning things that can help them in life than preparing for a test. So those are things I truly value about Deborah. However, I know that we talk a lot about this being a democratic school but I feel like a lot of the decisions that affect the teachers are not done in a democratic way. I feel like it’s a lot more of a ‘the decision has been made, here is what the decision is’ type of thing. When it comes to students I feel like the students are given a lot of choice and things are handled very democratically for the students as far as choices that affect the whole school, but for the teachers though, not so much.”

Arlene Rogers feels she has an objective view regarding Deborah Stone’s decision-making practices. She attests that,

“Since I’m in the trenches I can hear one group saying we have this democratic school and students are involved and it’s so wonderful. It is a positive perspective of things. And then there’s a group who feels bitter like ultimately these ideas came from somewhere and so they’re being imposed on us whether you want to believe that or not. Let’s say for instance Deborah decides that our school needs to have a wetland. She’ll ask a number of us, all of us, some of us ‘are you interested in this? Do you feel that it’s a fit in the curriculum? And it only takes a couple people to say ‘yes I can do something with this!’ So people perceive that as a top down policy when it was more of a discussion. I think that if every person Deborah spoke to said we think a wetland is a stupid idea and it’s not going to benefit us and it was screaming in her face it shouldn’t be done, it wouldn’t happen. I don’t think that she’s ever looking necessarily for what she wants. She’s looking to enhance the experience of the kids. So I think that there’s definitely the butting of heads. Like those two hats she wears (Principal and Lead

Learner) they can never be on at the same time. I feel they carry a conflict of interest.”

Deborah’s challenges in making decisions democratically lie within the tensions that exist in carrying out her vision which she believes should be embraced by her faculty, her students and her community. Her strong convictions on holistic learning, shared voice and environmental education paired with democratic practices of inclusive dialogue, valuing of voice and consensus have led her to constantly reflect on her actual practices and process of vision enactment. She says that if she would have it her way, in her own words, her vision might be

“...More extreme than it is right now, but I think we have to build a vision together. I mean, I can have my vision where I see us headed, but then I also have to have it built together with people that are ready to be on board. It can’t just be mine and you follow me. The important piece for me is that everybody’s voice is there. I have to rein it back a little to be what works and what is democratic and what is fair and what is in the best interest of all learners in the school”.

The clash of rationalities between some teachers and the principal are one of the challenges that arise from the practices of inclusive decision-making and consensus and within a hierarchically structured system. Sometimes decisions have to be made in a way that contradicts democratic aims.

Organizational Purpose

As stated in the description by the Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy framework, the principal organizational purpose is the predominant kind of aim enshrined in the explicit or implicit philosophy that drives the organization (Woods & Woods, 2011, p.113). The Mountain Laurel District stated belief and purpose is that,

“[The] education of youth is a shared task involving parents, community groups, the schools, and the students themselves. As a primary member of that education team, the district serves both directly in the instruction and guidance of its students and indirectly in assisting and supporting the efforts of the other members of the team. In fulfilling its responsibility, the district asserts an uncompromising commitment to educational excellence that will be reflected in the content, materials, activities, and methods employed in the classroom, in the fair and equitable treatment of all individuals within the school system, and in the maintenance of a flexible and responsive school system organization. Excellence cannot be attained unless the ideals of equality and human dignity are honored and promoted. Thus, the quest for educational excellence will be complemented by a corresponding commitment to the fundamental principles of our democratic society. Finally, in carrying out these functions, the district will seek to develop effective partnerships with parents, citizens, and the community, businesses, vocational training institutions, and the university to enrich the total education of its students.” Mountain Laurel School District¹² Purpose Statement

Aside from the District stated purpose, Emerald Lakes Elementary has abided in the past eight years by the Tools for Citizenship Lifelong Guidelines¹³ of:

- Trustworthiness - to act in a manner that makes one worthy of trust and confidence
- Truthfulness - to act with personal responsibility and mental accountability
- Active Listening - to listen attentively with intention to understand
- No Put Downs - to never use words, actions and/or body language that degrades, humiliates or dishonors others
- Personal Best - to do one's best given the circumstance and available resources

These guidelines are site-specific to Emerald Lakes Elementary adopted from Sue Pearson’s book Tools for Citizenship and according to Emerald Lakes Elementary School’s purpose they have been embraced to,

¹² District pseudonym

¹³ These guidelines are adopted at Emerald Lakes Elementary from author Sue Pearson and her book *Tools for Citizenship & Life: Using the ITI Lifelong Guidelines & Lifeskills in Your Classroom*

“Provide consistent parameters and expectations of conduct in our school community --- what behaviors to expect from others and ourselves. They are the social outcomes we set for our community. They also ensure that everyone is in an environment that encourages exploring, discovering and learning as well as a safe, nurturing environment that promotes our district's strategic plan. We believe that these behaviors contribute to a sense of workability in life, not only in the school and classroom but also at home and as an adult in life. These principles ensure that each student's attitude and emotional state are ready for optimal learning. These are social outcomes that we set for everyone and provide consistent boundaries and expectations for everyone's boundaries and performance”.

These guidelines are intended to create a common language at Emerald Lakes because for Ms. Stone, connectedness is fundamental in her organization. She explicitly articulates her stance on democratic practices in her school and she aims to carry out those practices by encouraging service learning projects in her school, all school gatherings, involving and partnering with parents and members of the community that share her vision.

Moving away from a narrow focus on performance goals, Emerald Lakes Elementary School's purpose is strongly defined by values in order to make organizational life genuinely and consistently committed to higher order values beyond success measured by test scores. This reflects features of holistic democracy, according to Woods & Woods (2011) analytical framework.

Although Mountain Laurel district practices are not within the specific scope of this study, they are taken into consideration when examining some constraints that can affect the degrees to which leadership practices can move towards features of holistic democracy. Taking into consideration the specific purpose as stated by the district and adopted at Emerald Lakes Elementary school, and in light of examining the school principal's leadership practices, and examining the school's adopted *Tools for Citizenship*

Lifelong Guidelines the specific purpose that drives the organization leans greatly towards substantive aspirations.

Knowledge Goals

The kinds of knowledge sought in student learning and professional development reflect Ms. Stone focus on values that espouse democratic citizenship in her school. With her teaching staff she promoted self-directed professional development through inquiry based projects on a voluntary basis. This began with a grant from the department of environmental protection in order to examine the curriculum and make a few revisions—not to the extent of district level revisions—but looking at their own schoolyard as a vehicle for learning. Ms. Stone brought the faculty together and presented the project to them. The first year, 12 teachers signed up for the introductory meeting along with some of the student interns that participate in the professional development program that Emerald Lakes Elementary partners through the state university. After the first meeting four more teachers decided they wanted to join in. They group split up into teams and targeted an inquiry area. From that point on they started to meet monthly. At the end of the year all the teams got to share the work they had done. The second year the faculty did the self-directed inquiry projects, the number of teachers involved increased to 22. The third year it increased to 30 people and they focused on creating a community of learners that celebrates inclusion at Emerald Lakes Elementary School. Combining with prior work done on inclusive practices the group decided not to split into teams that year but to do the inquiry project in collaboration with each other and at the end of the year present as a whole group. Ms. Stone’s vision for self- directed professional development

is voluntary participation. She says that *“It is an opt-in. Those people that are ready will come. It’s kind of the open space concept—whoever comes are the right people”*.

Currently they have 36. She is pleased with the interest from teachers. She says,

“We have a unique mix of people, including folks from outside the school who have also decided to join in. We have the Assistant Special Education Director; we have a retired teacher who did a lot of work with the national school reform faculty and Critical Friend’s groups to help us with protocols. Now we have five different projects we are working on. I am really pleased to see that people actualized what they wanted to learn on and my role has been to provide them the substitute teachers and other resources”.

Regardless of the tensions that may exist between Ms. Stone and some of her faculty, it is evident that Ms. Stone is openly articulate about her views and democratic knowledge aims, particularly for her students. In addition to the Lifelong Learning Guidelines adapted from Sue Pearson’s *Tools for Citizenship* (2000), Emerald Lakes Elementary School learns and practices the 18 Life skills that help define the Lifelong Guidelines for Personal Best. These are stated as:

- Caring - to feel and show concern for others
- Common Sense - to use good judgment
- Cooperation - to work together toward a common goal or purpose
- Courage - to act according to one's beliefs despite fear of consequences
- Curiosity - a desire to investigate and seek understanding
- Effort - to do one's best
- Flexibility - to be willing to alter plans when necessary
- Friendship - to make and keep a friend through mutual trust and caring
- Initiative - to do something, of one's own free will, because it need to be done
- integrity - to act according to a sense of what is right and wrong
- Organization - to plan, arrange and implement in an orderly way; to keep things orderly and ready to use
- Patience - to calmly wait for someone or something
- Perseverance - to keep at it
- Pride - satisfaction from doing one's personal best

- Problem Solving - to create solutions to difficult situation and everyday problems
- Resourcefulness - to respond o challenges and opportunities in innovative and creative ways
- Responsibility - to respond when appropriate; to be accountable for one's actions
- Sense of Humor - to laugh and be playful without hurting others

The stated learning objectives for these skills are respect and awareness of the students themselves and others, encouraging learners to develop understanding, create meaning and internalize that the school body is interconnected in a common language through these values. Another component for student learning at Emerald Lakes comes from an additional resource, *Habits of the Heart*¹⁴, which espouses building strong communities in order to build strong individuals. These habits are:

- Nurturing Attitudes - characterized by unselfish caring, support and willingness to share time
- Responsibility - showing and encouraging a personal commitment to each task
- Dependability - being there for others through all the times of their lives a steady influence that makes tomorrow a welcome event
- Friendship - Friendship is the habit that binds people together when we take pleasure in each other's company, listen, laugh and share good times and bad
- Community - the habit that reaches beyond comfortable relationships to extend a welcome to those who may be different from ourselves
- High Expectations - involves believing that others can be successful, telling them so and praising their accomplishments
- Courage - standing up and doing the right thing, speaking out on behalf of others and making a commitment to excellence in the face of adversity or the absence of support
- Hope - believing in tomorrow--going beyond what we see because we have learned to see with our hearts

¹⁴ These are adopted at Emerald Lakes Elementary from the book *Eight Habits of the Heart: Embracing the Values that Build Strong Families and Communities* by author Clifton Taulbert

Analysis of these observations and interviews, paired with achievement goals set forth by the demands of district requirements, leads to the interpretation that Emerald Lakes Elementary schools is way beyond cognitive-technical end and more aligned with social, emotional aesthetic and ethical understanding concerned with meaning and values and awareness beyond the self to a high degree. The principal assumes the duty to promote traits of holistic knowledge.

Method of Teaching and Creating Knowledge

Ms. Stone's approach to knowledge development for her staff and her students is focused on open access to information, voluntary and inclusive participation in professional development projects for staff, intellectual investigation and reasoning by dialogue and critique. Strong emphasis is placed on using technology as a tool for research and collaboration and includes skills for the critical scrutiny of research. The weekly All School Gatherings provide a space for student voice and leadership, as well as many service learning projects that extend learning to other parts of the community. Teachers at Emerald Lakes provide numerous learning opportunities for the students to build knowledge in collaboration with each other, facilitate learning, provide guidance and encourage students to make classroom decisions in through teamwork.

Being part of the Mountain Laurel School District, there are standardized performance goals sought and dictated by the district in accordance with state mandates

for both students and staff¹⁵. However, Ms. Stone's leadership practices favors emphasis on the co-creation of pedagogical content and democratic citizenship skills towards an ideas-generating culture. Irrespective of the constraints of traditionally bound hierarchy, Ms. Stone's approaches towards learning and creating knowledge demonstrate features of holistic democracy to a high degree. Evidence of this was observed consistently throughout the year in classrooms, during school gatherings, through student interviews and faculty professional development meetings.

Modes of Learning

Emphasis on aesthetic and affective learning through environmental awareness projects, community building and service learning projects at Emerald Lakes Elementary nurture an environment for embodied learning. Students engage in skills aligned with holistic democracy features which include connectedness and holistic well-being. Ms. Stone herself as a Lead Learner makes sure she has a group of people that can provide her with various perspectives on her initiative projects. She admits,

“Sometimes I have to get a group that I believe will kind of help me move something forward. And I always make sure there's one or two doubters on it

¹⁵ In 1999, Pennsylvania adopted academic standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and for Mathematics. These standards identify what a student should know and be able to do at varying grade levels. School districts possess the freedom to design curriculum and instruction to ensure that students meet or exceed the standards' expectations. The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based, criterion-referenced assessment used to measure a student's attainment of the academic standards while also determining the degree to which school programs enable students to attain proficiency of the standards. Beginning July 1, 2000, Act 48 of 1999 required persons holding Pennsylvania professional educator certification to complete continuing education requirements every five years in order to maintain their certificates as active. School entities are required to examine their student-level data, determine their professional education goals from the data, design an action plan with activities that meet their identified needs, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the training. courses taken outside of an area of certification or work assignment outside of the content area are deemed as *unacceptable activities* by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

that can do all the 'but what ifs' because I'm not good with the 'what ifs'. And I know that about myself so I make sure a 'what if' is there so that they can, can challenge me to think."

The citizenship skills aspect of learning at Emerald Lakes is a large component that almost all the teachers in the school are invested in as well as values that emphasize emotional awareness of the self and of others. With regards to a sense of spirituality, the constraints of separation of Church and State in the American public education system does not allow an exploration of how students, teachers and principal allude to a higher realm of self in an in-depth fashion.

Authority Structure

The authority structure at Emerald Lakes follows the a *pyramid structure* (Figure 4.2), concentrating power in a hierarchical arrangement through top-down directives and upward accountability towards district, state and federal mandates and stated policies compliance. Ms. Stone's decision-making practices fall between democratic and top-down according to the perceptions of the staff. Students regard Ms. Stone as "the boss," "the person in charge" and "leader". There are clear boundaries of authority when it comes to the perceptions of teachers and students and although Ms. Stone's democratic vision and leadership practices are explicitly articulated as democratic, some of the tensions and challenges in the enactment of those practices come across in this variable of the framework as perceived by members of the school community.

In the All School Gatherings, students carry the leadership and lead the agenda, while the principal and faculty remain on the sidelines. This is a recognizable initiative

by Ms. Stone and the teachers to provide student voice opportunities. Through observational data, students show tremendous initiative with projects and feel comfortable with their own voice. However the lines of authority remain clear between students, teachers and the principal.

Spaces for Participation

The Spaces for participation variable in Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework refer to the types of organizational spaces available for participation and how access to these is regulated (p.119). Within Emerald Lakes Elementary there are site-specific groups that carry certain autonomy and are in charge of making decisions that are specific to their organizational role.

With regards to inclusive or exclusive access, there is boundless participation given that Ms. Stone encourages voluntary participation and access from every member of the school as well as outside community members at the All School Gatherings, which are student-led. In the self- directed professional development initiatives previously outlined, participation was voluntary and there were members other than faculty that were invited to participate as well. For the professional development meetings Ms. Stone provided the spaces for the participants to meet; on many occasions this included her own office. Other times she provided the resources for the teachers and other members to be able to meet outside of the school or in other spaces where they would feel the most comfortable. Parents are always encouraged to visit the school or volunteer and the Parent-Teacher Organization is open to all parents and teachers of Emerald Lakes Elementary School. The principal and staff are committed towards developing more initiative and inclusive

participation, beginning with collaborative approaches towards the co-creation of knowledge, innovative inquiry and professional development.

Scope of Participation

According to Woods & Woods (2011) participation can be examined through two levels of concern: operational or higher order. Within a minimal scope, participation is restricted to strictly operational matters that have been defined by the senior leadership. Within a maximal scope, participation is directed strategically to fulfill the philosophy and values that underpin the organization and towards opportunities “for organizational members to reflect on and make meaning of their work together” (Woods & Woods 2011, p. 120). As previously discussed, Ms. Stone places emphasis on self-directed learning for staff and for students. For staff it is through the self-directed professional development and for students it is through the initiatives of All School Gathering, Tools for Citizenship and service learning projects. Ms. Stone takes a lead role in pushing these initiatives for her students and the main goal is to espouse democratic participation, focus on democratic values, collaborative learning and generate ideas which are aligned with a maximal scope of participation .

Communication Flows

Regarding the direction of communication and the freedom for the transmission of thoughts, ideas advice and instruction, Ms. Stone’s leadership practices reflect that for a certain group of faculty and for her students there are features aligned with features of multiple communication flows. Observational data supports Ms. Stones claims that,

“I have kids who come to talk to me about stuff all the time...and I am supposed to be ‘the scary principal’ you know... The kids aren’t afraid to come with me with problems around the school or things that they need help with or to say ‘you know I have an idea’ or they ask ‘do you think we could do this?’ Mrs. Rogers’s fifth graders connected me with Google docs¹⁶. I felt like finally we had arrived to that point where the students are the ones initiating things! They would connect me and their teacher and you know all the kids that were part of it and they could make edits in it and you know sometimes we were all joking around making edits...but they were very focused. That was great.”

On many occasions it was observed students constantly approaching Ms. Stone to ask questions, greet her or invite her to the class for projects presentations. Her practices as evidenced by observational and student interview data promote an open exchange of ideas, recognition and respect for teacher and student voice and promoting participative practices, which is inconsistent with a top-down leadership styles. Her views on shared learning promote a free exchange of communication between students and some staff.

Some faculty that was interviewed expressed their views stating that they felt that at times their expertise or input is not valued. Ms. Stone acknowledges that there are some faculty members who do not share her vision for her school. She deems those members as resistant or “not comfortable” or “not ready”, so she tries to respect that. There is an evident disparity between Ms. Stone’s perception of her practices with these ‘reluctant’ teachers and some teachers’ perceptions of Ms. Stone’s approach.

Mrs. Stefanie Beckham stated,

“Sometimes I feel that there’s not a lot of respect towards the input that teachers may provide here. I feel there are a certain group of teachers that are favorites and input from them is sought often. I believe the only input she wants is something that she knows she’s going to agree with. But now to be fair I give her

¹⁶ Google Docs is a free, web-based office suite and data storage service offered by the internet browser Google. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users.

credit as an administrator... When we are evaluated in a formal evaluation every three years in this district she told me 'I have to tell you we really, we principals, none of us have any idea how you guys do what you do! She had this one moment where she acknowledged something like that. Unfortunately, I feel she doesn't treat it that way as we're going along.'

Conflicting perspectives emerge again when it comes to the perception of communication flows. Observational data analysis indicates evidence of opportunities for dialogue and attempts by the principal to be inclusive with all of her staff. There is indication of a group of teachers who are wholeheartedly share Ms. Stone's vision and approaches and the communication flows is dynamic and open between this group. The students are encouraged to speak freely and engage in initiatives for school transformation. An example of this occurred a few years ago when there was an initiative placed by fifth graders at Emerald Lakes Elementary regarding the school lunch. Students felt they needed more choices for their menu for the students who had food allergies. With the support of the principal and their teacher, they presented the issue at an All School Gathering to the entire school. They also presented the issue to members of the school board and provided solutions to the dilemma. Eventually with the support of the school, the teachers, the principal, parents and other members of the school community the students' campaigning managed to get audience at the school board and they enacted a district change so the cafeteria menu included other options. This was a positive outcome for the school and an indication of a progressive disruption in the traditional hierarchical flow, where students created a change in school policy through open dialogue and voice enactment.

Key Purpose of Dialogue

Regarding the key purpose of dialogue at Emerald Lakes Elementary, Ms. Stone strives to amplify information exchange between her and her staff as well as with her students. As discussed above, sometimes conflicting views or perspectives were brought up among staff, but the opportunities for sharing and valuing voice allows for dialogue to become meaningful and rich. This can advance collective knowledge, co-creative learning and constructive critique, which are features towards a more democratic experience.

Engagement

Deborah Stone's commitment to her school is evident in her practices as she is invested wholeheartedly in her school, with her students and in her democratic vision. Teachers at Emerald Lakes Elementary said to genuinely be committed to their school and their students far beyond merely maximizing his or her own benefits in exchange for the efforts they expend. For the most part teachers and staff share a genuine collegiality, professional connection and respect towards each other, their ideas and their voice. They claim collective ownership of the school, nurturing students in a communal objective. Contrasting to rational bureaucratic hierarchical organizational type of engagement, where achievement and staff engagement is incentivized by materials, compensation or disciplinary sanctions, Ms. Stone's transformative leadership efforts towards collaboration and learning and respect in her school aims towards whole-person engagement in the educational experiences at Emerald Lakes Elementary by students and teachers willingly and committedly.

Community

The nature of the social relationships at Emerald Lakes Elementary has been promulgated by Ms. Stone with a focus on collegiality, nurturing professionalism, the valuing of voice and participation. Ms. Stone emphasis on community building has been through modeling respect, openness and communication. Supported by the stated district purpose, “[The] education of youth is a shared task involving parents, community groups, the schools, and the students themselves”, as well as the Tools for Citizenship Lifelong Guidelines which the students abide by at the school, the 8 Habits of the Heart and the aims of one common language for interconnectedness, Emerald Lakes Elementary aims to move away from ritualistic practices that superficially promote community engagement to a true commitments towards community building. The sense of organic belonging from the students is evident in the creation of a collective sense of responsibility for their school, students’ environmental awareness of not just their school grounds but of their community, and by encouraging student initiatives, Ms. Stone seems to have created through her leadership practices a communal sense of ownership for Emerald Lakes Elementary.

Creating a sense of community is Ms. Stone’s central objective. As one student indicated,

“I used to live in New York and when I came here she definitely made it seem like it’s almost like a family sort of. And I really like that cause when I was in New York we just had our separate classes and you do what you’re supposed to do but here it’s like not only about learning but about caring, sharing and the students are treated equally”.-Fourth grade student

Initiatives that promote inclusion are at the forefront of Ms. Stone’s goals for her staff and her students. This aspect illustrates the organic belonging feature towards

holistic democracy as stated by Woods & Woods (2011) which “characterizes by unity through diversity, rich caring relationships... in which ethical sensibilities are nurtured and cultural differences are respected” (p.123).

Personal

The personal sense of connection Emerald Lakes Elementary was expressed by student participants relating to a collective sense of ownership of their school. One student stated,

“Well I think that when we come to school we are supposed to grow as citizens and so I don’t really think that a single person owns the school. I think that all together each person makes a community ... the school isn’t just about the academics that we need to learn. It’s about us learning to be citizens and to grow up in a good community and to make our community and our world a better place.”

This philosophy towards building a community is a shared value among the students along with principles towards shared learning and respect which are grounded within the school’s culture and context. Ms. Stone persistently declares her intentions to promote a common language of connectedness and respect to promote genuine social and civic interactions which go beyond performance goals, targeting the individual as a whole for the development of a well-rounded citizen. Teacher and student led initiatives such as service projects that aim to advance citizenship and relationships between the school and the larger community as well as a growing focus on raising environmental awareness go beyond the functional aspect of connectedness.

Mindset

Woods & Woods (2011) highlight particular aspects of the mindsets encouraged by the respective ideal typical organizations to facilitate contrast in their analytical framework. They state that characteristic to a bureaucratic hierarchical type of organization a compliant mindset refers to a compliant habit of relying or deferring to authority as a source of direction and purpose and engaging in limited creativity and critical thinking (p.125). Woods & Woods clarify however that “Not all the features on the left side- [of rational bureaucratic hierarchy organizational type] – are always negative: there are circumstances in which some may be positive and needed” (Woods & Woods 2011, p.111). A democratic consciousness mindset “exercises and values critical, independent thinking, cooperative activity and the nurturing of holistic capabilities to expand awareness in the pursuit of truth, social and cultural justice” (p. 125). At Emerald Lakes Elementary School, Ms. Stone’s role as leader is clearly outlined and the perceptions of teachers and students indicate that members of the school categorically identify her as the highest authority in the building. Nonetheless the mindset in the school cannot be described solely as compliant. There is a collaborative culture of decision-making processes that to a certain extent has an impact of blurring the lines of hierarchy. The collective sentiment expressed by faculty and students is that Ms. Stone leads in a communal spirit nurturing collaborative action, shared learning, and independent thinking.

“Something I really like about this classroom is that there are no rules. [Pointing to the Lifelong Guidelines posted on the wall] The guidelines are pretty much up there. They are choices, respect, effort, responsibility, caring and honesty; and so pretty much the only rule is that we respect each other. It’s not even special respect for the teacher; it’s just respect your fellow peers.” Fifth Grade Student

Another student talked about the shared sense of responsibility they feel in their school for each other by saying,

“Sometimes we get together as like a big group and if something bad happened, we come together and sort of brainstorm ideas to prevent it from happening again. If someone gets in trouble or something and we all have to think of something to do about it.”

Features of democratic consciousness are advanced through collegiate endeavors of inquiry for an awareness—not just of performance skills—but, to certain extent, of democratic practices and values in order to create a culture of independent thinking and learning for the faculty and for the students.

Summary

The discussion above regarding the variables of Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework helps illustrate a rather complex range of leadership practices enactment that lean towards features of democratic practices within the traditional management paradigm of the US education system. Emerald Lakes Elementary school principal, Mr. Deborah Stone, strongly promotes practices that are aligned with features of holistic democracy as espoused by Woods & Woods (2011).

From the complexity that constitutes the realities of a traditional management paradigm, the posed questions of this research study aim to seek how some principals are able to employ leadership practices that are aligned with ideals of democratic schooling such as shared governance, collaborative decision-making, critical thinking in the inner

work of the staff and students towards the development of the holistic citizen, aware of not just the self but of others and their context for the benefit of the society as a whole.

One of the major themes that emerged from the analysis was Ms. Stone's vision enactment. Ms. Stone regards herself as having a transformative approach to her leadership. Evidence through participant and observational data supported her assertion in terms of the emphasis placed on values and emotion towards collective and fundamental objectives for higher levels of personal commitment towards organizational aims. It was also found Ms. Stone employs strategic approaches to her leadership practices such as distributing power among organizational members whom are able to inspire their commitments to collective aspirations and the established site-specific goals. She inspires and supports her organizational members towards the achievement of her vision of the school which is based on clear personal and professional values. It was also found that the underlying purpose of Ms. Stone's reflective practices of the external and internal dynamics of her organization was aimed towards a sustainable organizational purpose.

Another practice that Ms. Stone employs that promotes a sense of empowerment among her students is bolstering shared learning, student leadership opportunities, collaborative inquiry and critical thinking. Organic belonging, a key feature of holistic democracy was also an emergent theme in the data collected for this research study. Ms. Stone has managed to set a tone at Emerald Lakes Elementary which focuses towards embodied learning allowing the possibility for connectedness, and for individual well-being as well as for the entire organization.

For staff self-directed professional development through inquiry and shared learning paved the way for the staff that chose to participate have an opportunity to share their voice as well as engaging in creating and sharing meaning and understanding, building on ideas which are valued aims of the members of the entire organization.

While there is an integral aspect of the school that has to concentrate on cognitive-technical knowledge as part of federal, state and district mandates, there is an emphasis placed on democratic values through the adopted Lifelong Guidelines. This is what the organization led by Ms. Stone seems to encourage and value.

In terms of participation the breadth and scope, Ms. Stone identified that the aim was to create opportunities for embodied learning through the collaborative creation of meaning, advance collective knowledge and provide spaces for interactions that create rich social relationships. Valuing interactive pedagogies and student voice had the purpose of transcending authority and policy-level priorities, aiming towards higher order concerns.

Some of the issues that emerge from this analysis which practitioners and policy makers might find useful to address include:

- The value of setting out a school vision of holistic democracy which explicitly articulates a strategy to develop democratic capabilities, increases participation in policy-level matters (both staff and students) and places skills such as enterprise skills in a wider educational aims to develop democratic consciousness.
- Making explicit in a school ethos not only the value of community and organic belonging but also of connectedness (the importance of the exploration of deeper meaning, and holistic awareness)

- Critically examining boundaries of participation and the rationales for excluding members of other groups.

This analytical framework invites people to consider questions of participation and meaning as part of its framework; furthermore to creatively adapt this so that it reflects the holistic democratic aspirations that they feel will best work in their content and community. Each organization or individual has different needs at any particular point in time striving towards holistic democracy. For some a priority may be to consider how to disperse decision-making, nonetheless holistic democracy is greater than the sum of its parts-shown in the right-hand column of the analytical framework. The ultimate aim is to find a configuration of them all which works for the school and its population and community.

The ability to develop degrees of democracy is integral to the possibility of organic governance and viable adaptive strategies that builds upon present conditions in order to create environments more in line with democratic values. The analytical framework is therefore relevant to other settings and institutions too. The framework is offered as a conceptual frame to support practitioner and academic research aimed at gaining better understanding of the expressive and participative aspects of democracy in diverse settings. A democratic self-organizing culture depends upon the reflection and finding practical ways of improving meaning and participation. The framework is a way of helping to focus and raise awareness of how democracy can be deepened in order to guide effective adaptive strategies for change.

Chapter 6

Analysis of the Findings and Conclusion

“Democratic schools cannot exist without the leadership of educators who provide students with learning experiences that promote the democratic way of life” - Apple and Beane (1995)

This study’s focus on two principals’ educational leadership and aspects of democratic ideologies explored approaches and practices that nurture democratic relationships, approaches that promote working in collaboration and respect among members of the school community.

The case study of these two principals sheds light on the complex range of practices and different approaches that are aligned with democratic notions of leadership employed by the leaders of each school within a traditional management paradigm of the U.S. public education system (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991,1993; Blase & Blase, 1999; Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Edmonds, 1979; Dunlap & Goldman, 1991; Glickman, 1993, 1998; Kreisberg, 1992; Lieberman, 1990; Maeroff, 1988; Murphy & Louis, 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1983 ,Starratt, 2001, 2003;Theoharris, 2007) . This final chapter presents an analysis of the findings and compares the two principals within the aspects of decision-making practices, relationship building, vision enactment and under the dimensions of holistic democracy as espoused by Woods and Woods (2011).

A summary of the findings from the previous two chapters is presented under the core concepts of holistic democracy (holistic meaning, power sharing, transforming dialogue and holistic well-being) in order to highlight the distinctive and complementary

components of a rich conception of democratic practices employed by the two principals, grasping the overlaps and interplays of variables in the analytical framework. This analysis is presented through a critical lens referring back to the philosophies of John Dewey, A.S. Neill and others who espoused progressivist shifting towards practices that move away from narrow organizational notions which focus solely on measures of performance and pushes against the boundaries of traditional forms of teaching and learning. The chapter concludes with the limitations for this study and highlights the contributions this study makes to the body of educational leadership literature and identifies some implications of the findings for practitioners and researchers.

Promoting a Democratic Way of Life

“[A democratic society] must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social change without introducing disorder” (John Dewey, Democracy and Education, 1916)

The attraction to this study began with the notion that “democratic schools” were parallel with concepts of “alternative education.” The word *alternative* seems dichotomous to the conception of education for the citizens of a democratic society. The research questions that guided this study were intended to gain more insight and understanding of how some school principals employ practices that are aligned with democratic ideals such as shared interests, freedom in interactions, participation, valuing of voice and social relationships. The insights gained in this qualitative research study may provide some examples for educational leaders that struggle with the demands of the current accountability movement while simultaneously seeking to provide their schools

with the tools that can enhance democratic citizenry in our society. The rationale for this study was to examine traditional school organizational arrangements and contrast them with notions of democratic schooling.

Employing Democratic Leadership Practices within a Traditional Management Paradigm

Both Mr. Blake Pierce and Ms. Deborah Stone are part of the Mountain Laurel School District. As part of the US public education system, their schools have to adhere to state and federal mandates of accountability, performance measures and hierarchical (top-down) liability flow. Both principals were chosen for this study because of their explicit beliefs about collaborative teaching and learning processes, their open valuing of democratic ideals and choice. Both of these principals have different approaches but relatively similar aims.

Cedar Heights Elementary School principal, Mr. Blake Pierce's central practice is aligned with notions of democratic leadership. He promotes relationship building among his staff, builds rapport, respect and trust and enables collaborative endeavors which create a sense of inclusive leadership and empowerment among the staff.

Regarding relationships with staff, at Emerald Lakes Elementary, Ms. Stone focuses on building relationships around the community with those who share her vision on democratic practices, community building and environmental awareness. This approach along with the constancy of her convictions and the people she interacts with has helped materialize her vision which anticipates collaborative decision-making and critical thinking in the inner work of the staff and students. At times, however, she has

had to resort to deliberate relationship building with certain organizational members in a strategic manner in order to coax those members who do not agree with her vision and her beliefs. On occasion when consensus is not reached, she opts for removing herself from the decision-making process altogether so that members are able to vote without her administrative role having an influence on their judgments. However some participants in this study stated that she can be headstrong about the enactment of her pursuits and they feel that some of the members' voices are not taken into account, which for them negates the entire democratic purpose. Deborah's challenges in making decisions democratically lie within the tensions that exist in carrying out her vision which she believes should be embraced by her faculty, her students and her community. However her determination to value consensus and voice seem to constantly make her reflect on her practices. She wholeheartedly believes that it is her job to negotiate with '*resistant teachers*' and start them in projects in a platform where they feel the most comfortable while at the same time employing other members who "*are ready*" to persuade the skeptics to shift towards the goals of the organization. Ms. Stone says that she values the diversity in perspectives as they help to keep in her 'in check' and to consider aspects that may not otherwise present themselves without those opposing views.

Comparing these aspects of relationship building practices between Mr. Blake Pierce and Ms. Deborah Stone, the differing approaches lead to different outcomes regarding staff relationships. Mr. Pierce's approaches of seeking input from teachers prior to making decisions, building trust and respect among all of his staff, shared learning and responsibility have built a collective harmony which has paved the way for staff to feel they have voice and agency as well as an active role in creating and sharing

meaning and understanding partaking in a communal goal of setting the tone at Cedar Heights elementary towards embodied learning allowing the possibility for connectedness, and for individual well-being as well as for the entire organization.

While Ms. Stone approach may bring about some clashing of rationalities between staff members, her leadership approaches have thrust an organizational shift towards democratic applications in her school with an educational purpose that is strongly defined by values in order to make organizational life genuinely and consistently committed to higher order values beyond success measured by test scores.

Considering gender as a contrasting feature in leadership styles, literature on leadership and gender roles unfortunately provides a narrow focus on the complexities of leading a school, reducing the issue to the difference in ‘management approaches’ assigning biased traits to male and female leaders. The discussion usually focuses on defining ‘androcentric’ notions of management that allude to ‘male traits’ of aggressive competitiveness, emphasis on control rather than negotiation and collaboration which are placed under ‘feminine behaviors’. These limiting stereotypes constrain a rich discussion on gender implications regarding leadership practices. Taking the findings in this study through this limited scope, the practices employed by Ms. Stone maybe more aligned with aggressive and highly disciplined strategies for vision enactment while conversely aiming towards a ‘culture of collaboration’. Mr. Pierce’s employs more emphasis on collaboration and cooperation from the onset towards a cohesive collegiality through empathy and flexibility in his school, traits which tend to be associated with ‘female behaviors’. Nonetheless, as argued by Nias, Southwoth and Yeomans (1989) in Bush (2003),

“... The ‘culture of collaboration’, with its emphasis on concern for the individual and on cohesion, its legitimation of emotionality, its validation of control both by peers and by the head, its denial of competition, is a ‘ woman’s culture’ ...[but] to argue that a collaborative culture is gender-specific is simplistic) (p.80)

Looking at these practices through a genderless archetype where the possibility of leadership to exhibit a wide range of qualities which are present in both male and female, the focus is once again centered on the leadership processes.

Both schools as part of the Mountain Laurel School district have to abide by federal, state and district mandates. Aside from the measures of accountability which emphasize on cognitive-technical knowledge, both principals endorse high order values that are aligned with democratic aims.

Organizational Members’ Perceptions Regarding the Principals’ Democratic Leadership Practices

Mr. Pierce’s decision-making progress was regarded by faculty members as collaborative. Teachers collectively stated that Mr. Pierce valued relationships. He took the time to involve teachers and develop close professional relationships with each one. This approach was valued by faculty and had an overall impact on their perception of him as a leader and an enabler of collaborative decision-making. Students collectively regarded Mr. Pierce as a creative leader who valued shared learning and promoted rich relationships between the school leadership and peers.

Ms. Stone’s decision-making progress was regarded by half the faculty members that were interviewed as democratic. The other half of the faculty interviewed regarded Ms. Stone as authoritative. This discrepancy highlights some of the tensions that exist in Ms. Stone’s vision enactment for her school. However from the data it was evident that

there were multiple flows of information and dialogue. The divide in participant perceptions highlights the challenges that may exist in ambitiously propelling a leaders' objective for democracy while equitably acknowledging divergent perspectives. Student perception at Emerald Lakes seems to prove more cohesive with regards to connectedness, respect and freedom of choice.

Leadership Practices that Promote Democratic Ideals

The discussion regarding the two principals in light of the variables presented in the Woods & Woods (2011) Degrees of Democracy Framework helps illustrate the complexity of the application of leadership practices that intend to mirror features towards a more democratic way of leading a public school. As previously explained the discussion of principal practices guided by the variables in the Woods and Woods framework serves as a conceptual representation of how certain practices have a shifting outcome from one organizational ideal type towards another.

Cedar Heights Elementary school principal, Mr. Blake Pierce, promotes certain practices that come close to Woods & Woods (2011) holistic democracy organizational type.

Organic belonging, a key feature of holistic democracy was an emergent characteristic along with a scope of participation and the valuing of student voice which moves practice in the direction of co-creation of knowledge. Although authority remains hierarchical, Mr. Blake Pierce aims towards higher order concerns.

Through the Looking Glass of Holistic Democracy

As stated by Woods and Woods (2012), holistic democracy is a way of working together which encourages individuals to grow and learn as whole people facilitating shared responsibility, reciprocal relationships and mutual empowerment while helping to shape and co-create an ideas-generating culture. As discussed in Chapter 3 there are four dimensions of holistic democracy:

Holistic Meaning: Aspiring to a true understanding not only of technical and scientific matters but also the 'big questions of enduring values meaning and purpose. Under Holistic meaning the variables of Degrees towards Holistic Democracy from the Woods and Woods (2010) analytical framework include:

- Organizational Purpose
- Knowledge Goal
- Method of Creating Knowledge
- Modes of Learning

Power Sharing: Inclusive participation in shaping organizational operations, policy, direction and values and autonomy to act freely and express identity within the parameters of agreed values and responsibilities.

Under power sharing the variables of Degrees towards Holistic Democracy from the Woods and Woods (2010) analytical framework include:

- Authority Structure
- Spaces for Participation
- Scope of Participation

Transforming Dialogue: A climate where exchange of views and open debate are possible, and people cooperatively seek to enhance mutual understanding and reach beyond narrow perspective capabilities through democratic participation. Under transforming dialogue the variables of Degrees towards Holistic Democracy from the Woods and Woods (2010) analytical framework include:

- Communication Flows
- Key Purpose of Dialogue
- Engagement

Holistic Well-Being: Generation of belonging, connectedness, feelings of empowerment, self-esteem, happiness and participative capabilities through democratic participation. Holistic Well-Being the variables of Degrees towards Holistic Democracy from the Woods and Woods (2010) analytical framework include:

- Community
- Personal
- Mindset

The following figure from Woods and Woods (2012) breaks down the variables through the aspects of the four dimensions of holistic democracy between the two organizational types of rational bureaucratic hierarchy and holistic democracy. The range of practices observed was analyzed between these scales falling closer to either the right side (closer to features of holistic democracy) or the left side (closer to features of rational bureaucratic hierarchy).

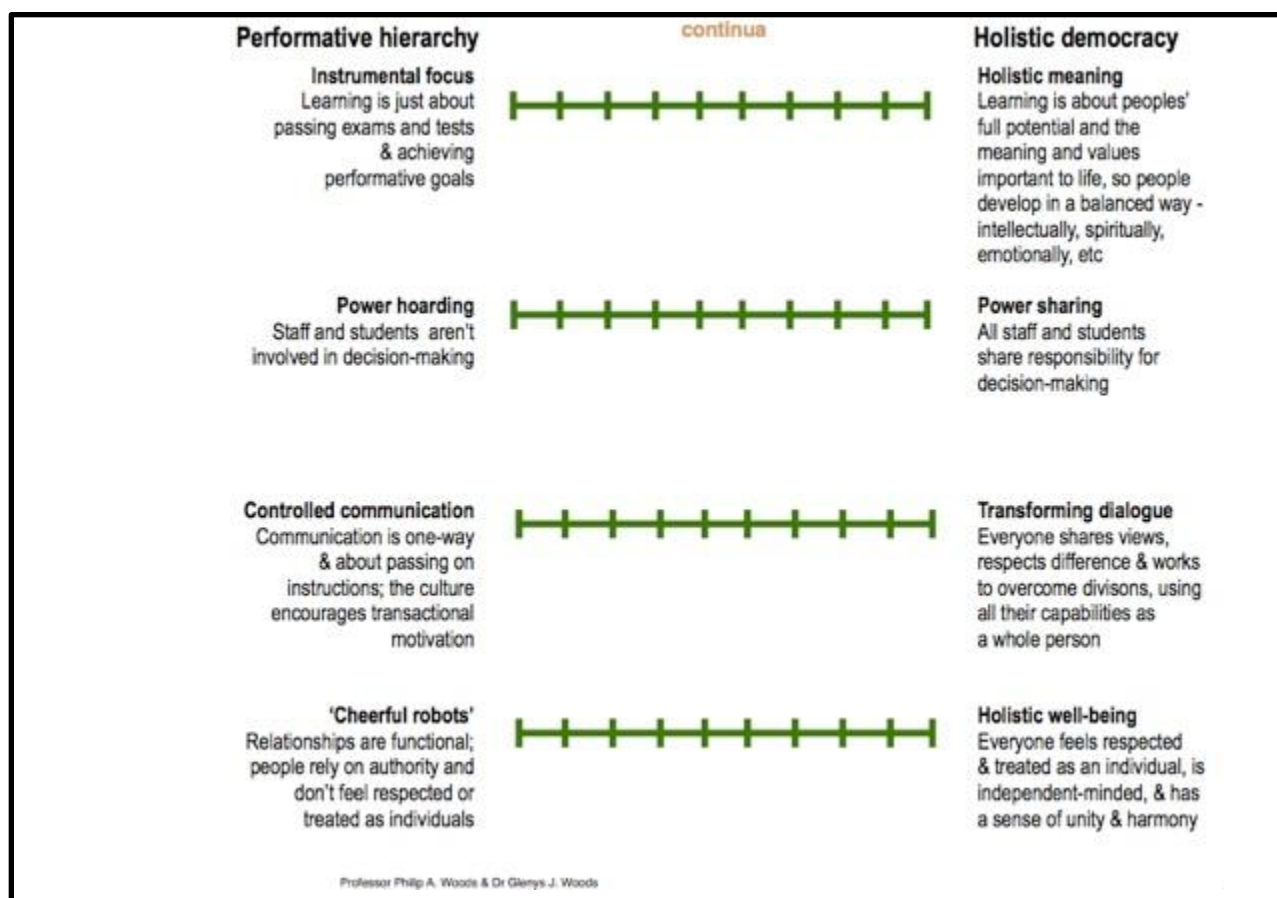


Figure 6.1 Simplified version of the Degrees of Democracy Framework

Mr. Blake Pierce's practices regarding holistic meaning present a moderate shift towards features of holistic democracy in that there is a valuing of higher order concerns, shared learning and approaches to collaborative decision-making process with inclusive practices for his teaching staff. Pedagogical approaches and professional development at Cedar Heights carry certain traits of a rational bureaucratic organizational model in that there are standardized performance goals sought and dictated by the district in accordance with state mandates for both students and staff. However, as described in chapter 4, Mr. Pierce's leadership practices encourage a shifting towards the co-creation of pedagogical

content and professional development within the teaching staff which is congruent with aspects of holistic meaning.

Ms. Stone practices regarding organizational purpose, knowledge goals, methods of knowledge creation and modes of learning present a shifting towards holistic meaning traits to a higher degree. The employment of the *Tools for Citizenship Lifelong Guidelines* discussed in Chapter 5, the enactment of *Skills for Personal Best* and the *Habits of the Heart* which focus on higher order values promote a common language at Emerald Lakes. Her openly articulated stance on democratic practices in at Emerald Lakes is carried out by strongly encouraging teachers and students to take part in service learning projects in her school, creating the space for weekly all school gatherings and relating and partnering with parents and other members of the community towards a common educational goal that fosters democratic citizenry skills. Moving away from a narrow focus on performance goals, Emerald Lakes Elementary School's purpose is strongly defined by values in order to make organizational life genuinely and consistently committed to higher order values beyond success measured by test scores.

Concerning power sharing, the authority structure in both schools is a pyramid structure, concentrating power in a hierarchical arrangement through top-down directives and upward accountability towards district, state and federal mandates and stated policies compliance. However both principals engage in practices which intend to shift towards a dispersion of leadership among organizational members. From the data collected, Mr. Pierce's approach to relationship building among staff creates a perception of effectiveness in blurring the lines of authority slightly more effectually than Ms. Stone. As one of the Emerald Lakes teacher participants claimed, democratic practices seem to

be more explicit for Emerald Lakes Elementary School students than they may appear for the faculty.

Mr. Pierce was explicit in his intention to shift away from the “egg crate model” of knowledge dissemination, but rather towards a blurring of separating boundaries of exclusion; an atypical reality in top down bureaucratic organizational systems. From the data collected it was evident that both principals value interactive pedagogies, student voice and the co-creation of knowledge. Nonetheless these practices have their limitations in terms of degrees of democracy. Authority remains hierarchical and concentrated, priorities are transmitted down, but both leaders strive to emphasize participation and inclusive practices in order to privilege higher order concerns.

Pertaining to transforming dialogue Ms. Stone’s practices as evidenced by observational and student interview data promote an open exchange of ideas, recognition and respect for teacher and student voice and promoting participative activities. Also, Ms. Stone strives to amplify information exchange between her and her staff as well as with her students. As discussed in chapter 5, sometimes conflicting views or perspectives were brought up among staff. The intention is for dialogue to become meaningful and rich even though rationalities may clash. Ms. Stone repeatedly stated her intention to advance collective knowledge, co-creative learning and constructive critique while acknowledging resistance from some organizational members.

Mr. Blake Pierce consistently seeks input from staff regarding decision-making processes at Cedar Heights Elementary School. Faculty and students expressed how they appreciate Mr. Pierce’s approachability and the opportunities for sharing and valuing voice allowing for dialogue to become meaningful and rich.

In both schools faculty acknowledged to be genuinely be committed to their schools and their students far beyond merely maximizing their own benefits in exchange for the efforts they expend. For the most part teachers and staff at both sites share a genuine collegiality, professional connection and respect towards each other, their ideas and their voice. They claim collective ownership of the school, nurturing students in a communal objective. Contrasting to rational bureaucratic hierarchical organizational type of engagement, where achievement and staff engagement is incentivized by materials, compensation or disciplinary sanctions, both principals display efforts towards collaboration, shared learning and respect in her school aims towards whole-person engagement in the educational experiences.

In relation to holistic well-being, Mr. Pierce emphasis on community building has been through modeling respect, openness and communication. Cedar Heights Elementary seems to move away from ritualistic practices that superficially promote community engagement. Rather there seems to be an organic sense of belonging within the school community. By coaxing all members to feel responsible for their school, encouraging students to regard every adult in the building as an educator, encouraging student initiatives, Mr. Pierce seems to have created through his leadership practices a communal sense of ownership for Cedar Heights Elementary School. The sense of unity was apparent to a high degree. The Cedar Heights Elementary philosophy and its values towards shared learning, building community and respect is grounded within the school's culture and context. Mr. Pierce declares his persistent mindset to transcend the structural separateness of classrooms by building connections and promoting interactions that go beyond achievement of performance goals, targeting the individual as a whole for the

development of a well-rounded citizen. At Cedar Heights Elementary School, Mr. Pierce's role as leader is clearly outlined and the perceptions of teachers and students indicate that members of the school categorically identify him as the highest authority in the building. Nonetheless the mindset in the school cannot be described solely as compliant. There is a collaborative culture of decision-making processes that to a certain extent has an impact of blurring the lines of hierarchy. The collective sentiment expressed by faculty and students is that Mr. Pierce leads in a communal spirit nurturing collaborative action, shared learning, and independent thinking.

Ms. Stone aims to move away from ritualistic practices that superficially promote community engagement to true commitments towards community building. The sense of organic belonging from the students is evident in the creation of a collective sense of responsibility for their school, students' environmental awareness—not just their school grounds but of their community. By encouraging student initiatives, Ms. Stone seems to have created through her leadership practices a communal sense of ownership and interconnectedness at Emerald Lakes Elementary School. Her practices aim beyond performance goals, targeting the individual as a whole for the development of a well-rounded citizen.

Examining Leadership Practices from a Critical Perspective

As Biesta (2007) contends that “schools may have exemplary curricula for the teaching of democracy and citizenship, but if the internal organization of a school is undemocratic, this will undoubtedly have a negative impact on students' attitudes and disposition towards democracy” (p.747). In other words, if we are teaching our students

to be participants in a democracy in an undemocratic environment, we might be hindering the efforts of teaching for democracy.

John Dewey's philosophies when juxtaposed against the current accountability legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 present a critical tension between the democratic ideals of engaging in participatory discourse and shared governance versus the administrative misapplication of the legislative intent of NCLB (Jenlink 2009, p.188) which has led to high-stakes testing and data-driven accountability. Mullen (2008) argues that Deweyian democracy represents a much more effective model for education than does the current accountability model, which is based on narrowly defined competencies and standardized tests. Along the same lines, Gitlin (2004) asserts that "improving test scores does not automatically promote social or economic equality or equity. Improving test scores does not demonstrate to future citizens how to participate in and sustain their educational gains as citizens in a democracy. Apple and Beane (1995) make a case for democratic schooling. They exemplify democratic school reform efforts carried out by teachers and students within the context of public education, where the emergence and formation of the educated democratic citizen transpires, that democracy should be sought.

Many of today's schools have lost recognition of educating future citizens to live in a democracy. This mindset has been perpetuated by the No Child Left Behind legislation resulting in a clear mandate for educational leaders. The combination of aligning leadership roles to democratic ideals seems to logically segue towards democratic leadership. However, this is a slippery slope as defining democratic leadership is very challenging and complex; moreover, within the context of clearly

defined and highly politicized lines in authority and bureaucracy that exist in many traditional school settings.

Aspects and concepts of top-down authority and power, previously delineated in chapter 2 through the metaphor of Michel Foucault's Panopticism, play a role in decision-making within school organizations. Denoting Foucault's emphasis on power existing within the network relationships that are systematically interconnected for the purpose of social normalization is precisely what Woods and Woods (2011) characterize as traits of rational bureaucratic hierarchy.

The influential theorist of critical pedagogy Paulo Freire agrees that power comes in ideological forms of knowledge, social relations, and other concrete cultural arrangements that function actively to silence people which is internalized in the form of discipline, consequently individuals participate in their own oppression, much like Foucault's concept of internalized surveillance. This point made by Freire indicates ways in which domination is subjectively experienced through its internalization. Henry Giroux (1985) asserts that Freire's assertion examines repressive aspects of domination with the aims towards self-knowledge leading to self-emancipation. It is within this theoretical juncture that Freire introduces a new dimension to radical educational theory and practice, linking the process of struggle to the particularities of people's lives while simultaneously arguing for a faith in the power of the oppressed to struggle in the interests of their own liberation (Freire 1985, p. xiii)

As a referent for change, education represents both a place within and a particular type of engagement with the dominant society (Giroux in Freire, 1985 p. xiii). Schooling

is merely the manifestation or exercise of delivering the knowledge or information. Education is more of a reasoning (analysis) of the issues that lead to the development of individual values, language and aspirations. “As a referent for change, education represents a form of action that emerges from a joining of the languages of critique and possibility” (p. xviii). Against the claim that schools were only instructional sites, radical critics pointed to the transmission and reproduction of a dominant culture in schools, with its selective ordering and privileging of specific forms of language, modes of reasoning, social relations, and cultural forms and experiences. In this view, culture was linked to power and to the imposition of a specific set of ruling class codes and experiences. Moreover, school culture functioned not only to confirm and privilege students from the dominant classes but also through exclusion and insult to discredit the histories, experiences, and dreams of subordinate groups. Finally against the assertion made by traditional educators that schools were relatively neutral institutions, radical critics illuminated the way in which the state, through its selective grants, certification policies, and legal powers, shaped school practice in the interest of capitalist rationality. In Freire’s view, the reproduction of capitalist rationality and other forms of oppression was only one political and theoretical moment in the process of domination, rather than an all-encompassing aspect of human existence. It was something to be decoded, challenged, and transformed, but only within the ongoing discourse, experiences and histories of the oppressed themselves.

The data that emerges from Mr. Pierce and Ms. Stone’s leadership practices provokes a critical examination regarding the ways in which each principal chooses to

actualize their aims. Mr. Blake Pierce's approach towards developing harmonious relationships with his staff results in a communal sense of purpose towards shared learning and positive perceptions from the students and the staff. His core beliefs regarding transparency and flexibility set the ground for valuing consensus, taking into account the needs and voices of the school organizational members; a notably democratic trait. Discussions about democracy have often been tied to discussions about education because education has traditionally been viewed as the vehicle towards creating the social citizen. As previously discussed the political nature of our educational system poses dilemmas in democratic management and tensions emerge within bureaucratic and hierarchical stratus. This was more evident in Ms. Stone's approaches towards achieving democratic aims, where her interests, personal values and motivations differed with some members of her school. This resulted in a clash of rationalities and the perception from some participants that regarded Ms. Stone as authoritative.

Both Mr. Pierce and Ms. Stone articulate their valuing of shared learning and the valuing of voice consistent with democratic notions in education in order to transform their organization towards a collective sense of unity with the self and others, promoting independent thinking, innovation, creativity and meaningful knowledge creation. Both principals in this research study engage in reflective practices in order to examine their leadership roles and align them with their own objectives towards collaborative and participatory initiatives with the members of their schools. These objectives are antithetical to approaches consistent with a traditional management paradigm of education.

Study Limitations

The limitations in this study include that Mr. Blake Pierce ended his tenure as principal at Cedar Heights to begin a job in the school district as Literacy Curriculum Supervisor and a continuation of a study of the long-term effects of his leadership practices cannot be examined. There is however data that indicates further research on the sustainability of his visions through staff teaching practices. Another limitation in this study is found within the use of Woods and Woods (2011) analytical framework. The dimensions presented in the original framework focuses on different dimensions of an organization as a whole, instead of principal practices. Further analysis of the framework could further serve to adapt this framework specifically for principal leadership practices to provide a more detailed conceptual representation of the two principals and how this has an effect on the overall organization.

Implications

“For democratic leaders, perhaps a first step is the realization of how fragile democracy really is. For all of its grand buildings and important people, democracy is fundamentally an idea, a collective idea that the populace has agreed benefits them”
(Klinker, 2006)

Education is not apolitical. Therefore, successful engaging in the education profession requires an understanding of the political trends, issues and forces within the U.S. education system. It is important educators to understand how political forces have and how they continue to influence our schools and the advantages in terms of the current expanding leadership roles that they can attain. Regarding democratic leadership, Kesson and Henderson (2010) provide a proposal for reconceptualizing the professional

development of educators. They advocate for US education to be oriented towards the historic problem of preparing citizens for life in a democratic society. Second, their conception of democratic life includes but exceeds political life; in this, they adhere to both Dewey's (1939,1989) position that democracy is a way of life...which provides a moral standard for personal conduct (p.101) and more recently Judith Green's (1999) notion of 'deep' democracy as a way of life characterized by empathy, equity, commitment, and connection. One of the counter-intuitive findings in this study was Ms. Stone's alternating use of practices that were perceived as authoritative by some of her organizational members in order to push for democratic aims. This point towards the use of strategic or political relationship building for the advancement of her vision. It is important to examine and reflect on the political aspects of vision enactment and to reflect on ways that some approaches may be dichotomous with reaching consensus and engaging in collaborative endeavors for modeling democratic practices.

Another important implication for the profession is to engage in constructive dialogue. It is within the reciprocal nature of conversations that true understanding and meanings on discourse can be accomplished. In the highly politically tainted conversations and interactions that inevitably take place within the education system, true commitment to understanding and openness to diverse views and perspectives can pave the way for a democratic process. Constructive dialogue enables participants to construct meaning towards a shared purpose about teaching and learning. Lambert (2002) contend that,

“There are conversations that occur around inquiry process such as action research, critical inquiry, desegregating school data, the protocol, and planned conversations around student work...These processes are being used in schools with

increasing frequency. They are becoming central to administrative preparation programs, professional development schools, and national and regional reform networks” (p.70).

Sustaining these conversations is the key for dialogue to become authentic. When educators are engaged in sustaining conversations, they develop trust within the group of participants and they feel safe to examine their own perceptions and question their practices. It is within these environments that theories of practice are reconstructed (Lambert 2002).

Student voice and choice do not fit particularly well into a system characterized by bureaucracy and hierarchical structure (Reitzug 2003; Morrison 2008) and herein lies one of the challenges for democratic leaders: resistance. Students may resist deviating from the traditional educational norm of passive acceptance and democratic educational practices such as voice and choice may be met initially with some resistance. Teachers may also initially resist applying democratic teaching practices, especially if their own education experiences deviated from a democratic approach to having voice and choice. Grappling with these fears within these authentic dialogues can help the reformation of practices.

Another implication is the call for leaders and educators to become reflective practitioners. Begley and Zaretsky (2004) state that “leaders in schools must become reflective practitioners and authentic in their leadership practices” (p. 641). In doing so, leaders become open to the values and perspectives of others and can give meaning to the actions of the members of the schools community. They also stress the importance of the reflective practice and valuation processes to determine context. “When unexamined values are applied arbitrarily, justified in the name of the democratic process, they can be

anything but democratic” (p.642). Through practicing democracy, we can teach democracy, live democratically and understand the goals of democratic education and leadership, which lie within voice, choice, participation and accepting diverse perspectives within the decision making process.

Kesson and Henderson (2010) propose a discipline approach to professional development that requires a contemplative (self-knowledge) stance and it is grounded in a ‘problematizing discourse’ approach to inquiry, and culminates in a theoretically informed approach to ‘deep’ subject matter understanding’ integrated with democratic self and social learning. The intent here is to position curriculum and teaching as a ‘democratic wisdom challenge’ (p. 217). Leaders might develop forms of intelligent action capable of deposing the technical/managerial, or ‘standardized management paradigm that has for so long structured their work and limited the possibilities for democratic education (p.214)

Through the democratic lens, traditional power structures are inverted. Power in a democracy is nested within the people, and this is precisely where democratic leadership should lie. Democracy champions voice, the free market of ideas, liberty and equality within a framework of social order and collective welfare. The purpose of educational leadership is to promote equity, justice and provide a safe climate where learning can occur. Democratic leadership must then espouse the notion that no matter how a leader’s authoritative roles are defined by the organization, the power rests within the conceptions of a democratic society, and they are there to be a voice and defender of the collective.

Some of the issues that emerge from this analysis facilitated by the Woods and Woods (2001) Analytical Framework which practitioners and policy makers might find useful to address include:

- The value of setting out a school vision of holistic democracy which explicitly articulates a strategy to develop democratic capabilities, increases participation in policy-level matters (both staff and students) and places skills such as enterprise skills in a wider educational aims to develop democratic consciousness.
- Making explicit in a school ethos not only the value of community and organic belonging but also of connectedness (the importance of the exploration of deeper meaning, and holistic awareness)
- Critically examining boundaries of participation and the rationales for excluding members of other groups.

Although the framework served as a valuable tool for analysis, the design by Woods and Woods (2011) does not specifically target principal leadership practices. For this particular study the framework guided the analysis of the data through the variables, leading to a conceptual representation of the principals' practices and how those reflected on the whole school in terms of democratic aims. Further evaluation of the Woods and Woods model may perhaps lead to further dimensions that should be considering when evaluating leadership practices in a case study such as this one. The findings in this study invite leaders to reflect on their practices and analyze concepts of holistic democracy which they feel will best work in their content and community. Each organization or individual has different needs at any particular point in time striving towards democratic

aims. For some a priority may be to consider how to disperse decision-making and the framework nonetheless presents features under holistic democracy which can guide leadership practices that lead towards a harmonious configuration which could fit for a school and its population and community.

Woods and Woods assert that the ability to develop degrees of democracy is integral to the possibility of organic governance and viable adaptive strategies that builds upon present conditions in order to create environments that are more in line with democratic values. The analytical framework is therefore relevant to other settings and institutions too. For this particular study however, a set of dimensions targeted specifically for principal leadership practices would shed more light on the dynamics and complexities in the challenges of employing directives that may be perceived as authoritative, as was the case with Ms. Stone by some members of her faculty, yet lead toward democratic outcomes for the school, although not necessarily for staff interaction and relationships. A democratic self-organizing culture depends upon the reflection and finding practical ways of improving meaning and participation. The Woods and Woods (2011) framework is a way of helping to focus and raise awareness of how democracy can be deepened in a school organization. Further development and analysis of this tool can serve to enhance the methodological aspects towards degrees of democracy in leadership praxis and effective adaptive strategies for change.

Conclusion

“That is why the utopian character of our educational theory and practice is as permanent as education itself, which for us is cultural action. Its thrust toward denunciation and annunciation cannot be exhausted when the reality denounced today cedes its place tomorrow to the reality previously announced in the denunciation. When education is no longer utopian, that is, when it no longer embodies the dramatic unity of denunciation and annunciation, it is either because the future has no more meaning for men, or because men are afraid to risk living the future as creative overcoming of the present, which has become old.” (Paulo Freire 1985, p.58)

Rather than viewing leadership practice solely as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, democratic leadership allows the space for leadership to be more a function of interactions between people and their situation. These interactions, rather than any particular action, are critical in understanding a more distributive type leadership practice. As contemporary scholarship acknowledges the importance distributing leadership between members of the organization, it is important to look at the decision-making process of the principals, examine their relationship and interactions with the teachers and students, study other organization members perception of those leaders' practices and explore to what degree those teachers and students feel like they take part in those decision-making processes. By examining interactions and relationships between these individuals in a traditional school setting, the findings of this study can provide insights towards new forms of educational leadership practices that intend to blur bureaucratic assumptions and styles of management while acknowledging that leadership typically involves more people than those at the top of the organizational hierarchy. The exploration of the processes of decision-making and the school community as an

inclusive type of leadership (principal, administration, teachers, students and parents)'s perspective can be a valuable contribution to the educational leadership discourse.

This case study arises out of the desire to understand complex ranges of leadership practices that lean towards features of democratic practices within the traditional management paradigm of the US education system. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. In this case the leadership practices of two principals were explored to determine to what extent their practices were aligned with democratic ideals of leadership praxis. This study considered perceptions of the teachers and students to determine to what extent those members feel like they are taking part of the decision-making process. An overview of each school principal's leadership practices, decision-making processes and educational philosophies were used in the analysis along with the variables presented in Woods and Woods Degrees of Democracy framework help determine the extent of democratic ideals embedded in the principals' practices .

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Appendix A

Woods & Woods Degrees towards Holistic Democracy Analytical Framework

DEGREES OF DEMOCRACY: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK		
	features of rational bureaucratic hierarchy	features of holistic democracy
principal organisational purpose	competitive performance	holistic meaning substantive
knowledge goal	cognitive-technical	holistic
method of teaching & creating knowledge	instruction within boundaries	co-creation across boundaries
learning capabilities valued	cognitive	multiple
authority structure	pyramid	power sharing flat
spaces for participation	exclusive	inclusive
scope of participation	minimal	maximal
communication flows	one-way	transforming dialogue multiple
key purpose of dialogue	information exchange	transformation of understanding
engagement	transactional	holistic
community	instrumental	holistic well-being organic
personal	alienation	connectedness
mindset	compliant mindset	democratic consciousness

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Principal Interview

Gender_____

Age _____

Highest level of education_____

Years of Total Experience as Principal_____

Years in Current Position_____

Building Level_____

Student Enrollment in District_____

Student Enrollment in School _____

Setting of District_____

Interview Questions

1. What would you say are your most strongly held beliefs about education and schooling?
2. Can you say something about your vision for your work as leader or principal?
3. What do you think informs this vision? (Readings? Personal experiences? Critical incidents? Can you further illustrate with examples?)
4. Have you encountered any obstacles in enacting your vision? If so, could you elaborate?

5. How do you feel your school's teachers engage (share/differ from) in your vision?
6. How do you feel your school's students engage (share/differ from) in your leadership vision?
7. How do you feel the parents of the students and members of the community understand and support (share/differ from) in your leadership vision?
8. How do you feel your school's administrative staff/personnel partake in the decision-making process regarding important school issues?
9. How do you feel your school's teachers/faculty understand and support in the decision-making process regarding important school issues?
10. How do you feel your school's students understand and support in the decision-making process regarding important school issues?
11. How do you feel the parents of the students and members of the community understand and support in the decision-making process regarding important school issues?
12. What decision style most closely reflects you? (delegative, authoritative, collaborative)

Additional Comments:

Teacher Interview

Gender____

Grade Level____

Years of Experience____

1. What would you say are your most strongly held beliefs about education and schooling?
2. How would you describe the decision-making process in your school?
3. How would you describe the educational values of the principal of your school?
4. To what extent do you think this is a democratic school setting? Illustrate your point.

Additional Comments:

Student Focus Groups

Topics: (These statements/ questions will prompt researcher to guide each topic section discussion)

Degrees of Participation

1. Students have a say in the decisions that are made (decide what's going on)
2. Teacher lets students do things their own way
3. The teacher allows students to choose what they will work on.
4. Teacher is the only one whom decides the rules.
5. Teacher and the students plan together what they will do
6. Teacher and the students decide together what the rules will be
7. Teacher in asks the students to help decide what the class should do
8. Students get a rule changed if they think it is unfair
9. In school the students get to help plan what they will do

Sense of School as a Community

1. Students in this school really care about each other
2. Students at this school are willing to go out of their way to help someone.
3. Teachers and students treat each other with respect in this school
4. The principal and the students treat each other with respect
5. Students at this school work together to solve problems.
6. This school is like a family
7. Student feels he/she can talk to the teachers in this school about things that are bothering him/her.
8. Students feel they can talk to the principal in this school about things that are bothering them.
9. Teachers in this school really care about me?
10. The principal in this school really cares about me?
11. The teachers in this school do not care what I think?
12. The principal in this school doesn't care what I think?
13. I feel safe and comfortable with the teachers in this school?
14. I feel safe and comfortable with the principal at this school?
15. Teachers in this school often punish students ?
16. The principal in this school often punishes students?
17. Teachers in this school get mad whenever you make a mistake?
18. The principal in this school gets mad whenever you make a mistake?
19. The teacher will always listen to our ideas about how to make the class rules better?
20. The principal always listens to our ideas about how to make the school rules better?

Quality of Group Interaction : When you have been in your class where everyone

in the group has worked together on something, how often did the group members:

1. Pay attention to what every member had to say?
2. Make sure that every member had a chance to participate?
3. Work together to solve the group's problem?
4. All agree before writing down a group answer or making a group decision?
5. Share supplies and materials with each other?
6. Ask questions of each other when they did not understand something?

Academic Self Esteem

1. I am a very good student.
2. I have trouble figuring things out at school
3. I am doing well in school.
4. I do not do very well in school.

Sense of Autonomy

1. I decide what I think is right, and then I do it
2. I am the one who decides what happens to me.
3. I decide most important things for myself
4. Even when I have the choice, I do not like to decide things for myself
5. I usually do not get to choose what I do
6. I make my own decisions, even when people do not want me to.
7. I do not have any choice about most of the things I do.

Democratic Values

1. I feel free to share ideas in the classroom
2. I feel free to share ideas in my school
3. The teachers share ideas with us
4. The principal share ideas with us
5. I feel my participation is important to my teacher
6. I feel my participation is important to my principal
7. I feel my participation is important to my classmates

Additional Comments:

VITA**Stephanie Cardona**

Stephanie Cardona was born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico in 1978. She graduated High School in 1996 and pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at The University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez. She went on to work as an ESL teacher before she obtained her Master of Arts in English Education degree in 2007 from the University of Puerto Rico. In 2008 she began her doctorate studies at The Pennsylvania State University Educational Leadership Program