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## Improving Principal Professional Practice Through Communities of Practice

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Improving Principal Professional Practice Through Communities of Practice

Lisa Clarke

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## IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE THROUGH COP

### **Abstract**

This Organizational Improvement Project (OIP) explores a problem of practice (PoP) where the Association Office (AO), within a large, private school district (District), wishes to facilitate professional development of leadership skills, collaboration, and cooperation amongst the principals. Perspectives on the problem are gained through a thorough assessment of the District and its existing culture and practices. In addition, this OIP examines the District's readiness for change and how both the internal and external forces for change can be used to create momentum to address the PoP. Various leadership approaches, including adaptive, agile, and servant leadership, and possible solutions are considered in response to the PoP. A change implementation plan that includes the adoption of a community of practice (CoP) is suggested as the focus of the OIP. The change implementation plan within the OIP focuses on planning and communicating the CoP to the various stakeholders. The proposed CoP will form part of a dual operating system of governance that operates outside the traditional hierarchy. The CoP would focus on building instructional and principal leadership skills while encouraging collaboration and cooperation with the principals and the AO. The ethical considerations of implementing a CoP as well as possible next steps are also discussed in this OIP. If implemented, it is proposed that this OIP will be successful in building relationships and leadership capacity among the principals and the AO within the District.

*Keywords:* dual operating system, community of practice, principal collaboration, instructional leadership, adaptive leadership, agile leadership, servant leadership

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### **Executive Summary**

Education is constantly changing and managing educational leaders through change can be challenging. The Association Office (AO) is a provincial member of an international Christian organization providing Christian education that fosters development of the spiritual, physical, intellectual and social-emotional learning in over 800 schools and 8,000 educators (AE, 2016). Within the province, 22 schools service the educational needs of local church families by providing Christian education (AO, 2016). Unfortunately, these schools are often located many hours travel from each other. As a result, the ability for principals and the AO to meet and collaborate regularly is limited by both geography and money. Within a district where schools are spread over a large geographic area, managing change becomes more problematic if the schools cannot afford the time or money needed to meet face to face.

The PoP faced by the district board office involves investigating ways to foster collaboration between the principals and district board office to improve professional practice. As a result, the district board office needs to creatively examine structures that will provide opportunities to address improving the professional practice of the principals and promoting collaboration within the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Building on a professional learning community approach, and utilizing a blended approach of online and face-to-face communities of practice involving the principals, the board district office can facilitate collaboration, leadership and professional growth (Cowan, 2012; Servage, 2008; Teague & Anfara, 2012; Wenger, 1998).

This organizational improvement plan involves the development of a blended face-to-face and online principal community of practice that would provide the vehicle to cultivate the principal and AO relationship. According to Wenger (1998), a community of practice is a group

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of people with shared concerns and the drive to improve their practice who interact on a regular basis. Structurally, the community of practice would divide the work and coordinate the AO and the principals' roles. Policy development and curriculum implementation would be shared, improving efficiency and promoting adherence to policy. It would also provide a structure for supporting the human resources frame by facilitating principal and local voice during the development of policies; which in turn, encourages alignment between local and organizational needs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In addition, the principal community of practice would foster productive relationships and promote a learning environment that would be productive for change as principals move forward as instructional leaders in the implementation of the new Ministry of Education curriculum. Politically, these meetings would facilitate bargaining, negotiating, setting agendas, and managing the conflict between the AO and the principals (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Finally, by monthly meetings and discussions held whether face-to-face or through online tools, the principal community of practice would allow the principals and the AO to communicate regularly with a goal to unite with a common vision and common understanding of the vision, symbols and policies that protects not only the local schools but the whole system (Wenger, 1998).

Through the implementation of a community of practice, the structure for promoting collaboration, vision, goal-setting and relationship building could be achieved (Lees & Meyer, 2011; Militello & Rallis, 2009). The leadership within the community of practice would then focus on specific school issues and would aid in the adoption of new curricular initiatives and assessment, positively impact student learning (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). This vision would be accomplished by building a community of practice that facilitates a supportive team that strengthens leadership and improvement in all areas of professional practice.

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### **Dedication**

From the beginning of this journey, I have been blessed to have the support of my family and friends. I dedicate this organizational improvement project first and foremost to my family: husband, Delwin, son, Braedan, and daughter, Kailey. Your patience and understanding through the many evenings and weekends enabled me to focus without feeling guilty for the time it took away from you. You encouraged me when I struggled and celebrated with me when I fulfilled each step towards this accomplishment. I know that you made sacrifices to support me in this process and I want you to know that I would never have been able to achieve this milestone without your support and love.

I also dedicate this organizational improvement project to my mother, Linda and my friends who never give up on me. Mom, Cheryl, Marisa, H  l  ne, and Lisa, you never once doubted that I would finish. You put up with me working on classwork when I was visiting and celebrated each assignment or course completed as if it were your accomplishment. Thank you for taking this journey with me. To Bob and Diane, my cohort partners, thank you for encouraging me to be better. Your positive feedback, constructive criticism, and emotional support throughout this process pushed me to be a better writer and educational leader. I could not have finished this doctoral process without you in my corner the last three years. Finally, I thank Scott for being my advisor. I was privileged to have you as a teacher and am honoured to call you my friend. Thank you for your guidance, support, and help to pull this whole project together. I am truly blessed in knowing and being supported by each one of you.

God bless you all!

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### **Definitions**

**Agile Leadership-** the process of responding and adapting to the environment to initiate change in short change cycles with incremental steps (Breakspear, 2015a; Galagan, 2015; Orski, 2017; Tennant, 2001)

**Adaptive Leadership-** leadership that focuses on second-order changes that challenge the underlying values and organizational norms (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

**Communities of Practice-** groups that share the same conditions within a social context that are used to create and acquire new knowledge (Bengtson, Airola, Peer, & Davis, 2012; Wenger, 1998).

**Distributed Leadership-** involves sharing the decision-making process to allow all group members to have a meaningful voice (Irvine & Lupart, 2010; Jones, Forlin, & Gillies, 2013; Schmidt & Venet, 2012).

**Dual Operating System-** an agile and adaptive network structure that operates parallel to the traditional hierarchy to encourage agility in business (Kotter, 2014)

**Inquiry-based Learning-** The process of using an inquiry research framework where students learn through planning, investigating, and researching a problem or question (Banchi & Bell, 2008; Wells, 2001).

**Instructional Leadership-** describes the practice of educators working together to improve student learning through quality teaching and learning (Hopkins, 2001).

**Professional Learning Communities-** small groups of educators that meet to support each other and are united by a common vision or goal (Servage, 2008; Teague & Anfara, 2012).

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**Servant Leadership-** leadership characterized by a leader that inspires leadership in others through service and professional development (Greenleaf, 1970; Spears, 2004; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

**Transformational Leadership-** leadership that is driven to improve what already exists (Marzano et al., 2005).

## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem**

The Association Office (AO) is the provincial branch of an international organization of Christian schools and is one of the largest Christian school systems in the world. Within North America, the system employs over 8,000 teachers and administrators in more than 800 schools (AE, 2016). The system exists to provide an exceptional Christian education alternative to parents by fostering the development of the spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social-emotional learning of the whole person while developing a life of service and faith in God (AE, 2016). Furthermore, it is the vision of the organization to strive to blend academic achievement and Biblical truth in a way that honours God and blesses others (AE, 2016).

Originally founded in 1904, my provincial association currently serves over 2,000 students living in a western Canadian province and employs several individuals to oversee the Christian education of its associate schools (AO, 2016). In addition to the superintendent, main AO support positions include assistant superintendents, curriculum district principals, special education district principals and finance specialists. The superintendent has held the role for over 15 years while the other members of the AO have been in their roles less than five years.

The AO is responsible for six high schools, two online schools, and 14 elementary schools within a large geographic district. Many of the schools are located six to twelve hours from each other which makes collaboration between principals and the AO staff, as well as AO school visitations, difficult. Furthermore, providing face-to-face professional development is also problematic due to the time required to travel between the schools. Teachers and principals are not able to meet without taking two travel days for a one-day workshop. Additionally, the needs of the schools and administrators vary based on the school location and size. Within the district, the schools vary in sizes from small two teacher schools to large 20 teacher schools. Moreover,



some of the schools have administrators that teach in addition to their administrative duties while others have full-time administrators.

The AO employs over 70 teachers and 25 administrators in a non-unionized Christian environment (AO, 2016). While both teachers and principals must hold valid provincial teaching credentials, there are no provincial guidelines that require principals to hold specific principal qualifications or a master's degree. Currently, only 20 percent of teachers and 40 percent of principals within the province hold a master's degree (AE, 2016).

Both the international and district church systems utilize a hierarchical authority structure where policies and procedures are dictated from the organizational leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013). There are several layers of leadership within the church system including international, national, and provincial associations. Provincially, an elected district president is responsible for overseeing all areas of ministry within the district association of churches, including education and the AO (Nichols, 2000). Moving upwards in the hierarchy, the district president reports to the president of the Canadian national office, who in turn, reports to an international governing body for the advancement of education in North America (NAD, 2016).

Within the province, this hierarchy continues downwards. The district president chairs a school district administrative committee that reports to the president of the provincial church. This administrative committee's membership includes all high school principals, a few elementary principals, pastors and additional laypeople from the district. This committee acts as an advisory to the district president and is above them. This committee also recommends to the district president the hiring and firing of all educational employees, including the AO superintendent and staff.

At the local school level, each school is run by a local school operating committee. Its membership is elected from the local churches' laypeople and parents based on each local school operating committee's constitution that describes the positions and term lengths. The local school operating committee oversees the physical plant, finances, resources for the school, and making recommendations for hiring of the local teachers and principal.

Due to the religious aspect of the organization, all leadership approaches are first viewed through a religious lens. This religious lens supports a Christian worldview that uplifts the value of the individual in striving to grow morally, spiritually, intellectually and physically (AE, 2016). While this aim may be viewed through several different approaches, the underlying drive towards a relationship with God and the fulfilment of God's plan for our lives remains the same regardless of any secondary approach undertaken (AE, 2016).

The variety of shareholders within the educational system is an attempt to provide an integration between the church and the school. Varied inputs work to strengthen the educational system's relationship with local and district churches. This hierarchical structure, however, can hinder educational reform as many stakeholders hold a conservative-based educational viewpoints which makes change very difficult because the church leaders are rooted in upholding traditions (Guttek, 1997; MacDonald, 2014). Many school principals and teachers within the system also hold religious conservative views and are resistant to deviate from traditional educational methods. Furthermore, educators have seen numerous approaches to educational reform come and go and are hesitant to embrace new strategies (Guttek, 1997; Macdonald, 2014).

While the church-at-large holds a predominantly religious conservative aim, the AO embraces a religious liberal approach which favours freedom and choice within a religious

environment (Carpenter, n.d.; Gary, 2006). The superintendent believes in the development of a shared vision where each stakeholder is given a voice. As a result, the superintendent involves many different shareholders, including the Ministry of Education, the district church administration, the district educational governing board, and each school's local school operating committee in the decision-making process. Given the vast differences in school locales, he must use a distributed leadership approach to ensure that each stakeholder's needs are heard and addressed. Part of the superintendent's role involves facilitating and developing a district-wide shared vision that will be supported by all stakeholders. All policies and procedures, therefore, are developed in consultation and voted by a K-12 Governing Board made up of appointed pastors, principals and lay people.

There are times, however, when the superintendent must require strict adherence to religious or provincial directives. In those instances, hierarchical leadership is necessary and the superintendent must use his influence to educate and enforce directives within the established religious conservative environment. As Sheppard, Brown, and Dibbon (2009) explain the hierarchical approach is sometimes needed to effect change in an existing conservative and hierarchical system. The superintendent, however, prefers to only use hierarchical methods to support distributed leadership ideals.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

Due to the large distances between schools in the province, collaboration between principals and the AO is often difficult and expensive. There is extensive research supporting the use of professional learning communities within a school to bolster collaboration; however, there are fewer instances where principal communities of practice are occurring (Eaker, DuFour, & Burnette, 2002; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). My problem of

practice (PoP) addresses the issues surrounding the development of collaboration and unity amongst the principals in our district.

### **Perspectives on the Problem of Practice**

#### **Four Frames**

This PoP can be evaluated from several different perspectives and viewpoints using several tools. Bolman and Deal (2013) present a framework that allows for an organizational assessment based on the structural, human resources, political and symbolic frames. Each of the frames examine the organization through various lenses. The structural frame examines the formal roles, rules, policies, and procedures that may hinder the effectiveness of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The remaining frames focus on the individuals in the organization and their abilities, coalitions, and vision. The human resources frame strives to facilitate alignment between the organization and individuals while the political frame strives to understand the different interests competing for power and resources within an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The symbolic frame is the last of Bolman and Deal's (2013) frames and addresses the culture and vision of how the organization and individuals are perceived.

**Structural frame.** Bolman and Deal's (2013) structural frame examines the structures within the organization and how they affect the PoP. Due to the large distance between schools, the principals of all the schools do not meet on a yearly basis. The principals that are members of the school district administrative committee meet, face to face, twice per year to discuss policy and procedures. These meetings are often a few hours long and involve the presentation of several reports. There is no time, within the meetings, set aside for collaboration or discussion, leading to policy being dictated rather than discussed. Furthermore, the policies that are presented are often developed by one or two individuals in the AO without consultation with the

principals. There is currently no structure within the system that will allow for ongoing opportunities for discussion and collaboration as a group of principals with the AO on policy development.

**Human resources frame.** When examining the principals' perspective within the human resources frame, there are many issues involving skill mismatches, old feelings, prejudices, attitudes and beliefs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). First, the principals' professional growth needs are not being met. Understanding that some of the schools are in remote locations and that parochial school salaries are often substantially less than their public counterparts, finding qualified and experienced administrators to serve as principals is difficult. Currently, only forty percent of principals hold a master's degree and half of the principals, due to high staff turnover, have held their position for less than three years. Secondly, this lack of collaboration in the development of policy and procedures, as discussed in the structural frame, leaves the principals feeling unappreciated and frustrated. They believe the AO does not understand the realities of the local culture because their voices are not heard. Unfortunately, because of the diverse needs of the local schools, conflicting personalities and values contribute to difficulties in agreement and building consensus. Facilitating alignment of individual and organizational needs, through effective teams for collective action, is essential for addressing these human resource issues (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

**Political frame.** The political structure within the organization also poses problems for the AO as it attempts to facilitate change and school improvement. First, the church administrative structure has the power to override any decision made by the AO. This promotes ambiguity in the leadership structure and authority of the AO. The principals band together and lobby the church administration for exceptions in educational policies. Without understanding

the educational situation, the administration sometimes approves unsuitable policies or actions. Secondly, the AO power is diluted by the principal and the local school council, who controls the local school facility and finances. This council sometimes makes decisions that are not in line with AO or government policy. In addition, while the AO attempts to enforce government regulations, it must continually educate and negotiate with the local council, the principals, and the church administrative structure to ensure compliance. All these factors become problematic as the Ministry of Education inspectors expect the authority to be able to exert control over their member schools.

**Symbolic frame.** All the stakeholders involved in the organization have different symbolic views of the role of the AO, principals, and Christian education. Local administration and councils have developed institutional identities based on their regional perceptions of Christian education. As a result, some schools are very conservative and adhere closely to the tenets of faith while others promote themselves as non-denominational Christian schools to appeal to a larger market. Different stakeholders also hold various interpretations of governmental expectations. Unfortunately, these beliefs are encouraged by the Ministry of Education inspectors as the evaluations and expectations reflect the local interpretation of the governmental expectations, as opposed to the AO policies. The inconsistency caused by varied interpretations of the policies is illustrated by one principal receiving a good inspection report while another principal, in another location, is reprimanded for similar programming. The principals who receive good reports are exceptional principals and become heroes to the other principals. Difficulties arise within the system when principals, who have received good reports, question the validity of the AO policies for their local district. The conflicting messages from the inspectors' interpretations and the AO policies undermines the credibility of the AO. This may

lead some principals to discount the AO policies in favour trying to gain favour with the inspector. The role of the principal, as the educational leader of the school, symbolically becomes reduced then to a leader who can make the school look the best. As Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest, by not authentically acting as principal, by following the best practices and policies of the AO, the meaning attached to the role of principal becomes either confused or lost.

### **PESTLE Analysis**

The PoP can also be examined using a PESTLE analysis which evaluates the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal aspects of an organization (Chapman, 2016; PESTLE Analysis, 2016). The political analysis examines the governmental regulations, while the economic examines any financial issues that may affect the organization (PESTLE Analysis, 2016). The social analysis assesses the human components that may affect the organization and the technological analysis evaluates the positive or negative impact of the organizations technology. Within the context of this OIP, the environmental and legal aspects are not significant; therefore, they will not be addressed.

**Political.** Throughout Western Canada, the provincial governments regulate and fund private schools. As a result, all private schools must meet certain standards to operate and receive government funding (Alberta Education, 2016; BC Ministry of Education, 2016; Government of Saskatchewan, 2016; Manitoba Office of Education and Training, 2016). For schools to operate, all teachers must be provincially certified and are held to the provincial standards of practice. In addition, each school is inspected by the provincial government accrediting office to ensure that schools are following the provincial school act, policies and curriculum. The primary mandates of the AO, as directed by the provincial governments, are to ensure that member schools continue to meet provincial standards, provide professional

development for best practices, and regularly audit both the education program and finances of each school (Alberta Education, 2016; BC Ministry of Education, 2016; Government of Saskatchewan, 2016; Manitoba Office of Education and Training, 2016). Given that visitation by the AO is difficult, it is essential that the local principal ensures the schools and local operating committees are meeting the requirements of both the Ministry of Education and the parochial accrediting body.

**Economic.** The economic factors within an organization have a significant impact on the ability of an organization to operate (Professional Academy, 2016). The PESTEL examines issues arising from funding and the organizational economy (Chapman, 2016). Within the governmental funding model, funding is allocated to aid in the operation of the school and not association offices; therefore, the AO is funded through the district church organization. The parochial administrative committee, which consists of the superintendent, district treasurer, and the two clergy leaders, determine the operating budget for the AO. As a result, the education department, while receiving a large percentage of the budget, does not have the extra money required for large scale initiatives. Due to the cost involved in travelling large distances, it is often cost prohibitive to bring all the principals to one location. It is equally expensive and time consuming for the AO to travel multiple times to each school. Furthermore, providing training opportunities for principals in their local areas, so travel expenses are minimal, requires additional funding from the AO budget. Each principal is eligible for continuing education monies, but these are allocated on an as needed basis and may not cover the entire cost of the conference or in-service. Principals may also request funding through their local school operating committee; however, many schools do not receive enough funding and rely on tuition to meet their operating budgets.



**Social-cultural.** The social-cultural factors in the PEST analysis examine the shared attitudes and beliefs of the people within the organization (Professional Academy, 2016). This is similar to the Bolman and Deal (2013) human resources and symbolic frames yet looks at it from a lens of how individuals as a collective group affect the overall organization. The district is united in its shared vision of supporting the faith of its membership. This commonality is what separates the various Christian school organizations. Throughout the geographically diverse district, each area is unique in its interpretation of both the religious beliefs and its philosophy of Christian education. While the overall belief in the church exists to unite the district, the individual local differences also serve to separate them from district global policies that should affect everyone. Within the same geographic district, there may also be several churches that support alternate styles of worship, supporting the same school. This church divide threatens the local schools as families may not view their local church school as best reflecting their values. Instead, they may send their children to another denomination's school. Training, assistance, and support from the AO, therefore, is essential for the principals to be able to negotiate alliances, build shared beliefs among the diverse churches in the area that will promote the local church's school and serve the needs of the area.

**Technology.** In response to the financial budgetary limitations, efforts have been made to improve the use of technological resources like tele-conferencing through telephone and internet programs. Over the last year, the AO has provided all schools with an Office 365 license to facilitate the sharing of documents between the schools and the AO. In addition, the AO has purchased a ZOOM web-conferencing licence to facilitate video conferencing with large numbers of participants. Furthermore, Skype and Google Plus have also been used for smaller meetings between the AO members, when they are travelling, or administrators. The issue with

the purchase of the technology is that there is often no additional money left over for training the principals or the AO on how to effectively use the technology that has been made available to them. Differences in technological ability also cause difficulties as not all the principals are comfortable with technology beyond basic word processing or web surfing.

### **Equity Audit**

Finally, when completing an analysis of the organization, an equity and culture audit should be completed to determine and understand the culture of an educational organization. Ahren, Ryan, and Niskodé-Dossett (2009) propose that a culture audit should aid leaders to not only understand the group's culture, but also provide an assessment strategy aimed at improvement. Many equity-culture audits address various categories including: student achievement, support for the diverse needs of all students, communication, leadership beliefs and beliefs about students (Kentucky Department of Education, 2008). Cleveland, Powell, Saddler, and Tyler (2009) support the use of an equity-culture audit tool to examine the role of the leadership in school culture. They postulate that equity-culture audits are an essential piece of any district or school improvement effort (Cleveland et al., 2009). This equity audit is important to this OIP as it focuses on student learning as opposed to the other data that examines the organization itself.

When examining academic achievement, most principals within the system were found to encourage their teachers to support and celebrate academic achievement. In fact, many principals intentionally assign staff to teach to their strengths, which maximizes the opportunities for students to excel. In addition, student achievement is celebrated through public displays of work and articles in the school and district paper.

While most of our principals support safe, orderly and equitable learning, there are some areas of weakness. Improvement can be pursued in the development and management of student groups. These groups should be based on instructional needs and providing ongoing flexible groupings that are continuously assessed. There needs to be a focus from the AO to help provide principals with professional development to support their teachers in creating varied experiences that support the diverse needs of the students. The principals also need more support in providing opportunities for teachers to share their innovations and what is working in the classroom through a professional learning community.

Similar to the communication issues that arise between the AO and the principals, communication within our schools and our districts is also a struggle. Family communication about student achievement is accomplished primarily through the online grading program. Parent-teacher and student-led conferences are poorly attended and families are not routinely contacted to discuss behaviour or academic performance. Some principals and teachers are reluctant to meet with parents after school hours to discuss these issues. Furthermore, only a few schools are using technology in communication. Some administrators and teachers do use newsletters, email, or Facebook to communicate with their students and a few schools have a regular communication plan that includes written newsletters or electronic communication with parents, church, or community. As for communication within the school, many teachers indicated that they are not consulted by administration in any decision-making that involves teaching and learning. This lack of communication is one of the reasons for stakeholder dissatisfaction within the system.

Finally, when examining the leadership and educational philosophy, it appears the principals utilize a hierarchical leadership structure with their teachers and staff (Bolman & Deal,

2013). When dealing with the AO, however, the hierarchical leadership structure is not supported by the principals. It is possible that this is the result of the schools being geographically separated by large distances. This separation from the AO enables schools to act autonomously without direct oversight from the AO.

One concerning theme, among some educators within the system, is that student success or failure is the responsibility of the student alone. The principals do not necessarily view the teachers as equally responsible when a student experiences difficulty. Some principals seem to hold preconceived ideas about students and their lack of motivation. Increased collaboration and communication to become instructional leaders in the school will provide principals with the needed professional development on strategies that will help support all students.

### **Relevant Literature**

When working with principals from a district level, there are several key topics that need to be reviewed as each contributes to the success in building collaboration. Professional learning communities, communities of practice, and instructional leadership are all areas that affect the success of the organizational improvement project's PoP.

**Professional learning communities.** Much of the recent literature examines how principals use professional learning communities (PLC) to build a shared vision and collaboration with their teachers. Before exploring the aspects of professional learning communities, it is essential to examine the different definitions of professional learning community. Professional learning communities are defined in many ways by many different people. Servage (2008) believed that professional learning communities are groups that hold three common beliefs. The first belief is that professional development is essential to improving learning. The second belief is that collaboration is the most effective process for professional

development and the third belief is that the collaboration must involve problem solving in authentic situations (Servage, 2008). This collaboration goes beyond the traditional meeting where the educational leader imparts knowledge to the employees. It requires the individuals within the organization to take an active role in initiating and implementing new ideas and strategies to enhance student learning and the school in general.

Several authors believe that there are fundamental dimensions of professional learning communities. Teague and Anfara (2012) believed that there must be shared values and vision, shared and supportive leadership, collective learning and application to practice, shared personal practice and supportive conditions. Each one of these dimensions helps to contribute to the professional learning community. In fact, Sigurdardottir (2010) also defined similar fundamental dimensions for professional learning communities. She also focused on the shared values, shared leadership, support among staff, collaboration between staff, administrative support, a positive social climate, and job satisfaction and commitment.

Each description has merit in the educational system and different leaders may approach professional learning communities in different ways. The most important thing to remember is that unlike standalone professional development initiatives, professional learning communities are ongoing groups. This is not a one-time brainstorming session or staff meeting where policies and procedures are dictated and never discussed again. Huffman and Hipp (2003) stress that professional learning communities are a process to affect change and not an end result or goal to achieve. They work to develop professional respect and relationships and are a way to empower teachers to create an atmosphere where change can take place in a manner that benefits all involved.

*PLC leadership.* Leadership takes many forms. According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), there are two types of leaders: transactional and transformational. Transactional leadership is based on the day to day maintaining of what always has been; whereas transformational leadership is one that is driven to improve what already exists (Marzano et al., 2005). Transformational leaders embrace change, not just for the sake of change, but for the improvement of student learning. It is through the transformational leader that educators can help principals and teachers assume responsibility and roles within the school to help achieve the vision.

A transformational leadership style is crucial when initiating a professional learning community. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) believed that educational leadership should not be placed on one individual. The principal must be a transformational leader, who emphasizes the development of shared goals, beliefs, and values (Schmidt & Venet, 2012). Similarly, Jones, Forlin, and Gillies (2013) agree that the leader facilitates the shared beliefs and fundamental concepts needed for shared ownership and change. This collaboration between all involved in the inclusion process is essential for its success. According to Irvine and Lupart (2010), collaboration encourages shared responsibility for meeting learning needs on a collective as opposed to a single individual.

Distributed leadership is one way a transformational leader can encourage principals and teachers to work together and share the vision and responsibilities. Distributed leadership reimagines the role of the principal as one that provides supportive, motivating leadership to the members of the team while still upholding educational principles (Irvine & Lupart, 2010). Each stakeholder, in distributed leadership, works together to develop and follow a professional development plan or action plan that supports education for all students (Schmidt & Venet,

2012). As the key player in distributed leadership, the principal involves the “people who will implement the plan in all aspects of the decision-making process” (Jones et al., 2013, p. 64).

Facilitated or distributed leadership is effective at developing shared vision and ownership as it inherently gives a voice to each stakeholder (Jones et al., 2013). Decisions are made by consensus and focus on respect toward the collective goal. Similarly, Ryan (2010) suggests that parents and teachers want to have a “meaningful voice in the decision and policy making processes” (p. 8).

Distributed leadership empowers teachers by developing the knowledge, skills and supports to help differentiate their instructional practices to meet the needs of the students (Howery et al., 2013). It also provides support to principals and teachers as they share what they learned through professional development in a professional learning community. According to Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, and Miels (2012), education is strengthened by providing learning communities where the teachers can interact, learn and support other teachers. This collaboration provides educators the opportunity to participate in planning and developing the plans for school growth and improvement (Harpell & Andrews, 2010).

Research also shows that the sharing of leadership responsibilities helps to make and build relationships. According to Huffman and Hip (2003), “Without creating a culture of trust, respect, and inclusiveness with a focus on relationships, even the most innovative means of finding time, resources and developing communication systems will have little effect on creating a community of learners” (p. 146). It is only in sharing the leadership roles that principals feel valued and trusted with decision making. This trust enhances the relationships and builds the capacity for change (Fullan, 2002). It is only through collaboration and cooperation between the AO and the principals that change will occur, therefore these relationships are essential.

According to Wells and Feun (2008), the role of administration is changing. Administrators must focus on building relationships that exhibit trust and shared leadership. If the AO wants to effect change in schools using professional learning communities, the principals need to be supported by providing what is needed to help facilitate the process. After all, the implementation process of professional learning communities is a change in and of itself.

When educational leaders are willing to collaborate with their principals they empower them. Empowerment is characterized by shared accountability and mutual support (Song, 2012). Song (2012) believes that professional learning communities help educators become empowered and as such are more receptive to change. Not only are they more receptive to change, but members begin to create an atmosphere of professional autonomy which facilitates personal growth since they are more willing to participate in that professional growth as opposed avoiding the energy that is required with reforms (Waugh & Punch, 1987). Another by-product of empowerment is the creation of leaders. Fullan (2005) insisted that the success of professional learning communities is dependent on leaders that develop leaders.

***Vision and goals in the PLC.*** Learning organizations cannot exist without a shared vision (Senge, 1990). Developing a shared vision and goals is one of the most difficult beginning steps for professional learning communities. In fact, Eaker, DuFour, and Burnette (2002) believe that the lack of vision is an impediment to improving schools. Similarly, Leclerc, Moreau, Dumouchel, and Sallafranque-St-Louis (2012) also use the presence or absence of school vision as a determining factor in whether the professional learning communities are effective. Huffman and Hipp (2003) emphasize that the shared vision of the stakeholders must be connected to the school's goals. Once the shared vision is determined, therefore, the AO and principals can set out plans for using their vision to achieve their goals.



**Communities of practice.** While professional learning communities focus on building relationships and shared goals and vision between teachers and principals in an educational environment, communities of practice, according to Wenger (1998), result from social interactions between individuals that share the same conditions within a social context. Additionally, Bengtson, Airola, Peer, and Davis (2012) share that while professional learning communities tend to focus on new knowledge acquisition, communities of practice focus on the creation and acquisition of new knowledge through targeted professional development and transformational leadership. Unlike a professional learning community where members are led by their leadership, a community of practice involves the social learning that takes place among those with equal roles within an organization as opposed to leader and individual (James-Ward, 2011).

The history and social context, found within communities of practice, creates meaning through the implementation of an inquiry cycle involving identifying a problem, discussion of the problem and collaboration in the problem-solving process that leads to acceptance of responsibility by the participants (Militello & Rallis, 2009). Similarly, Lees and Meyer (2011) agree that case-based, observation-based, or problem based learning, within the community of practice promoted creativity and alignment between the conceptual problems and real-life. The community, therefore, strives to create meaning through mutual engagement in a joint enterprise that leads to shared experiences (Wenger, 1998). Likewise, the inquiry cycle encourages collaboration among the individuals in the community of practice as opposed to isolation (Militello & Rallis, 2009). Fahey (2011) supports the use of protocols that the group follows step by step to help guide and focus the group discussions when working collaboratively on solving

issues that threaten school climate. The community of practice, therefore, is most effective when the community focuses on issues that are a central factor in their roles (Wenger, 1998).

As individuals in a community of practice explore authentic, situated learning experiences, intellectual capacity for decision-making is developed (Braun, Gable, & Kite, 2011). When following a constructivist perspective of situated learning experiences, members of the community of practice develop additional competencies as their learning becomes more rigorous and meaningful (Defise, 2013). Therefore, the goal is to create opportunities for members of the group to share and collaborate to facilitate learning and sense-making that encourages practice (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). This self-generated knowledge is highly valued by the community of practice as they collaboratively problem solve (Buysse et al., 2003). Furthermore, Braun et al. (2011) suggest that these authentic experiences develop potential leaders and their efficacy, ownership and engagement in their own professional development. Gerard, Bowyer, and Linn (2010) agree and find that the leadership that developed within the community of practice translated into leadership at the school level. Comparably, Bengtson, Airola, Peer, and Davis (2012) share that while professional learning communities tend to focus on new knowledge acquisition, communities of practice focus on the creation and acquisition of new knowledge through targeted professional development and transformational leadership.

The process of sense-making and meaning-making within the community can be effective online as well. The Inquiry Learning Forum leverages technology to facilitate communities of learning by allowing educators the ability to support each other through web-based videos and asynchronous discussion (Moore & Barab, 2002). Reilly, Vandenhouten, Gallagher-Lepak, and Ralson-Berg (2012) support virtual delivery as cost-effective and efficient

as group members could participate from geographically and demographically diverse areas. Unfortunately, Moule (2006) discovered that engagement in the group could be limited by both the members' computer skills and the lack of relationship building needed to facilitate feelings of cohesiveness. Furthermore, both Lees and Meyer (2011) and Chitpin (2014) caution that learning within the group can be negatively impacted if the group members are not fully committed, engaged, or comfortable with their group. Nevertheless, continued online communities demonstrated evidence of improvement as the participants continued to meet (Reilley et al., 2012).

According to Cowan (2012), communities of practice using a blended program of online and face-to-face meetings can help negate the issues found in online groups and demonstrated both higher retention and group completion levels. Furthermore, the participants reported that they were highly engaged with each other (Cowan, 2012). Enfield and Stasz (2011) suggest this engagement is a direct result of the coherence in the group created by a culture that has been encouraged through reflective practices that both develop and communicate the meaning. Another study, by Choi, Browne-Ferrigno, and Muth (2005), found that the online cohort exchanged more meaningful messages with more personal interaction and reflection than the blended online and face-to-face cohort. This phenomenon may have occurred because participants in one cohort were not as comfortable with face-to-face communication while other cohorts were uncomfortable sharing their personal views in a public forum (Choi et al., 2005).

**Instructional leadership.** One of the most important roles of a principal is to support student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Both British Columbia and Alberta include instructional leadership as part of their leadership expectations (Alberta Education, 2009; BCPVPA, 2013). In Alberta, principals are expected to provide instructional

leadership by understanding pedagogy and curriculum, implement strategies for improved student achievement, encourage fair and appropriate assessment practices, and ensure that all teachers meet provincial teaching standards (Alberta Education, 2009). In British Columbia, the second domain highlights the instructional leadership role in relation to curriculum, instructional and assessment practices that support student learning (BCPVPA, 2013).

The definition of instructional leadership, however, describes the practice of educators working together to improve student learning through quality teaching and learning (Hopkins, 2001). Robinson, Lloyed, and Rowe (2008) believe that the impact on student learning by instructional leadership is larger than transformational leadership within the school. According to Marks and Printy (2003), the difference between instructional leadership and transformational leadership is that the former focuses on building capacity in individuals while the latter's goal is organizational improvement. Instructional leadership can transform the organization as principals' value collaboration and direction setting with the superintendent as they improve their leadership for learning (Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014).

One of the challenges to instructional leadership is the daunting idea that principals need to be experts. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) highlight that instructional leaders should have a deep knowledge of subject matter and curriculum as well as various instructional strategies that will improve student engagement. As a result, instructional leaders are viewed as curriculum experts, a label that principals, who have been out of the classroom for a while, may be uncomfortable with wearing (Costello, 2015). Furthermore, Goodwin, Cunningham, and Childress (2003) note that principals have been layered with additional responsibility without authority that causes an imbalance as principals must spend more time managing the schools than promoting instructional leadership. One of the ways to relieve the pressures on principals is

to work with several individuals in instructional leadership teams to promote collaboration through a distributed leadership approach (Weiner, 2014). This instructional leadership team is also known as leadership for learning (Hallinger, 2011). DuFour and Marzano (2009) agree that schools need learning leaders.

*Instructional leadership for IBL.* A new educational initiative, that requires instructional leadership in the school, is inquiry-based learning (IBL). Wells (2001) defined inquiry-based learning as an “inquiring disposition that influences the way in which all activities are approached” (p. 194). Banchi and Bell (2008) discussed three generally accepted types of inquiry: structured inquiry, guided inquiry, and open inquiry. Structured inquiry is still mainly teacher-controlled except that the students have been given the problem and the procedure but were not told what to expect for the outcome (Lott, 2011). The student, therefore, follows the step-by-step instructions without knowing what the result would be. The student then would observe what happened to evaluate the results (Banchi & Bell, 2008). Guided inquiry is where the teacher poses the question and the students must plan the investigation, research or experiment and make their conclusions (Banchi & Bell, 2008; Lott, 2011). In guided inquiry, different groups of students may attempt to solve the problem in different ways. The role of the teacher then is to circulate and provide feedback while the students complete the process (Maes, 2010). In open inquiry, students are in control of the process from beginning to end as they choose their own question, method and make their own conclusions (Banchi & Bell, 2008; Lott, 2011).

Educators around the world are being called to include inquiry-based learning as part of the curriculum (Lunetta, Hofstein, & Clough, 2007). Across Western Canada, schools are looking to incorporating inquiry-based learning into their curriculum. British Columbia’s

curriculum heavily focuses on personalized, inquiry-based curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2015). Similarly, Alberta Education prefaces their curriculum documents with a focus on developing critical thinking and inquiry skills in each subject while enriching teaching strategies through Learn Alberta government initiatives (Learn Alberta, 2005). Saskatchewan Ministry of Education (2016) refers to constructing understanding through inquiry in their new renewed curriculum documents. Likewise, Manitoba's curricula are integrated to facilitate the inquiry of big ideas through a flexible model of planning that provides for a variety of student-led instructional practices (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003).

Instructional leadership, by the principals, is essential to monitor the implementation of inquiry-based learning as it requires a shift in how teachers typically teach in the classroom (Beerer & Bodzin, 2004). Principals must work with the teachers to help them understand inquiry so they are able to effectively integrate it into their teaching strategies (Wright, 2001). Similarly, Newman et al. (2004) stressed that principals should provide teachers with opportunities to participate in inquiry activities as well as reflect on their own learning of inquiry while researching the theoretical basis of inquiry-based learning. As such, in-services provide an important orientation to inquiry-based learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Similarly, Murphy and Lick (1988), recommend the use of professional learning communities that meet once or twice a month to support each other in the implementation process. Collaboration at the school level between principals provides essential professional development that will only serve to produce better teachers (van Zee, Iwasyk, Kurose, Simpson, & Wild, 2001). In addition, the small groups provide an opportunity for reflective practice with the principal and other staff on what is happening in the classroom (Wright, 2001). Loucks-Horsley (1987) agrees with Wright and recommended that principals facilitate teachers actively planning

curriculum together to further enable all the teachers to support one another in the implementation of best practices.

### **Relevant Internal and External Data.**

Unfortunately, the AO does not keep large amounts of internal data or conduct internal research. In 2011, however, the AO took part in research into student achievement across the denominational system using the Canadian Achievement Test 4 and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CRAE, 2011). They found that progressive teaching methods, including cooperative learning, individualized student learning, and simulations were positively correlated with student success (CRAE, 2011). In addition, the researchers found that students who had teachers who interacted with conference educational administrators, as well as other educators, demonstrated higher growth in achievement than other students (CRAE, 2011). Furthermore, the study found that students in the AO's private Christian schools outperformed the national average in all subjects and that smaller multi-grade schools did as well or better than their larger school counterparts (CRAE, 2011). The most interesting information for our teachers and administrators was the finding that students scored higher on the achievement tests than their ability tests predicted (CRAE, 2011). This information highlights, that using current curriculum, our schools do a good job of teaching content to students. However, the problem is that due to the past success in achievement tests, some teachers use the results to resist implementing new inquiry-based teaching strategies.

According to the Government of Alberta (2016), private education accounts for five percent of the student population and received a total of \$248 million from the government. In comparison, British Columbia private education accounts for thirteen percent of students in the province with a funding cost of \$245 million (FISA, 2012). These spending figures account for

50 percent of the cost per student paid to private schools in British Columbia and between 60-70 percent in Alberta (FISA, 2012; Van Pelt & Clemens, 2016). While there are no separate statistics for Alberta, in British Columbia only 15 percent of private schools are elite non-denominational or international baccalaureate schools while the remaining private schools are Christian or other religious schools that rely on the government grants (Hyslop, 2016). These figures illustrate the government funding deficits that limit the finances within the private school districts.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

As a Christian, I primarily view the world through a Judaeo-Christian religious perspective. I believe in a Creator God who gives purpose, worth and value to each person. I also believe that everyone is endowed with different skills and abilities that can be utilized to support the betterment of organizations and society. Distributed and instructional leadership, at the AO and the school level, would demonstrate respect, acknowledge and utilize different and unique talents that would aid in accomplishing the goals and vision of the organization. My religious view supports my belief that both leaders and followers should work together to develop their strengths and talents to their full potential. Consequently, leaders have a responsibility to help develop the strengths and improve the weak areas for those in the organization.

In addition, my religious beliefs place importance on the leader to be confident, knowledgeable, and able to help the followers grow morally, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Since leadership is a social act between people, it is important to follow Christ's example and build trust and relationships that will facilitate growth. While there are many innate traits of leadership, like charisma, that make leadership easier, those without those traits can still lead to be effective leaders. Leaders with innate leadership traits have an advantage and



responsibility to lead regardless of whether they hold formal leadership positions. Individuals without these innate traits, however, can still learn to be effective leaders through lifelong learning. As I examine my philosophy of leadership, I find my PoP and OIP correlates well with my philosophy of leadership and my Christian world-view complements the vision of my OIP.

### **Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice**

Several questions can emerge from my PoP. When I look at the lines of inquiry, I wonder exactly how the AO and the principals became so disconnected from each other? At some time, the trust between the AO and the schools must have been broken. Was the AO undermined because of the human resource frame where the leaders were not viewed as supportive or were the principals not trained to execute their duties? This question does not necessarily need to be addressed to move forward; however, knowledge of the past difficulties would be helpful in avoiding making the same mistakes again.

Another factor that may contribute and influence the problem is the perception of the principals. Do they view the idea of collaboration and communities of practice as additional workload or as a support to lessen their load? Do the principals even want to have a voice or do they prefer the AO continue to dictate policy and practices? Many times, the principals have told the AO to just tell them what to do and they will do it. Is this truly the way that they feel or are they simply too overwhelmed to stop to think about the issues?

Another question involves the name of the group. Could the name of the group affect the perception of the group? Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest that the meaning that we symbolically assign roles and activities is very important. In examining what to call the group of principals, would the symbolic name *community of practice* be more acceptable than the term *professional learning community*? Would the principals identify with one more than the other? Perhaps a

community of practice would help principals embrace each other as equals as opposed to one person or group as the leader (James-Ward, 2011).

Braun et al. (2011) highlight that information from communities of practice can be transferred to improve practice at the local school level. Would the principals be willing to accept the responsibility for decisions made in the group to be enacted at the local school level? Furthermore, would they embrace the goals and vision of a community of practice and replicate them with their local school organizing committee? In addition, how much power would the community of practice must effect change if the policies and procedures are voted by non-educators within the school district administration and the president of the district church?

### **Vision for Organizational Change**

Within the AO, my role involves facilitating instructional leadership as principals strive to incorporate new curricular initiatives in their schools. Unfortunately, there is no structure currently in place for principals to collaborate, or work with each other, to develop the instructional leadership skills that promote instructional and assessment practices that support student learning (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2011; BCPVPA, 2013). The principals do not currently meet on an annual basis, nor do they engage in teleconferencing. The superintendent communicates important information through superintendent's memos that are emailed to all principals. The school district administrative committee, of which a few select principals are members, votes policies that are created and presented by the AO.

My vision for the organization supports a change in the structure of the AO and how the principals relate and support each other. Through the implementation of a community of practice, the structure for promoting collaboration, vision, goal-setting and relationship building could be achieved (Lees & Meyer, 2011; Militello & Rallis, 2009). The development of positive,

collaborative relationships between the AO and the principals, using distributed leadership that allows principals to share in the responsibility of decision making and the promotion the democratic aims, that would give stakeholder a voice, would work to improve Christian education throughout the whole province (Bennis, n.d.; Portelli, 2001). The leadership within the community of practice would then focus on specific school issues and the development of instructional leadership skills to improve student achievement (Hopkins, 2001; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, Lloyed, & Rowe, 2008). The shared instructional leadership would aid in the adoption of new curricular initiatives, assessment practices, and positively impact student learning (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). This vision would be accomplished by building a community of practice that facilitates a supportive team that strengthens leadership and improvement in all areas of professional practice.

Given the province's curriculum based on inquiry-based learning, instructional leadership would contribute to a smooth transition in the curriculum reform process (Alberta Learning, 2004; Allen et al., 2015). These instructional leadership skills would work to improve student achievement through the adoption of new curricular initiatives and assessment that would positively impact student learning (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). In addition to instructional leadership, collaboration, by the principals and AO working together to develop district policies would ensure that local issues and voices are heard. Once district policies are approved, principals would then support the implementation and adoption of the policies at the local school level. Furthermore, by encouraging collaboration among the principals and the AO, specific and relevant opportunities for professional growth in educational leadership could be provided to build leadership capacity in the principals.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

Many factors contribute to my organization's readiness for change. Provincial Ministries of Education are shifting their curriculum to one based on inquiry-based learning. This curriculum relies heavily on the principals being the instructional leaders in the school. This new curriculum is based on a change in educational philosophy that moves from teacher-directed learning to student-centred learning (BC Ministry of Education, 2015; Learn Alberta, 2005). Principals are expected to observe classrooms and ensure that teachers are using student-centred practices involving inquiry and hands-on learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Newman et al., 2004). As a result, principals are ready to collaborate with each other because their teachers are pressuring them for help in this transition and the development of new lessons and classroom strategies. This collaboration is further supported by the AO's desire to encourage participation by the principals through distributed and democratic leadership practices that promote sharing of leadership responsibilities and decision making between the AO and the principals (Portelli, 2001; Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbons, 2010).

Using the awakening process of the change path model, there is a need for principals to collaborate to develop their professional capacity (Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2015). According to Cawsey et al. (2015), a gap in performance must be identified and leaders need to envision how this gap will be rectified through the change process. Currently, the principals meet with each other face-to-face once a year. The remaining communication with the principals is accomplished through superintendent's emails and AO onsite visits. These practices are not sufficient for developing the principals' instructional leadership capacities or facilitating collaboration. This collaboration involves providing the AO and the principals opportunities to

brain-storm, discuss, and problem solve together in a distributed leadership environment (Fullan, 2002; Howery et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2013).

While the parochial system is currently developing system-wide professional standards, Alberta and British Columbia principals have also been pushed toward change through the adoption of the provincial leadership standards by the various provincial principals and vice-principals' association (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2011; BCPVPA, 2013;). Currently, Manitoba and Saskatchewan do not have published principal leadership standards. As provincially certified educators, principals in British Columbia and Alberta can be reported to the provincial regulatory body if they do not meet these leadership standards.

Within British Columbia, the leadership standards set new leadership goals and standards in four different leadership areas. The first domain addresses moral stewardship and promotes the development of shared values and vision and ethical decision making based on what is best for the school and morally defensible (BCPVPA, 2013). The second domain expects principals to be the instructional leaders of the school while supervising and providing guidance regarding curriculum, instructional and assessment practices that support student learning (BCPVPA, 2013). The third domain requires that principals develop relational leadership by building intrapersonal capacity, interpersonal capacity, and cultural leadership (BCPVPA, 2013). Finally, the organizational leadership promotes sound management and administration of the local school through community building, which includes developing positive relationships within the school, community and AO (BCPVPA, 2013).

Unlike British Columbia that focuses on only four domains, the Alberta focuses on seven leadership dimensions (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2011). Fostering effective relationships with those in the school community, including parents, students, and other staff is the first

leadership dimension (Alberta Education, 2009). The second leadership dimension on promoting visionary leadership and the third leadership dimension on leading a learning community would be supported with the implementation of a community of practice (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2011). The fourth and fifth dimensions involve facilitating leadership and instructional leadership which would also be supported through an improved relationship with the AO as principals would have access to the resources and expertise of others (Alberta Education, 2009). The last two standards involve the management of the school operations and organizing the school in relation to the larger societal context which also involve networking and collaborating with community stakeholders in meeting the needs of students in the school (Alberta Education, 2009).

Given the nature of the change initiative in my PoP, the individuals who are essential for the success of the community are the high school principals. They are the ones who need to support and encourage the development of the community of practice where they can share ideas and concerns with each other in a non-threatening environment (Wenger, 1998). Thankfully with the new curriculum and the provincial leadership standards that outline the standards of practices that are expected from principals, there are additional pressures exerted on the principals to become collaborative partners who improve their professional practice (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2011; BC Ministry of Education, 2015; BCPVPA, 2013). In addition, the principals have realized that they must work together to be ready for the curricular change. Those two key factors indicate that my organization is ready for change and that I have a group of change agents with which to build a coalition for change (Cawsey et al., 2015).

### **Communicating the Need for Change**

It is important to have a plan to communicate the need for change as any new initiative requires identifying the need, getting leadership's support, seeking feedback, and focusing resources are all part of communicating the need for change (Cawsey et al., 2015). In addition, different stakeholders hold different expectations and needs, so different strategies and communication methods would need to be utilized to ensure adoption of the change initiative (Cawsey et al., 2015). Given the current hierarchical nature of the education system, the need for change must come from the superintendent of education and the AO; therefore, they should be the first to understand the need for change (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In addition, the AO and the school district administrative committee would also be presented with the need for developing a shared vision that would promote unity within the church and school (NAD, 2016). Strategies for communicating change would include presentations and discussions with principals, the local school operating committee, and the administrative committees highlighting the need to collaborate to strengthen the system and develop principal leadership skills in the human resources frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

One way to communicate change with the local school operating committees and the principals would be for a member of the AO to attend one of the regularly scheduled committee meetings. According to Cawsey et al. (2015), the program may fail if there is confusion or disagreement over the need for change and what exactly needs changing. One way to convince the local school operating committee and the principals of the necessity of collaboration with the AO would be to highlight the opportunity to have a voice through the distributed leadership approach of the community of practice (Jones et al., 2013; Ryan, 2010; Schmidt & Venet, 2012).

The AO could offer informational sessions for the school district administrative committee, principals, teachers, and local school councils as stakeholder buy-in is imperative for success (Cawsey et al., 2015). Through telecommunications, like webinars, superintendent's memos, government news releases about new curricular initiatives, and informational websites, the AO would be able to communicate the need for change in quick, efficient and cost-effective ways to the principals and other stakeholders (Cawsey et al., 2015). Communication strategies like a Google Plus community, Skype, and other internet collaboration applications would also allow for bi-directional communication where those unable to come to the AO would have an opportunity to ask questions and respond (Cawsey et al., 2015). In addition, the AO could also forward communications from the Ministry of Education. When addressing curricular changes, the Ministry of Education communicates its changes through media, informational sessions, e-mail announcements, websites, and videos.

Given that communication and collaboration are two of the issues in my PoP, implementing the community of practice is itself a need that needs to be communicated. The community of practice provides a structure for communicating information about practices and policies that need to change by developing visions and goals (Eaker, DuFour, & Burnette, 2002; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Senge, 1990). If the community of practice is initiated, it would also be an opportunity to share the need for change with principals as new government expectations are released (Wenger, 1998). Through the community of practice, principals would have the opportunity to discuss and engage each other in focused problem-solving strategy sessions (Bengtson, Airola, Peer, & Davis, 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003).



## **Chapter 2: Planning and Development**

The first chapter of my OIP examines the various perspectives of my PoP using Bolman and Deal's (2013) four frames, a PESTLE analysis, and an equity audit as well as other relevant literature dealing with the PoP (Ahren, Ryan & Niskodé-Dossett, 2009; Chapman, 2016; Cleveland, Powell, Saddler, & Tyler, 2009; PESTLE Analysis, 2016). After analysis, I have determined that my PoP falls primarily within the structural and human resources frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Consequently, my organizational improvement plan (OIP) addresses changes to the organizational structure to facilitate improvement in the human resources frame through the implementation of a combination of frameworks.

### **Theory for Framing Change**

As the Association Office (AO) exists within a large parochial hierarchy, changing the structure at the church level would be a difficult and slow process. The main framework for change in my OIP follows Kotter's (2014) Accelerate framework with the introduction of a dual operating system model. The Accelerate framework adapts Kotter's (2012) eight-step process for change by recognizing alternate networks are needed in large organizations that operate within hierarchical systems (Kotter, 2012, 2014). This dual operating system model allows organizations to change rapidly by creating a guiding coalition of individuals, that operates parallel to the existing hierarchical system (Kotter, 2014).

At the foundation of the dual system are five important principles: utilizing many people to effect change, having a 'get-to' mindset, action that involves both the head and the heart, leadership not just management, and the partnership between the hierarchy and the network (Bradt, 2014; Kotter, 2014). Instead of steps, Kotter (2014) proposes the use of accelerators to promote flexibility within an organization. These accelerators include creating urgency, building

a coalition, forming a strategic vision, enlisting others, remove barriers to change, celebrate short-term wins, sustain the acceleration, and finally instituting the change (Kotter, 2014). Each of these accelerators will be used within the OIP, along with other change theories such as Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols's (2015) Change Path Model which focuses on mobilization, Hargreaves and Shirley's (2009) *The Fourth Way*, and Lewin's unfreeze, change, refreeze model (Schein, 1995). Furthermore, Cawsey et al. (2015) and Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) both support the need to involve many different people or change agents in the change process. The importance of the change agents' mindset and leadership in the change process cannot be ignored as organizations strive to facilitate leaders as opposed to management in enacting educational change (Dweck, 2006; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Prior to beginning to frame change, the principals and the AO must shift from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). Mindset is one of the barriers to change that Kotter (2012) acknowledges. Those who do not believe that leaders can grow tend to have a fixed mindset that supports the trait theory (Dweck, 2006; Northouse, 2016). This focus on leadership traits postulates that good leaders are the result of inherent personality traits as opposed to the potential to develop leaders (Northouse, 2016). Principals need to be aware that they have the potential to change and grow as both individuals and leaders.

Unfortunately, some principals feel that they are given their role because of fixed leadership traits within themselves as opposed to their potential for leadership growth. They feel that their own intrinsic traits, like being organized, charismatic, or good with people, set them apart and lead to their leadership success. Those principals may experience difficulties when faced with challenges and failure. Individuals with fixed mindsets view failure as condemnation as opposed to a stepping stone in their leadership learning (Dweck, 2006).

From the organizational standpoint, many principals may be perceived as being gifted in leadership skills, or conversely, lacking leadership skills. Consequently, a principal's performance may be evaluated through this lens. Judging principals through this trait lens may result in the principals becoming resentful, unmotivated, or even leaving the organization (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2008). In addition, viewing the principals through a fixed mindset lens may also lead the AO to not recognize areas of growth or decline in individuals who were previously perceived as having leadership talent or weaknesses (Dweck, 2006).

Similar to Bolman and Deal's (2013) symbolic leadership ideal where the leader wants to be a hero, those with a fixed mindset do not want to appear incompetent to their peers (Dweck, 2006). This fixed mindset creates a type of hero worship that I have observed within my organization. Some principals of smaller schools look to the principals of large schools as possessing greater leadership talents and ask them for advice on policy and governance. Unfortunately, instead of referring principals to the AO, these hero principals, in an attempt to appear like experts, often provide incorrect or incomplete advice (Dweck, 2006).

Hewett (2016), supports the development of a growth mindset in any organization that is faced with change. Similarly, Kotter (2014) agrees that change requires individuals to have a get-to mindset as opposed to a have-to mindset. Principals need to be excited about change in addition to recognizing that they are able to change and grow. My OIP will allow for all principals and the AO to develop a growth mindset by focusing on adaptive leadership, distributed leadership and servant leadership to facilitate the collaboration and support in the assessment and development their leadership skills (Dweck, 2006; Greenleaf, 1970; Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009; Jones, Forlin, & Gillies, 2013).

Change agents must also understand the culture and history of the organization. In my organization, many individuals follow conservative approaches to education and are reluctant to deviate from this established symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Any change initiatives, therefore, must respect and understand this symbolic culture. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) address culture by describing history as leaving a legacy for the future. By examining the legacy of the first, second, and third ways, the authors propose that educational leaders must recover from past educational failures by focusing on building capacity and support for educators (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Educators must be taught to use the growth mindset to help them endure the various shifts that occur within education while at the same time, honouring the struggles and successes of the past (Dweck, 2006).

Successful implementation of any change also requires developing an inspiring and inclusive vision (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Kotter (2014) describes this accelerator as building an action plan that is driven by both the head and the heart. Within my organization, the vision and mission has been swayed by many different perspectives. Educators are often frustrated over the pendulum swinging from one fad to another and fail to see the urgency of implementing something that may not last (Gutek, 1997). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) acknowledge that while the administration guides educational change, the principals, teachers, and students hold an important role in building the change. Unfortunately, the opinions of the various stakeholders pose issues in the political frame as the stakeholders may disagree about the core philosophy and values that underlie education (Bolman & Deal, 2013). They propose a vision that focuses on developing resilience for both educators and systems that will be flexible to the various external pressures by inspiring adaptability and challenging the imagination to think outside the box (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009).

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) also promote mindful learning and teaching through a distributed leadership approach that focuses on professionalism, sustainable leadership, networks, responsibility, and diversity in cultivating individuals for change. They propose one of the catalysts of coherence, that will unite an organization, is an understanding that learning takes place through integrating networks that allow educators to watch, listen and learn from each other rather than through workshops and research reports (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) also suggest that change initiatives that come from staff are more effective than trying to force reforms from the top. Shared responsibility with all levels of staff, through distributed leadership, is the best way to advance a moral and compelling vision (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). This viewpoint is supported by Kotter's (2014) proposed accelerators of enlisting a volunteer army who supports the vision and strategic change initiatives.

While communication between the AO and principals needs improvement, my OIP requires that principals feel part of a community that initiates change from the bottom up as opposed to the top down. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) provide a model for building a vision and professional practice by proposing the use of lively learning communities that promote sustainable leadership (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Furthermore, Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) believe that this form of sustainable leadership is established by developing a team of principals that collaborate and build leadership capacity. When dealing with rapid change, these learning communities provide a way to sustain acceleration in Kotter's (2012) model.

Education is constantly changing and Marzano et al. (2005) believe that changes can be categorized into first-order changes and second-order changes. First-order changes involve the day to day management of the school; while the second-order changes involve drastic change

that stems from the need to solve a problem (Marzano et al., 2005). Daly and Chrispeels (2008) suggest that first-order changes exemplify technical leadership while second-order changes reflect a more adaptive leadership style. Instead of managing the technical solutions to problems, adaptive challenges recognize that problem definitions and solutions require learning, growth and development in its leadership (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009). Kotter (2014) agrees that more leadership to enable action, and not simply management, is needed in any change initiative.

Within my OIP, the most important responsibilities that fall in Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resources domain include becoming a change agent, communication, focus, ideals and beliefs, input, intellectual stimulation, involvement, knowledge, optimizer, outreach, and relationships, and resources (Marzano et al., 2005). Many of these responsibilities can be accomplished by the principal alone; however, they are all strengthened through collaboration and cooperation with other leaders (Marzano et al., 2005). Within the dual operating system, these responsibilities provide a foundation for improving professional practice by focusing on doing the right work for effective school reform. (Marzano et al., 2005).

Marzano et al. (2005) suggest the first step involves developing a strong leadership team. Similarly, Kotter (2014) advocates for a guiding coalition that serves to lead the organization through the change process. That leadership team can work to identify areas of strength and weakness that will support selecting the right work and order the change process (Marzano et al., 2005). The AO and the principals together then match the different change initiatives and leadership styles needed to appropriately address the magnitude of the change (Marzano et al., 2005). This adaptive leadership style is supported by Heifetz et al. (2009) in that leaders need to focus on adaptive challenges instead of technical problems to effect positive change. Unfortunately, the change involved in my PoP is a too drastic change from the current

hierarchical structure; therefore, a dual operating system that operates parallel to the organization would be necessary to promote the distributed and democratic approach (Kotter, 2014; Portelli, 2001; Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010). Therefore, any change initiative must happen outside of the hierarchical structure and work to improve professional practice.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

There are many ways to analyze my organization from a change perspective. The structural frame and human resources frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013) indicate that leadership initiatives, within my hierarchical organization, must be instituted using a dual operating system, since changing the structure of the District is difficult (Kotter, 2014). Consequently, addressing human resources and professional capacity deficits is essential to successfully navigate the change process (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Kotter, 2014). Based upon Kotter's (2014) accelerate model, the AO is facing a big opportunity that would facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and professional development to support the current educational mandate of curricular change. The governments, through their focus on change, have unfrozen the current operating system and created the conditions for the AO to mobilize the District for change (Cawsey et al., 2015; Schein, 1995). Since principals are responsible to guide their teachers through adopting new instructional and assessment strategies that complement the new curriculum, the AO can use this big opportunity to identify and bring together individuals who want to be part of a guiding coalition that would form a strategic vision for implementing this change (Allen et al., 2015; BC Ministry of Education, 2015; Kotter, 2014; Learn Alberta, 2005). Thus, the AO can work towards the mobilization of change as principals recognize the need to work together, regardless of the distance and local differences, in a cooperative and collaborative environment on the new curricular implementation (Cawsey et al., 2015).

### **Cooperation and Collaboration**

According to Kotter (2014), a guiding coalition is essential to direct the change process. Currently, the AO is structured as a hierarchical structure yet there are two positions within the system that would be able to lead a dual operating system (Kotter, 2014). The curriculum and special education coordinators, in the District, report to the Superintendent but do not report directly to the administrative committee. These individuals also do not serve in a direct supervisory role over the principals. A link between the hierarchy and the parallel network could be forged by using these individuals that would facilitate collaboration and cooperation with the various principals (Kotter, 2014). Currently, there are three unofficial parallel networks that occur outside the hierarchy that are based on geographic area and school size. The school principals that have over 150 students are one informal network, while the other two networks involve schools that are smaller and in remote areas. These networks are less concerned with the improvement of student learning and more about supporting each other in adapting the AO policies to meet their local needs. The challenge in my PoP would be to unite these parallel networks together to guide the change initiative forward. By uniting the principals from across the large geographic area, change can be initiated by the collective group as opposed to a few appointees working in isolation (Kotter, 2014).

**Culture.** Schein's (2010) Conceptual Model for Culture Change provides further enlightenment on the culture that facilitates the disconnect among the principals and the AO. Since the provincial governments new curriculum has forced the educational institutions to unfreeze, there is an elevated amount of survival anxiety within the system (BC Ministry of Education, 2015; Learn Alberta, 2005; Schein, 2010). I have observed that the principals are reluctant to work together because of many different fears. Some are afraid of the loss of power



and position, some fear that they are incompetent with the new initiatives, some are afraid that they or their school will be punished by either the AO, the local operating committee, or the parents. In addition, I believe at least one principal is afraid of being ostracized by their peers (Schein, 2010). This survival anxiety heightens the resistance towards collaboration and trusting each other.

**School leadership.** The OECD (2009) *Improving School Leadership the Toolkit* provides a tool to assess how well the school leaders are working together as a system. Using the system leadership tool, several disturbing gaps in practice are identified within my District that need to be addressed through my OIP (OECD, 2009). Regrettably, many principals are not concerned with the success of the other schools in the AO. The principals do not participate with each other in networks that are focused on improving learning nor are there leadership development initiatives that focus on improving collaboration for lowering achievement gaps in the various schools. Of larger concern, however, is the fact that there appears to be incredulity towards the importance of collaborative activities. The principals do not share resources and there are no incentives to encourage the school leaders to work together. As a result, there is no “culture of trust and collaboration” between the principals in the various schools (OECD, 2009, p. 30).

An evaluation of the existing partnership and collaboration is essential for identifying gaps and developing a baseline for growth in collaboration and cooperation (Kotter, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005). Using the Marzano School District Evaluation and the Marzano Leadership Evaluation Models, the AO is assessed for cooperation and collaboration through four elements for district leaders and five elements for principals (Learning Sciences International, 2012, 2013).

At the AO leadership level, the first element assesses the extent to which the District leadership provides clear guidelines that delineate the areas where the schools follow District protocols from areas the schools can make their own decisions (Learning Sciences International, 2013). Within the AO, schools are expected to implement and follow policies that are developed and duly voted by the administrative committee. These policies cover most of the government and parochial regulations. Schools have autonomy on local policies that include school start and end times, recesses, field trips, discipline and local student handbooks. The decision-making roles of the AO and the school are not clearly outlined as a distinct policy.

The second element under the fourth domain ensures that the stakeholders, including the administrators, teachers, board members, parents, and students view the District as a collaborative and cooperative workplace (Learning Sciences International, 2013). Currently the AO does not have a way to monitor perspective in the District. During principal evaluations, parents are surveyed and asked if they feel the principal works collaboratively with the local school operating committee, as well as parents and the staff within the school. However, these results are not analyzed at the AO level for collaboration and communication with all the stakeholders.

The third element asks the extent that stakeholders have input to the District. (Learning Sciences International, 2013). There are many opportunities for stakeholders have input with the AO. Parents are often engaged through the surveys and membership on both the local operating and provincial committees. Local operating committees collect surveys from parents and members to petition the AO and the operating committee for specific policy requests or variances.

The final element for the District leadership assessment on cooperation and collaboration involves the District leadership providing leadership development and shared responsibilities. There is a gap between the development of leadership at the AO level and the principal level. Within the AO, responsibilities are delegated and appropriately shared. The delegation of District level responsibilities to the principals however is non-existent. Given the hierarchical structure and physical distance between the AO and the individual schools, shared leadership and leadership development with the school administration is problematic. Overall, in this measure, I would rate the District leadership at a beginning level of cooperation and collaboration as there are some attempts to develop clear and measurable goals and delineation of responsibilities in each area; but, it is currently only partially complete.

When examining cooperation and collaboration at the school leader level using the Marzano School District Evaluation Model and the Marzano Leadership Evaluation Models, it is clear there is gap in the collaboration both between principals and between the principals and the AO (Learning Sciences International, 2012, 2013). First, the leadership would be rated as ineffective in providing opportunities to share and discuss effective practices. In addition, there are no formal roles in the decision-making process nor are there collaborative groups that regularly interact to address educational issues (Learning Sciences International, 2013). The school leaders would be rated as developing in the areas of input from stakeholders at the local levels (Learning Sciences International, 2012). The leadership does collect input from teachers, staff, parents, and others in the learning community; however, it is unclear the extent that the input is contributing towards the functioning and policies of the local schools.

**Provincial leadership standards.** Provincial principal and vice-principal associations in both Alberta and British Columbia recognize the need for collaboration and community building

(Alberta School Councils, 2016; BCPVPA, 2013). Within Alberta, the school leadership standards focus on developing and facilitating leadership by promoting collaboration and cooperation within the members of the school community (Alberta School Councils, 2016). Principals within Alberta are also required to facilitate interactions and access to resources, both human and material, outside of the local school (Alberta School Councils, 2016). It is expected that schools will develop networks both within the school and between schools to enhance student learning. Since the Alberta document is still a draft document, it does not have an evaluation rubric.

The British Columbia Principal and Vice-Principal Association (BCPVPA) identifies interpersonal capacity as its sixth standard and community building as its ninth standard and it provides a self-assessment of the organizational environment and its ability to collaborate and cooperate (BCPVPA, 2013). Using the BCPVPA (2014) self-assessment it became apparent that the District scored high in measures of academics and curriculum but low in standards six and nine which reflect the interpersonal capacity and community building within the District. The District scored high on the measures that included maintaining a positive attitude about the Districts learning culture and support of inclusion, protection of rights and confidentiality, inclusion of stakeholders in school planning, and understanding and maintaining the boundaries of professional relationships. The areas of weakness, that support my PoP and OIP, involve facilitating team development and collaboration, effective communication both laterally and vertically, professional reflection, fostering leadership capacity in others, development of networks within and between schools, and liaising with external and community agencies. This perceived gap in relationship building, cooperation and collaboration also affects the self-

reflection in areas related to the effective teaching practices as they relate to the new learner-focused curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2015).

### **Professional Development**

While cooperation and collaboration are effective ways to promote professional development and learning, Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) insist that school leaders build leadership capacity through principles of professionalism. The authors argue that investment must be made in professional capital, development of strong professional associations and collective responsibility (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). As a result, it is essential to not only analyze the organization through its gaps in communication and collaboration, but also in its commitment to professional development in building leadership capacity.

The Kentucky Department of Education (2008) developed a document to analyze and assess the school improvement initiatives in Kentucky schools. Standard six refers to the professional development, growth and evaluation within the professional capital of Kentucky schools (Kentucky Department of Education, 2008). Evaluating the District using the six indicators on professional development has shown that there is limited or partial implementation of professional development opportunities. While educators participate in the required professional development, there is a lack of focus on application in the school setting. In addition, many professional development opportunities are focused on improving the skills of only a few select individuals. This is caused by many of the professional development opportunities taking place in urban areas that are difficult for rural educators to attend. Furthermore, the District does not have a strategic plan that outlines professional development expectations or requirements. There are attempts in the AO to collaborate with the principals in planning professional development for teachers, but collaboration among the AO and the

principals to determine the direction of professional development is nonexistent. This past year, there has been an attempt to intentionally align teacher professional growth plans with evaluations; but there has not been any attempt at the principal level to coordinate growth plans with principal evaluations. Finally, all professional growth that is offered is not leadership specific and does not have an emphasis on continuous growth.

The Learning Sciences International (2013) principal rubric also addresses professional development and trust in the leadership's knowledge and ability to lead. Evaluating the District through these elements also identifies a gap in the leadership's professional development to improve practice. Principals and the AO do not have an annual written growth plan to address the strengths and weaknesses of the leader. In addition, there is a general lack of faith and trust between the AO and the principals in both directions. Neither side views the other as being a clear instructional leader or as effective in the communication or development of leadership capacity that will raise student achievement. The leadership at both the local and the AO level is viewed as being unwilling to take a stand on tough issues or acknowledging goals that have not been met. This problem indicates an additional avoidance issue that results from organizations rewarding those who do not upset the organization's equilibrium by exposing conflict (Heifetz et al., 2009). Both the AO and the principals do not have an appropriate place to discuss the tough issues in a non-threatening environment. As will be seen in the discussion of possible solutions to my PoP, by creating a dual operating system that is outside of the regular hierarchy, discussion of some of these tough issues would be possible without fear of retribution (Kotter, 2015).

### **Growth Mindset**

After evaluating the cooperation, collaboration and professional develop aspects of the organization, assessment of the system's growth mindset also identifies barriers to the change

process (Dweck, 2006). Mindset Works (2012) is an informal online resource that provides four different online surveys that examine personal mindsets, students' motivational challenge level, classroom mindset and school mindset. Overall, when the system is assessed at the school mindset level, the valuable feedback indicates that the District is a fixed mindset community. Administrators and a few leaders make most of the decisions for the system, while the principals and teachers are often frustrated by the policies and challenge administration each time there is a change.

The AO leadership views the principals as resistant to change and entrenched in their positions. Many principals work in isolation and the less-skilled principals are unable to learn from their colleagues. The principals, who are ineffective, do not understand why or what to do to improve. There is anxiety among the principals because ineffective individuals are either fired or ignored and worked around. Furthermore, the principals find the professional development options offered by the AO to be unrewarding while the needs of many students are not being met. On the surface, it seems that no one is sure what to do to correct the system. It seems that the fixed organizational culture seems to keep people anxious and is more concerned with striving to look good or trying to avoid looking bad rather than working to improve (Mindset Works, 2012). This survival anxiety, caused by the fear of not being part of the group, limits the potential for schools to be successful (Schein, 2010). Unfortunately, these conditions serve to undermine the morale and motivation of everyone involved.

Understanding that any change process requires buy-in from the human capital in the organization, time and effort must be spent to cultivate leadership capacity in both the AO leadership and the principals (Cawsey et al., 2015; Heifetz et al., 2009; Kotter, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005). Through professional development, a growth mindset, cooperation and collaboration,

the AO and the principals would be able to effect change within the District. Through a dual operating system, the OE and principals could work freely outside of the traditional religious hierarchy to build professional capacity to positively affect student learning. The principals and the AO would work to build trust and support each other through educational change while developing educational leadership skills and resources.

Professional growth opportunities would allow for continuous growth and leverage the strengths of all leaders to build leadership capacity that would strengthen student learning. Collaborative initiatives would reduce the isolation and allow burdens to be shared with trusted colleagues. In addition, any learning anxiety, or temporary anxiety associated with any change process would diminish as the principals grow their leadership capacity (Schein, 2010). Finally, by instilling a growth mindset in our principals and the AO, we would be journeying on a path of lifelong learning. As these capacities are strengthened, the principals will continue the shared leadership and professional growth would trickle down to the teachers, enriching the educational system and promoting effective practices for student learning.

### **Preliminary Solutions**

Given the difficulty caused by the distances between the schools, possibly solutions can become problematic. The first solution would be to maintain the status quo. In this scenario, change would continue to be managed at a local level without interference from the AO. This solution does not address the PoP and principals would be left without support from the AO or their colleagues during evaluations and change initiatives.

### **Hierarchical Solution**

A second possible solution relies on a hierarchical approach where principals would be given specific expectations for collaboration with peers and disciplined for failing to meet those



expectations. While this solution may improve compliance with AO policies and change initiatives, it would create feelings of distrust and fear between the principals and the AO that would encourage further segregation and isolation. Unfortunately, I believe this is not a viable solution as the use of a hierarchical system would not increase trust nor reduce the anxiety experienced by the principals towards collaboration or change.

### **Community of Practice Solution**

The third and preferred solution involves developing a dual operating system to foster collaboration and co-operation among the principals and the AO. This community of practice would exist outside of the hierarchical structure and promote capacity building among the principals through professional development and leadership development. Both Kotter (2014) and Schein (2010) promote similar ways to relieve the anxiety that will bring the principals to a place where they can trust and collaborate with each other in a way that will support student learning across the district regardless of where the schools may be located. First, a structure needs to be developed that will facilitate the collaboration and trust that is needed (Schein, 2010). While this could be accomplished within a hierarchical system, the dual operating system could also be used (Kotter, 2014). The dual operating system would allow the principals to reduce their anxiety about the power dynamics or punishment since there would not be a hierarchy within this dual operating system.

In my organization, it is important to ensure that there is a structure in place for facilitating the needs of the AO and the principals. Therefore, my OIP involves the development of a blended face-to-face and online principal community of practice that would provide the vehicle to cultivate the principal and AO relationship. According to Wenger (1998), a community of practice is a group of people with shared concerns and the drive to improve their

practice who interact on a regular basis. Structurally, the community of practice would divide the work and coordinate the AO and the principals' roles. Policy development and curriculum implementation would be shared, improving efficiency and promoting adherence to policy. It would also provide a structure for supporting the human resources frame by facilitating principal and local voice during the development of policies; which in turn, encourages alignment between local and organizational needs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In addition, the principal community of practice would foster productive relationships and promote a learning environment that would be productive for change as principals move forward as instructional leaders in the implementation of the new Ministry of Education curriculum. Politically, these meetings would facilitate bargaining, negotiating, setting agendas, and managing the conflict between the AO and the principals (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Finally, by monthly meetings and discussions held whether face-to-face or through online tools, the principal community of practice would allow the principals and the AO to communicate regularly with a goal to unite with a common vision and common understanding of the vision, symbols and policies that protects not only the local schools but the whole system (Wenger, 1998).

Once the community of practice has been developed, a few select principals would be gathered to be introduced to the concept. This strategy blends the need for communicating the vision in the awakening phase with facilitating the development of change agents in the mobilization phase (Cawsey et al., 2015). By understanding that elementary school principals look up to high school principals as symbolic heroes (Bolman & Deal, 2013), the first wave for communication would be directed to the six high schools in the province. Subsequent phases of adoption would gradually add the elementary principals to the community. In addition, all the principals would receive email and online support from the AO through an online google

community where resources and information could be posted and shared. Providing training for such technologies would be held during the face-to-face meetings that would be held at the association office. Helpdesk support would also be available through the AO.

As the AO moves to the distributed and democratic leadership approach, the principals and the AO relationship, that was originally framed by the hierarchical organizational structure, would need to be mandated from the AO in the initial stages (Nichols, 2000; Portelli, 2001; Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010). After the CoP is established, it will operate as a dual operating system in tandem with the existing hierarchical structure (Kotter, 2014). It is the hope that as the principals become more familiar with meeting with each other and sharing with each other, the benefits of belonging to a community of practice would facilitate this becoming an ongoing initiative within the organization (Wenger, 1998).

### **Leadership Approaches to Change**

In order for organizations to be successful, Kotter (2015) proposes that leaders must think differently, have appropriate networks and systems, and a change in leadership routines. The dual operating system using a CoP, proposed in this OIP, allows change leaders to blend strategies from various leadership models to effect change. The different leadership strategies examined in this OIP are utilized to meet the diverse needs of stakeholders while still moving the organization forward. Partnership between the hierarchy and the dual operating system provides flexibility that promote leaders thinking differently and changing their leadership routines (Kotter, 2015). The result is an agile organization that operates in concert with the existing organization by including individuals that are stakeholders in the organization (Kotter, 2015). Change requires the appropriate leadership style for the appropriate stakeholders (Senge, 1990). These leadership approaches to change within this OIP are accomplished by blending various

principles from agile leadership for the change leader, adaptive leadership for the hierarchical stakeholders, and servant leadership with the principals (Breakspear, 2015a; Greenleaf, 1970; Heifetz et al., 2009; Kotter, 2014).

### **Agile Leadership**

While originally associated with software design, Breakspear (2015a) postulated that the education system needs agile leaders. Agile leaders differentiate themselves from other leaders by dealing well with unfamiliar or ambiguous situations and recognizing the need to anticipate and prepare for upcoming change (Breakspear, 2016a; Galagan, 2015; Orski, 2017). According to Kotter (2015), the ability to recognize windows of opportunity is essential to identifying a big opportunity needed to accelerate change. Moreover, agile leaders use the organization's mission and vision to identify possible changes and to facilitate incremental steps toward change (Boehm & Turner, 2005). Instead of creating large detailed plans, agile leaders use focused teams that learn, respond, and adapt as they work their way through the various short work cycles involved in the incremental steps of change (Breakspear, 2016b). These incremental changes towards the organizational goals can be utilized as the short-term wins needed in implementing Kotter's (2014) acceleration model for change.

Agile leaders also understand the need for focused teams like the CoP to help implement change. The mobilization of these networks of people and providing an opportunity to foster creativity serve to empower change within the system (Breakspear, 2015b). In addition, Kotter (2015) suggests that organizations are more agile and quick to change if there are many people driving the change. Similarly, Hall (2014) argues that agile leaders recognize that the organization exists as an ecosystem that has leaders at every level. However, Breakspear (2015b) argues that change will only occur if that army of change agents is protected from the rules and

procedures of the hierarchy. By using a dual operating system, agile leaders can provide a safe environment for their principals and teachers as they creatively try new solutions (Breakspear, 2015b; Kotter, 2015).

According to Tennant (2001), agile leaders recognize the need for effective communication within the network. In fact, agile leaders prefer many different types of communication that include both frequent and informal communication as well as formal communication (Tennant, 2001; Wagstrom & Herbsleb, 2006). One of the benefits of Kotter's (2014) dual operating system is that it allows for this type of communication among groups that previously would not have informal communication. It is through these networks that the agile leader is able to provide the necessary information for members to make appropriate decisions. Some agile leaders use a process called SCORE (Scrum for Research) to communicate information with each other (Hicks & Foster, 2010). SCORE uses either brief status meetings several times a week to keep everyone informed in the change process or special on demand meetings to deal with specific issues that may arise (Hicks & Foster, 2010). Within this OIP, the informal meetings would be held once per month and take place during the onsite and online CoP meetings. Additionally, chapter three addresses a communication plan for stakeholders to help inform them throughout the change process.

Agile leaders seek to become better all the time. According to Breakspear (2016b), the most important key to agile leadership is the mindset that leaders continuously learn. Similar to Dweck's (2006) growth mindset, agile leaders understand that they are always learning. Through iterative learning cycles, agile leaders recognize that change is a series of small, critical changes that coalesce together to implement larger changes (Breakspear, 2016a). These iterative learning cycles also work to sustain acceleration as change is view as an ongoing process for continuous

school improvement (Bernhardt, 2013; Breakspear, 2016b; Kotter, 2015). By following a cycle of clarifying the problems, incubating the solutions while collecting data, and then amplifying the solutions to the whole organization; agile leaders encourage quick change by constantly evaluating and adapting to the data (Breakspear, 2016b).

### **Adaptive Leadership**

While agile leadership focuses on the change cycle, adaptive leadership focuses on the second-order or adaptive changes to an educational system's goals or vision (Marzano et al., 2005; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Similarly, Daly and Chrispeels (2008) agree that organizations need to focus on the second-order changes that will re-evaluate and challenge the existing values and organizational norms. To Heifetz et al. (2009), this is the difference between leadership and authority. Similarly, both Fullan (2002) and Marzano et al. (2005) draw a distinction between transactional and transformational leaders. Adaptive leaders are those who are not simply called on to be transactional leaders who or fix technical problems, instead adaptive leaders focus on transformational problems that require addressing the underlying vision and goals of the organization (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009).

Adaptive change can only occur when the leaders identify the gaps between the values and behaviours of an organization. Rogers (2015) proposes that leaders often fall into the trap of dealing with the technical issues that are easily remedied with a straightforward response instead of focusing on the value system that may underlie the issues. Often, leaders are too immersed in the organizational environment that they fail to be able to understand the roots of the problem. In order for this to happen, adaptive leaders must be able to take a step back and diagnose their organization like someone standing on a balcony (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Adaptive leadership also recognizes that disrupting status-quo moves an organization forward. Campbell-Evans, Gray, and Leggett (2014) call this process of using leader-managed discomfort, productive disequilibrium. Unfortunately, within the education system, adaptive changes or productive disequilibrium, disrupt the status-quo and are often viewed as challenging the system (Campbell-Evans et al., 2014; Kaufman, 2005). Likewise, Heifetz and Linsky (2004) identify the resistance that may face leaders when they challenge the authority of the organization. Since adaptive leadership examines and challenges the underlying belief structure of an organization, adaptive leaders assume a great deal of risk when challenging the status-quo (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Wallis (2008) and Kaufman (2005) also both agree that organizations often punish those who challenge the ingrained hierarchical structure. Therefore, it is essential that adaptive leaders manage disruptive change in a way that limits distress to manageable levels while carefully moving the organization forward (Rogers, 2015.).

According to Galvin and Clark (2015), organizations tend to naturally fall into a structured environment that may become too bureaucratic and unable to adapt to the changes in the environment. Similarly, Kotter (2014) recognizes that the hierarchy is important to facilitate routines in implementation; thus, there is a need for a more flexible network that operates parallel to the hierarchy. This network is more suited to managing change in an adaptive leadership model. Therefore, the goal of adaptive leadership within this OIP hinges on identifying threats or opportunities to the environment, mobilizing people to respond to those challenges, and then enlisting support from the stakeholders (Heifetz et al., 2009; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

Similar to agile leaders, adaptive leaders must be proactive and flexible as they anticipate, prepare, and institute changes (Govindarajan, 2016). Therefore, the first key to

adaptive leadership is the possessing the ability to recognize subtle changes in a situation that will trigger the need for change (Wallis, 2006; Whiffen, 2007). These changes can be identified as either threats or opportunities (Bhengu & Myende, 2016). Furthermore, the leader must also be able to determine whether the threat or opportunity is an adaptive change that requires change to the culture and vision of the organization or a technical change that is more concerned with processes (Bailey, Cameron, & Cortez-Ford, 2004). Wallis (2008) goes on to argue that it is not enough that an adaptive leader recognizes the problems, he or she must also be able to effectively communicate the adaptive work that needs to be done. Finally, adaptive leaders must be able to vary their behaviour based on the changes in the environment. They are not locked into one specific solution and are able to adapt their behaviour based on how they perceive the change to the environment (Sharpe & Creviston, 2013).

The second key to adaptive leadership involves the mobilization of a group of people to respond to the change. Kotter (2014) refers to this group as the change agents. These are the individuals that will spearhead the decision-making process. The adaptive leader taps into the potential and skills of various individuals when choosing this group since the group's ability for strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities are directly related to success of the adaptive changes (Campbell-Evans et al., 2014; Sharp & Creviston, 2013). In addition to the individual skills and talents, the adaptive leader must take into consideration the influence of other variables including "generational differences, personality strengths, different morals and values, or previous educational opportunities" (Prendergast, 2016, p. 42). However, adaptive leaders should not shy away from those who think differently as they provide an additional perspective and may assist in recognizing potential solutions (Govindarajan, 2016). Furthermore, it is crucial to



acknowledge that varying perspectives, offered by including diverse voices, strengthens the ability of an organization to make adaptive changes (Heifetz et al. 2009).

The third key to adaptive leadership involves enlisting the stakeholders in the change process. Adaptive leadership involves striking at the heart of the organization's value system (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). The adaptive leader must both recognize and balance the stakeholder expectations of the organization's value system with what may be in the organization's best interest (Galvin & Clark, 2015). Since both the stakeholders and the adaptive leader share responsibility for the outcome of the change, they should be included in the process of moving forward to face the adaptive challenges together (Rogers, 2015). Similarly, Kotter (2015) recognizes the need to include stakeholders in the adaptive process as part of the volunteer army to elicit change. In chapter three, this OIP will address how the stakeholders will be enlisted to support the change process.

Finally, adaptive leadership is not only about leading others, but also making personal changes in one's own practice. It involves the leader's ability to gain the trust of the individuals and stakeholders in an organization (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008). In addition, Khan (2005) insists that adaptive leaders shift their own personal mindsets and behaviour as they adopt new ideas. Essentially, adaptive leaders must model what they are asking their teams to do and lead by example (Sharpe & Creviston, 2013). Therefore, adaptive leadership allows the leaders to live the organizational vision both in their actions and belief system as they work together to change the organization (Khan, 2005).

### **Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership was first coined by Greenleaf in 1970. He determined that a great leader is one whose first priority is to serve others (Greenleaf, 1970). Similarly, Allen, Moore,

Moser, Neill, Sambamoorthi, and Bell (2016) concur that servant leaders in an organization lead from behind by growing other individuals in the organization. Furthermore, Spears (2004) also includes commitment to the growth of people as part of the central characteristics of a servant leader. Within educational leadership, Fullan (2003) recognizes that one of the responsibilities of a school leader is to encourage the development and leadership of others in the school. This professional development accomplished by the servant leader's focus on creating structures that facilitate peer learning opportunities, a climate for individuals to support each other, giving and receiving difficult feedback allowing individuals to challenge their assumptions, and acknowledgment that mistakes are learning opportunities (Marquardt, 2000; Northouse, 2016; Song, Park, & Kang, 2015; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). By using the CoP, the servant leader facilitates relationship building while supporting one another in professional development.

Within my PoP, relationship building and trust is an identified gap in the system. Therefore, using servant leadership to build relationships and trust between the leader and the followers is essential (Allen et al., 2016). Community building with both the stakeholders and followers is essential to the success of the servant leader (Crippen, 2005). Likewise, Allen et al. (2016) identifies the need to engage stakeholders in relationship building as they provide sustainability in the change process by empowering the leader. Strong ethical and moral behaviour by the leader creates the trusting relationships with their team (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014). Furthermore, the servant leader builds relationships through empowering their followers, holding them accountable for their actions, humility in allowing the followers to receive the credit for their actions, and courage in taking risks and accepting mistakes (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

In addition to developing leaders and relationship building, servant leaders are effective communicators (Northouse, 2016). This OIP introduces the CoP as an effective means for the servant leader to encourage communication among the principals. Servant leaders are able to listen and be empathetic to the needs of their followers (Spears, 2004). Greenleaf (1970) believes that listening and understanding the interests of the followers creates opportunities for growth and change. Often leaders use on-on-one communication to recognize the abilities and potential in the followers (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014). Burch, Swails, and Mills (2015) agree that full dialogue that is fair and safe is a core responsibility of a servant leader. The communication found in servant leadership would strengthen the success of the change management plan discussed in chapter 3.

### **Conclusion**

Through identifying the limitations of attempting to enact structural changes within a hierarchical environment, I believe that providing a dual operating system network will facilitate the change needed to develop professional capacity in its existing leaders. In addition, my organization must recognize that change within a hierarchical leadership structure does not encourage communication, cooperation and collaboration. Instead, an adaptive leadership style is needed to ensure stakeholder buy-in and support for the AO and the leader needs to be a servant leader to the principals and an agile leader to the organization. By implementing a dual operating system, change leader, in cooperation with the AO, can facilitate ongoing resiliency in a rapidly changing educational environment. In chapter three, I outline my change implementation and communication plan that will facilitate collaboration and co-operation among the principals in my geographically diverse district.

### Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

#### Change Implementation Plan

As outlined in chapter one, the AO is a hierarchical religious organization. As a result, the changing of the hierarchy is virtually impossible. Therefore, this OIP proposes a lateral shift from the religious hierarchy that allows for a dual operating system that will operate parallel to the existing hierarchy (Kotter, 2012). As demonstrated in Figure 1, the community of practice (CoP) would include a core group of stakeholders operating outside of the traditional hierarchy. The superintendent, association office, and principals would form a CoP that allows an opportunity for agile and adaptive leadership to facilitate developing a growth mindset, cooperation and collaboration, and professional development (Breakspear, 2015b; Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009). This OIP is dependent on the development of this dual operating system (Kotter, 2014).

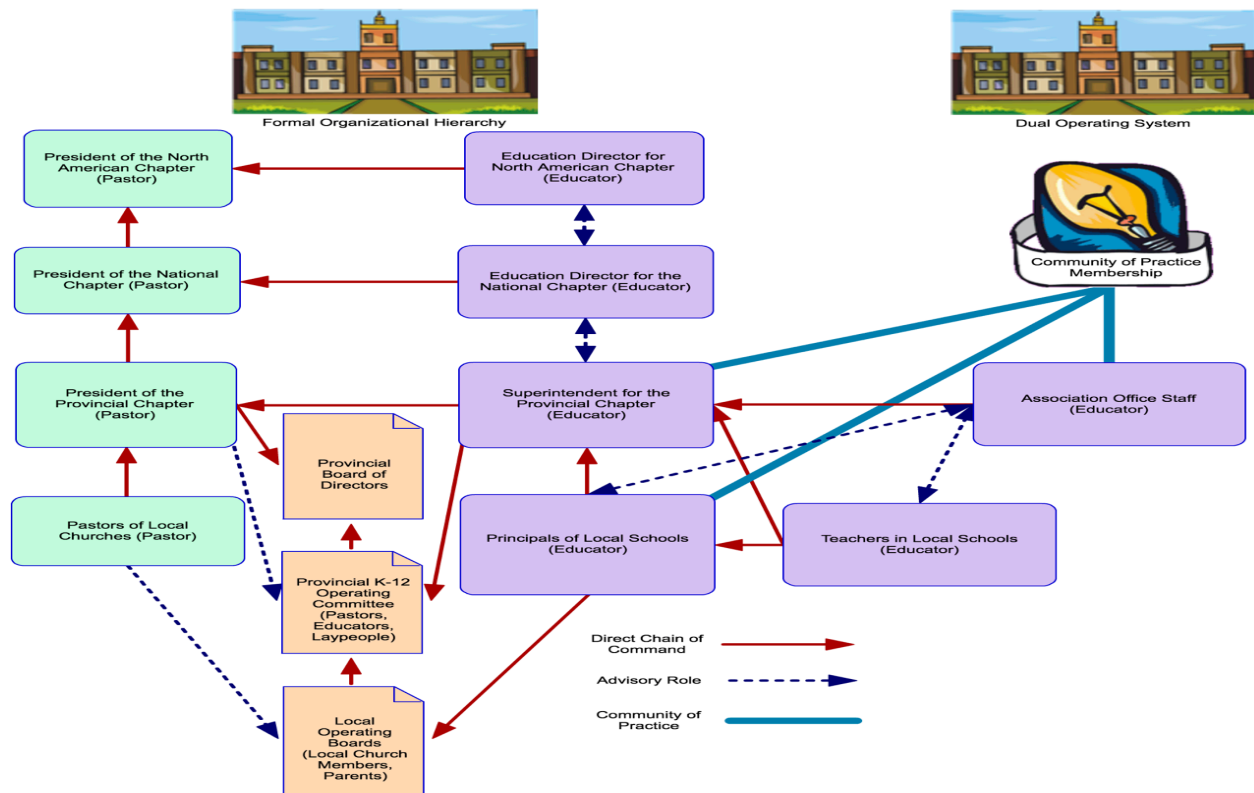


Figure 1. Proposed organizational structure

### **Create a Sense of Urgency**

As identified in the previous chapters, external and internal pressures are enabling a climate for change. The changing curriculum within the provinces has placed a new push on principals being the instructional leaders in the schools (Alberta Education, 2009; BCPVPA, 2013; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, Lloyed, & Rowe, 2008). Pressures from the internal stakeholders, including parents, the AO and the church head office identified the need for cooperation and collaboration among the schools and the AO (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Shirley 2009; Marzano et al., 2005). Due to the urgent need for change, this OIP will focus on developing a community of practice, that relies on the collaboration and cooperation of its members, to provide adaptive, servant, and agile leadership in an authentic environment (Breakspear, 2015a; Greenleaf, 1970; Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009).

### **Generating Short-term Wins**

The goals for the OIP are divided into three phases: short, medium, and long-term goals. The short-term goals involve the development of a pilot community of practice. The pilot group includes the AO and six high school principals. Due to the geographic distances between the schools, this group would meet both virtually and face-to-face. Teambuilding and cultivating trust between the AO and the pilot group principals would be the focus of the CoP. The CoP members would be encouraged to participate in directed collaboration on relevant issues such as curriculum, policy, and inclusion. It is anticipated that the pilot group would be motivated by having an opportunity to add local input and voice in policy development. The CoP would create a symbiotic relationship with the AO to enhance the development of local policies. Since the CoP includes the decision-makers in the hierarchy, the CoP would not undermine the authority of the AO.

The second phase, or medium-term goals, would involve the expansion of the community of practice to include the remaining high school principals and the addition of three elementary school principals. While the medium-term goals would still focus on building trust and collaboration, the CoP would also provide an opportunity to develop a series of strategic visions that would lead toward the gradual release of hierarchical authority. Therefore, the medium-term goal facilitates a move towards an open dialogue for developing a shared vision for the schools and the AO. Once the expanded community of practice develops the vision of shared decision-making, the OIP will move towards the long-term goal.

The third phase and long-term goal is a permanent, ongoing CoP relationship between the AO and all the district principals. During phase three, the CoP will have become an important extension of the AO and the principals view the CoP as a valuable vehicle for personal growth and collaboration. While the CoP would continue to foster and build ongoing trust and collaborative problem-solving opportunities, it would also provide discussions on shared decision-making for non-governmental policies. In addition, the CoP would provide a means for shared resources and mentorship support.

### **Enable Action by Removing Barriers**

Removing barriers is an essential step to successfully implementing and managing change. It involves examining both the limitations of the OIP and the resources needed to ensure success. The largest limitations to my PoP fall in the structural and political frames (Bolman & Deal, 2013). First, the AO and the principals currently function within a hierarchical structure that may hinder the development of the democratic and distributed leadership approach needed to facilitate collaboration and community building (Portelli, 2001; Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010). The participants may not trust that the CoP would exist outside of the hierarchical

structure. There may also be distrust between the principals and the AO or the supervising clergy that rely on hierarchical dictates for policies and procedures. Second, the sample size, of 18 participants, would be small as the CoP would involve only the AO and the principals, not the vice-principals. Furthermore, there may be issues with collaboration and communication as both high school and elementary principals would be involved. The principals may not see areas of similarity between the different divisions. In addition, if they do not see the value of the CoP they may resent that they are not able to opt out of the initiative. The principals may have negative feelings if they feel that participation in the CoP is forced through the terms of their employment. Finally, the parochial organization must approve financial expenditures and budgets needed to provide the face-to-face and online technologies for the CoP. These parochial organization and the AO must budget line items for the CoP that include transportation, per diem, lodging, and release time. Furthermore, they also need to invest in the technology needed to connect the principals that are geographically distant from each other.

There are also limitations in the human resources and symbolic frames. Given that this is a new initiative, some principals may not believe that the organization is capable of change. They may view the CoP and distributed leadership ideology as a way to download more work to the local principals. Many principals already believe that they do more work than is required. Since many already believe that they are doing a good job, the principals may self-report themselves on anonymous self-reflective surveys in a more positive light to support the symbolic hero principal to the other principals (Sheppard, Hurley, & Dibbon, 2010; Wenger, 1998). Since each school in the province needs a principal of record, the AO has sometimes hired principals that do not have the preferred education or work experience. As a result, many principals do not hold master's degrees nor have they had any leadership training. This gap may lead to

discrepancies over the topics that need to be addressed to improve professional practice, as each principal is at a different place in their professional growth.

Another limitation that needs to be overcome is how to facilitate collaboration when the schools are geographically distant from each other. Unfortunately, some schools are located over twelve hours drive away from each other which requires the principal to be absent from the school for an extended period. Those principals would lose three workdays away from their school to attend a one day meeting since two of those days would be travel days. In addition, the expenses for the travel, per diem, lodging, and mileage can become cost-ineffective. As a result, it is impossible to hold monthly face-to-face meetings that would foster collaboration. A blended on-site and online community would provide for CoP meetings. This OIP proposes face-to-face meetings to occur in October, January, March, May, and July to coincide with coincide with other parochial meetings that the principals are expected to attend. By adding an extra day to the existing meetings, the AO will save money on travel costs and the principals will only be away from their schools for one additional day. The remaining virtual meetings would be held by through various video-conferencing software in August, November, and February. By utilizing Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, Microsoft Office 365 suite, G-Suite for Education, and Basecamp, the CoP could continue to share resources and collaborate when face-to-face is cost and time prohibitive.

### **Institute Change**

Part of instituting change involves developing principal capacity within the human resources frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Resources need to be provided to help provide a framework for building capacity. Within the OIP, the CoP will follow the School Reform Initiative (n.d.) collection of protocols that would be used to frame the discussions and



collaboration within the community. These protocols specify steps for discussing issues and topics that will allow the meetings to be productive and not become complaining sessions. Furthermore, the protocols allow opportunities to build trust with each other by stipulating a set of guiding principles that will shape discussions. Once these protocols are agreed upon by the CoP membership, other resources may be introduced to build the instructional leadership of the principals.

While there are many different resources for developing educational leadership. The CoP would focus on developing leadership using Marzano's 21 responsibilities of the school leader (Learning Sciences International, 2012, 2013). Dweck's (2006) Mindset model, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (2009) Improving School Leadership Toolkit. These resources, explained in chapter two, also allow for the tracking and monitoring of the change process through various rubrics and indicators.

### **Form Strategic Vision and Initiatives**

The original vision of the OIP is to implement the CoP to encourage collaboration and cooperation among the AO and the principals. Once the CoP is established, part of its role is to develop a strategic vision and goals for the church, the local community and the District. The initiatives that would be instituted would be developed through agile and adaptive leadership (Breakspear, 2015a; Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009). Through the functioning community, quick responses to government initiatives or policies can be addressed. However, the vision, goals, and the initiatives would be developed through the needs of the stakeholders as the CoP grows.

**Build a Guiding Coalition**

The guiding coalition for the OIP would be comprised of the primary change agents within the District. Since the principals and the AO would be the ones most directly affected by the plan, it is logical that they be invited to form this coalition of change agents. These individuals have a vested interest in the system that would motivate them to become an active part of the community. The high school principals are the Ministry of Education (MOE) contact person for the school and they need to understand and comply with existing policies. As a result, they have a desire to have input into policy development that affects their local area. The elementary principals are motivated by the desire for support from other principals. All the elementary principals are teaching principals and do not have time to develop their own resources. They need to look to each other for support and the CoP would provide a vehicle for that collaboration.

Within the AO, each role also has his or her own reasons to support the community of practice. The superintendent desires cooperation with the principals. He wishes to end any antagonistic relationship created by the hierarchical structure between his office and the schools. The associate superintendent supervises policy development and implementation. Consequently, he wishes the principals to provide input and comply with the policies voted by the provincial K-12 operating committee. As the provinces are in the process of implementing both a new inquiry-based curriculum and inclusive education, the curriculum coordinator and the special education coordinator both desire the principals and AO to be united in developing instructional leadership that would ensure success for all students.

**Enlist a Volunteer Army**

One of the most difficult issues of education is managing the stakeholders' reactions to change. These stakeholders are a vital part of the educational process within the District. Members of this volunteer army include parents, educators, the clergy, and the provincial K-12 and local operating committees. Communication is the main vehicle for enlisting this volunteer army's support of the CoP. The volunteer army will be encouraged, following Kotter and Schlesinger's (2008) model for managing resistance to change, to support the CoP through education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, and negotiation and agreement. In addition to communication, it is the goal of the OIP to engage the stakeholders in an appropriate timely way.

Using the guiding coalition, the principals and the AO have the opportunity to influence the attitudes of the volunteer army of stakeholders. In addition, the CoP allows the AO and the principals to address some of the perceived negative impressions by purposefully including them in the process. The members of the CoP would work to improve communication between the AO, principals, and stakeholders. The stakeholders understand the personal and corporate history involved with the District. With support from the CoP, the principals and AO would be able to influence the stakeholders in an effective and positive way. In addition, by enlisting the stakeholders as a volunteer army, under the principals and AO, they would be provided a voice and fair process to ensure that their local concerns are communicated at the district level.

**Sustain Acceleration**

Finally, as the CoP is intended to continue as an ongoing change initiative, change and acceleration can continue as the community adapts to constantly changing educational landscape. Using the CoP structure, the principals and AO would continue to develop trust, collaboration,

and cooperation to face the ongoing challenges in education. This would enable the district as a whole to be more resilient to adapting to change and challenges.

### **Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation**

Whenever attempting a change initiative, it is important to constantly monitor and evaluate the process. While there are many ways to do this, the Deming cycle which follows a plan, do, study, and act framework has successfully guided organizations through the change process and led them to become successful again (Langley, Nolan, & Nolan, 1994). Within this system, change is achieved through planning and identifying the change opportunity, doing or implementing the change, studying the results and data to determine whether the change has been successful, and then acting on the change in a wider arena (Bernhardt, 2013). If for some reason the change is not successful, instead of broadening the scope of the change initiative, the change agents realize the importance to assess, adjust and begin the cycle again. This ongoing cycle of assessment and monitoring change helps to propel the organization forward. The CoP framework will utilize the continuous school improvement cycle developed by Bernhardt (2013) that is based on the Deming Cycle (Langley et al., 1994). Bernhardt's (2013) plan, implement, evaluate, and improve cycle, as illustrated in Figure 3, fits within the Deming Cycle but has a focus on continuous improvement as opposed to ending the cycle at act (Langley et al., 1994). In addition, the Bernhardt's (2013) continuous improvement cycle spends more time on planning and has shorter implementation and evaluation phases that allow for more flexibility. This cycle allows for the support of short-term wins as the process supports small incremental changes that are constantly evaluated and built upon to reach larger goals. This model fits with this OIP as it illustrates the ongoing process of planning, implementing, adjusting and improving the educational system (Bernhardt, 2013).

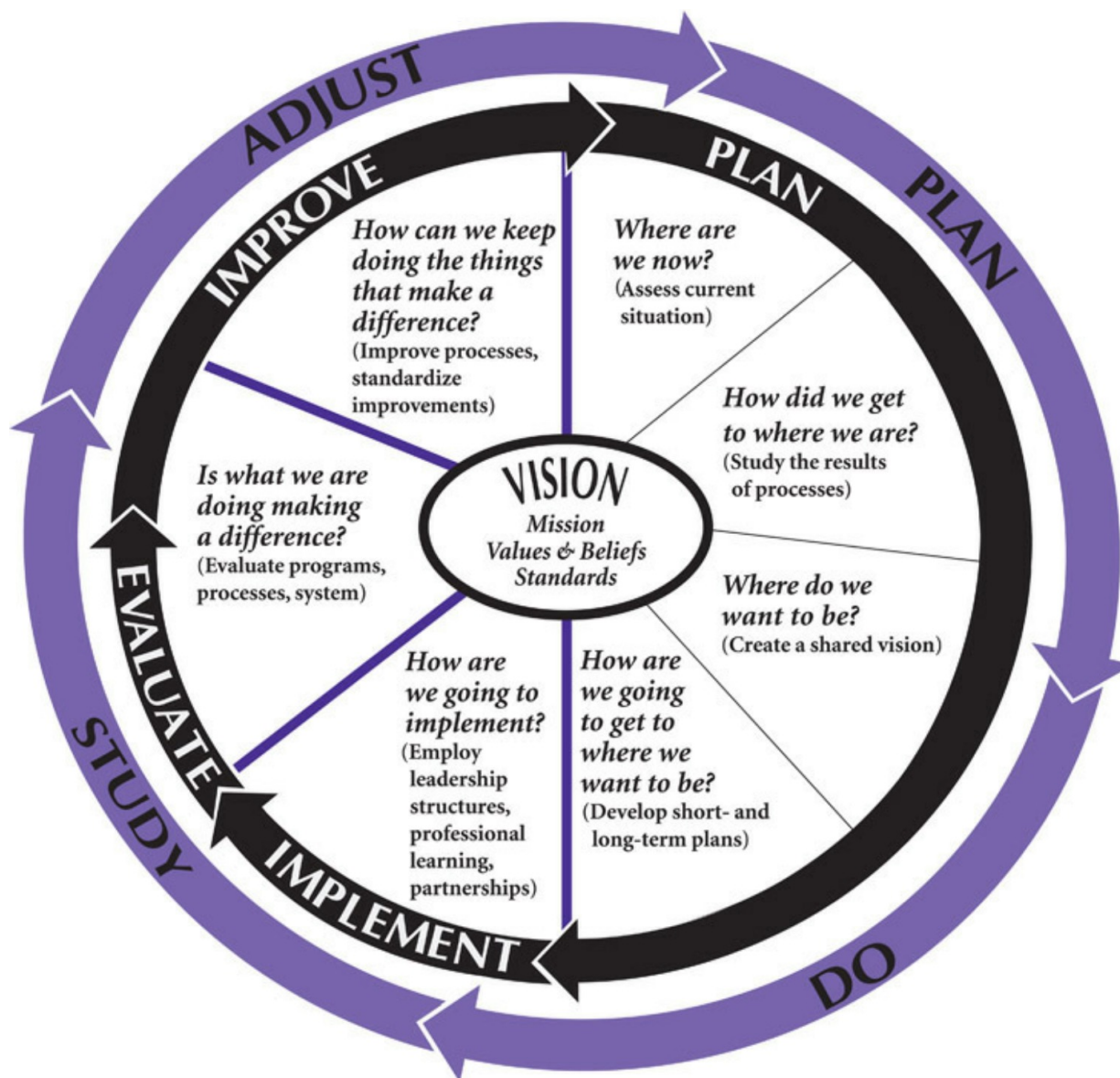


Figure 2. Continuous school improvement (Bernhardt, 2013, p. 19)

### Plan

The planning phase involves addressing four questions: “where are we now, how did we get to where we are, where do we want to be, and how are we going to get there?” (Bernhardt, 2013, p. 19). Unfortunately, some school improvement plans stop at the planning phase. They are only concerned about developing plans to be implemented and if they are unsuccessful, they simply develop more plans. This OIP holds an understanding that school improvement is a

continuous process that can only be addressed through ongoing collaboration and cooperation.

The organizational and change readiness analysis presented in chapters one and two explains the data was collected on these questions. This data illuminated a gap in the organization's ability to communicate, collaborate, and cooperate. The proposed CoP solution addresses how we as an organization will be able to close this gap.

### **Implement**

Once the communication and collaboration gap was identified and a solution proposed, the OIP was developed. This OIP addresses the question of how are we going to implement our plan. Following Kotter's (2014) Accelerate model, this OIP outlines the short, medium, and long-term goals that were identified in the first part of this chapter. In addition, the dual operating system (Kotter, 2014) provides a structure for the CoP that would operate outside of the traditional hierarchy. Part of the implementation process also involves the development of a communication plan, that enhances the work completed in the community of practice, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

The biggest impediment to the implementation of the CoP is the distance between the schools and AO. As already discussed, ongoing face-to-face communities are limited by travel, time, and money. As a result, the extension of the face-to-face community of practice to an online environment allows more flexibility in the collaborative process. New web-based applications allow for more collaboration, community, and engagement with those who may not be physically close to each other because they can be part of the community from anywhere the internet is available (Hearn & White, 2009). Unfortunately, technological ability of the principals may limit the implementation of this endeavour. As a result, technology that is simple and easy to use will assist in the introduction of an online community. While there will be limited

technology training, Hearn and White (2009), caution that the focus of the online communications be facilitating discussion and not training on the technology itself. This is an area that will need constant redress during the implementation phase as the OIP moves forward.

### **Evaluate**

The evaluation of the OIP involves answering whether the community of practice is making a difference. It would be deemed successful if the principals and the AO see an increase in collaboration and cooperation as well as an increase in leadership capacity as evaluated by the tools described within this section. First, the community of practice needs to be assessed on its success or failure as a framework for encouraging collaboration and cooperation across the district. Second, the evaluation involves examining the structure and effectiveness of the community of practice and whether it is an effective way to facilitate the development of leadership capacity in the principals. This secondary evaluation of the community of practice would examine how well the community of practice is working to improve student achievement and facilitating professional learning. Consequently, any evaluation of the OIP would involve evaluating collaboration and communication as well as professional capacity of the leadership.

When evaluating the community of practice as a vehicle for collaboration and cooperation, the primary tools used to measure change would be observations and interviews. Feedback from individual and group reflections of the community of practice process would be encouraged and follow the DICE Model to measure duration, integrity, commitment, and effort (Cawsey et al., 2015). The duration involves evaluating the effectiveness of the time in the CoP and how often the OIP will be formally evaluated. Within the community of practice, the OIP will be formally assessed every six months and prior to beginning each new implementation phase. Commitment would involve a two-dimensional assessment allowing each member to

evaluate both the perceived leadership in the AO and the principals' perceived level of support to enact change through the collaboration process. The effort would involve assessing the effectiveness of the member's transmission of the community of practice's vision and goals to the various stakeholders. Given that there are many different stakeholders in the educational process, Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols' (2015) balanced scorecard may also be used to track the completion of the goals developed in the community of practice. Each goal, in the community of practice would have an action plan that follows the SMART (specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic, and time-based) framework to allow for the goal to be assessed for effectiveness, based on the shared vision of the community of practice (Project Smart, 2017).

At the end of each implementation phase, re-evaluating the CoP using the tools discussed in chapter two would provide a measure of growth. By revisiting the same measures used in chapter two, the effectiveness of the community of practice can be assessed by comparing the new data to the baseline data that was originally collected. Cooperation and collaboration would be re-examined using the OECD (2009) *Improving School Leadership the Toolkit*, Schein's (2010) Conceptual Model for Culture Change, Marzano's School District Evaluation Model and Leadership Evaluation model (Learning Sciences International, 2012, 2013) and the BCPVPA (2014) self-assessment of the interpersonal standards. These tools provide rubrics that allow for rich conversations to illustrate the collective journey of the principals and the AO within the CoP framework. Professional development initiatives would also be assessed using the Kentucky Department of Education's (2008) performance descriptors and the Mindset Works tool (2012) for assessing and developing a growth mindset. In addition, the stakeholders, including teachers and operating committee members, would be surveyed on their local experiences and any changes that resulted from their principal being a member of the CoP. This potential data, as to



the perceived benefit with the stakeholders, would indicate possible future directions for the initiative.

Student data will also be used to measure and communicate the effectiveness of the CoP. Various student artifacts can be used to determine whether the changes proposed in this OIP have a positive effect on student learning. Local artifacts like work exemplars, lesson plans, and assessment records can provide valuable insights into whether the CoP is facilitating change at the local school level. Furthermore, Ministry of Education inspection reports and standardized tests provide additional data to analyze. Student academic growth can be measured through pre-test and post-test comparisons of the provincial assessments and the Canadian Achievement Tests. While local artifacts, standardized tests, and provincial assessment results are available in the schools, the Ministry of Education inspection report results would need to be accessed through the AO and made available to the CoP for analysis.

Communicating areas of concern, as well as areas of strength, is a key component of change within a OIP. Concerns about the OIP would be addressed in the CoP using protocols from the School Reform Initiative (n.d.). While these protocols promote collaboration and communication growth in a non-threatening structured environment, they also provide an structure for addressing negative issues that may arise in the monitoring of the change process. There are many different resources and protocols (School Reform Initiative, n.d.), that will be used to navigate potentially difficult conversations through non-threatening protocols. These conversations are important as they allow the principals and the AO an opportunity to voice concerns and provide for valuable feedback in a safe manner while still focusing on growth. In addition, the protocols would also facilitate honest reflection opportunities that give valuable ongoing data illustrating how the members are implementing the shared vision within their local

setting. Furthermore, anecdotal responses will provide insight into the effectiveness of the format and process involved in the community.

### **Improve**

Mento, Jones, and Dirndorfer (2002) strongly support using evaluation to improve the change process. It is important for organizations to not only reflect on the data collected, but on what that data is trying to tell them about the OIP. Bernhardt (2013) refers to this process as organizational growth from simply a complying school to an ongoing, flexible, learning organization. As the CoP is meant to be an ongoing initiative, it is essential that the data is collected, analyzed and used to determine future goals and action plans. By participating in the continuous school improvement cycle, the community of practice will remain an important vehicle for educational change.

### **Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change**

As a change leader, following ethical protocols for the protection of my participants is an important part of the OIP. Since the goal of my community of practice is to ultimately promote professional growth in the principals, the respect for persons must also be carefully considered in the planning of the OIP. Throughout the CoP, protocols that develop agreed upon norms will guide participant interaction (School Reform Initiative, n.d.). These protocols will protect participant autonomy and respect for the differences that may arise when sensitive issues are considered and discussed (Government of Canada, 2016). In addition, these group norms will help aid in setting boundaries and guidelines that will protect the welfare of my participants while demonstrating respect for them as individuals. The CoP will endeavour to promote justice and equity among the principals and the AO (Government of Canada, 2016). Therefore, the

following ethical considerations will be discussed: consent, fairness and equity, and privacy and confidentiality.

The use of data in the OIP is an important ethical consideration. Bolman and Deal (2013) highlight the need for collecting data in each of the four frames prior to implementing any organizational change initiative. According to Stockley and Balkwill (2013), using data to initiate change within the organization should involve an ethics review by the change agent. Any OIP that involves collecting data and using data is considered research with human participants when it is implemented. Therefore, the change agent in this OIP, when initiated, may be considered a researcher. In 2014, the Government of Canada released the latest edition of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* or the TCPS 2 (Government of Canada, 2016) outlining three areas of ethical concerns when implementing OIPs that involve people. Consent, fairness and equity, and privacy and confidentiality form an ethical framework that should be applied when working with humans in any OIP (Government of Canada, 2016).

### **Consent**

Within this OIP, the change agents must consider how consent will affect the CoP. The TCPS 2 insists that change agents must have respect for the person who is participating in the original change implementation and that any secondary data used must honour the original consent (Government of Canada, 2016). Within education, ElAtia, Ipperciel, and Hammad (2012), expressed concern that consent may be problematic when working with large data sets like student achievement data. Many schools and governments, expect students to participate in provincial testing sessions. These provincial assessments, like the Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) in British Columbia, are mandatory and any exemptions must be justified

through an application process (Government of British Columbia, 2016). The Ministry of Education informs parents that FSA testing data is used to help the province, districts, and school councils evaluate and plan to improve student achievement (Government of British Columbia, 2016). Therefore, parents who consent to the provincial assessments do not allow the data to be used for other purposes. Consequently, it would be unethical to use the data for other purposes like evaluating principals or teachers. Change leaders must ensure that any secondary data, like student achievement data, used to support an OIP, honours the original participants consent. As this OIP includes using student data for the evaluation and improvement of the educational system, it does honour the consent given. Hence, it can ethically be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the community of practice in improving student learning.

Consent is also problematic when dealing with employees within an organization. Mercer (2007), suggested that such insider data collection is directly affected by the power hierarchies within the organization. The political issues, found within Bolman and Deal's (2013) political frame, may affect the consent for the data collection. Participants in the CoP may feel coerced, using undue influence, into participating which undermines voluntary consent (Government of Canada, 2016). Therefore, change agents need to ascertain the validity of using any data if there underlying consent concerns. This is one of the liabilities inherent in this OIP. As the principals would be expected to participate, it is important to neutralize as much as possible the negative effects of being part of such a community by identifying any conflict of interest.

**Conflict of Interest.** As stated, the OIP involves both management and employees. In this situation, consent becomes problematic and causes a conflict of interest. As a board level employee, there is a conflict of interest as the principals that I will be working with are all subject to evaluation by either myself or the superintendent (Government of Canada, 2016). This

power imbalance could cause concern for the welfare of the principals as it would be impossible to keep confidentiality of the discussions during the CoP from the AO. This issue would have to be addressed honestly and openly within the CoP; but, since part of the OIP is to build relationships between administrators and the board district office, it would provide an opportunity for building trust (Government of Canada, 2016).

In addition, the OIP will take steps to ensure the confidentiality of survey questions and one-on-one interviews by using coding and anonymization to remove any descriptors that would identify principals and thus protect their responses from the AO (Government of Canada, 2016; Thomson et al., 2005). Finally, nothing that is revealed in the CoP should be used to negatively affect a member's position or role. This is an important distinction as the CoP operates outside of the original hierarchy so any perceived insubordination or disagreements should not be carried over into the organization's hierarchical evaluation system. The CoP is a place for open dialogue and professional development. However, members should be instructed that they will continue to be evaluated in their role outside of the CoP through the proper organization evaluation process.

### **Fairness and Equity**

As the CoP outlines its mission and goals, the members will need to develop inclusion and exclusion parameters for participants and secondary data (Stockley & Balkwill, 2013). As much of the data used in this OIP is secondary data, it is also the responsibility of the change agent to ensure that secondary analysis of data is appropriate (Tripathy, 2013). It is unethical to manipulate any data to falsely support a position. Gallagher (2005) supported fairness in data collection and believed that justice was one of the three principals of moral standards in research. Likewise, Thorne (1998) refers to this as fidelity in research. During the CoP, the secondary data collected would be evaluated openly and honestly with the CoP members to ensure justice and

fidelity in the OIP. In addition, the change agents should also be aware of the privacy laws in their local province and the ethical guidelines for collecting data.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Another concern in my OIP involves maintaining confidentiality and privacy when information is published or shared with stakeholders. In Canada, privacy and private information is protected both federally, through the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and provincially, through the Personal Information Protection Act (Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada, 2003). In British Columbia and Alberta, private schools are governed under Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) regulations (Government of British Columbia, 2003; Service Alberta, 2017). Under PIPA, an employer is permitted to collect personal data if it is reasonable for establishing, managing or terminating an employee (Government of British Columbia, 2003; Service Alberta, 2017). The act, however, stipulates that all information is for the organizations sole use and any information collected should not reveal the identity of the individual (Government of British Columbia, 2003; Service Alberta, 2017). As a result, the confidentiality of the participants, data collection and storage in British Columbia is protected by both the Panel on Research Ethics and PIPA (Government of British Columbia, 2003; Government of Canada, 2016; Service Alberta, 2017).

All initiatives must preserve the privacy of the individual. Gallagher (2005), agreed that this is a primary safeguard and that information should only be made public when it has been anonymized. While most published data are stripped of identifiers, authors must be careful that they do not unwittingly violate confidentiality in their interpretation of any original data (Thorne, 1998). One measure used by British Columbia and Alberta is to ensure privacy is through prohibiting the release of data for small sample sizes. Provincial assessments, for example,

cannot be published if the sample size in the class is less than five students (Edudata Canada, 2015).

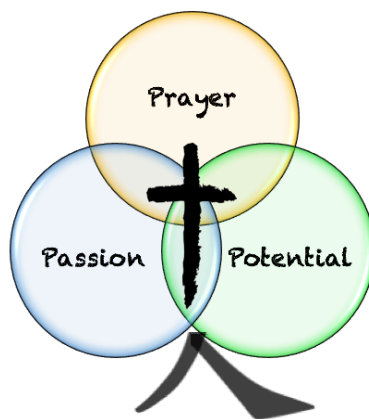
The CoP participants' privacy will be protected in publication through securing the data and anonymizing by replacement of direct identifiers of the principals, schools, years of experience and dates (Thompson, Bzdel, Golden-Biddle, Reay & Estabrooks, 2005; Tripathy, 2013). Unfortunately, the unique setup of the district causes a problem with identification in the OIP. Because the district has schools across the province, anonymizing the data in a way that could prevent identification or harm to the system becomes problematic. For publication of this OIP, high schools and elementary schools, even if located within the same campus, are counted as two separate schools, even though there may be only one principal to administer both divisions. In addition, generalizing the participants as administrators in the data, as opposed to principals and vice-principals, also helps in preventing the system from being identified during publishing or sharing of data.

### **Change Process Communications Plan**

The most important part of any OIP is the communication plan. This is the how the change agent will communicate the necessity of change to the various stakeholders. A successful communication plan identifies the target audience, includes effective key messages, and identifies the methods to engage the target audience. The communication plan also communicates the ongoing progress of the change to encourage, inform, and report the outcomes to the stakeholders. For this OIP, the stakeholders included in the communication plans are the superintendent and AO, principals, teachers, local school operating committees, provincial operating board, parents, and clergy.

### Key Messages

According to Hovland (2005), part of creating a persuasive communication plan involves the creation of three key messages that will summarize the goals of the OIP. Hovland (2005) also proposes that effective communication involves a message that tells a story using complementary imagery. Within a religious organization, any OIP and communication plan needs to include a spiritual component so the communication plan will not solely focus on the professional growth and collaboration initiatives. The OIP will be framed under the three simple key messages of prayer, passion, and potential. As each of these key messages will serve to improve communication across all levels of the organization, they will work to satisfy the needs of my PoP. Furthermore, these key messages will tell the story of how a CoP can support the growth of these themes in our system. In addition to the words, an accompanying image (see Figure 3) will visually represent the three key messages.



*Figure 3.* Key theme imagery

This proposed image combines the three key messages in a stylized Tree of Knowledge from the Bible. The circles overlapping in the middle show the necessity for collaboration in all areas while also highlighting the cross as the fundamental reason for why Christian education



exists within our system. In the communication with the stakeholders, the parochial trademarked logo will be included under the tree. The goal of the image is to show the stakeholders that only through a collaborative initiative can the three themes be effectively realized. By selling this vision and the key messages to the stakeholders, they will see the need to provide the necessary financial, time, and technical resources that will support the OIP. The key messages will be communicated through a series of presentations in committee meetings, town hall meetings, emails, articles, and brochures.

**Key Message 1- Prayer.** Prayer is one of the foundations of a relationship with God and our schools have a unique opportunity to cultivate a relationship with Him. A Bible curriculum is only one component of that spiritual journey as our faith should be integrated into every aspect of education. Our schools need to also become places of prayer. Through a CoP, the principals and AO will collaborate to develop the vision for a province-wide spiritual plan highlighting our unique faith-based identity to both our constituents and the government.

**Key Message 2- Passion.** The modernized provincial curriculum emphasizes the exploration of passion. Christians need to encourage a passion both for God and for learning about the world He created. Our educators foster this passion development in those who enter our schools. The proposed CoP will encourage and support the principals and AO to work collaboratively to instill passion for learning in our teachers and students. Imagine the ripple effect within the province if we work collaboratively to purposefully nurturing passion for God's service.

**Key Message 3- Potential.** Our Christian education system has tremendous potential for the future. Cultivating potential for leadership among principals, teachers, and students contributes to the long-term viability of our parochial system. The CoP will focus on building

principal capacity in instructional leadership. There currently exists a need to develop leadership potential by investing in such an aspiring leader program that can be achieved through a CoP.

**Stakeholder Communication Action Plans**

Stakeholder communication will take place through a variety of mediums. Initially, the communication will be focused on the AO, principals, provincial operating committee, local school operating committee and clergy (see Table 1). Once the CoP has been approved and established, teachers and parents will be added to the communication plan to share the vision and various goals of the CoP (see Table 2).

Table 1

*Initial Stakeholder Communication Action Plans for Community of Practice Approval*

<b>Key Message: Prayer</b>				
Stakeholder	Person Responsible (Who)	Action Steps to Persuade (What)	Frequency (When)	Estimated Resources (How)
Superintendent /AO	Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the need for a CoP to collaborate on a Spiritual Growth Plan to accompany the new Bible curriculum</li> <li>• Use the CoP to provide principal training on using the new Bible Program</li> </ul>	Initial Proposal	Presentation, new Bible program resources,
Principals	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the CoP for collaboration on developing a Spiritual Growth Plan for the local school</li> <li>• Share integration of faith and learning ideas with other</li> </ul>	Initial Proposal	Webinar, Zoom.us or other video conferencing software for geographically distant schools, face-to-face

		principals through the CoP		presentation to local principals
Provincial K-12 Operating Committee	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight the vision for collaboration to develop a province wide Spiritual Growth Plan</li> </ul>	After initial proposal idea is accepted by the AO and principals	Presentation at the Provincial K-12 Operating Committee Meeting
Local Operating Committee	AO & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight the resources available within a CoP to build a Spiritual Growth Plan for the school</li> </ul>	Propose after approval from Provincial Operating Committee	Town hall meeting with AO and Principal
Clergy	Superintendent & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight the use the CoP to facilitate coordination for livestreaming for small school Weeks of Prayer</li> </ul>	Propose after approval from all stakeholders listed above	Zoom.us or other videoconferencing software
<b>Key Message: Passion</b>				
Stakeholder	Person Responsible (Who)	Action Steps to Persuade (What)	Frequency (When)	Estimated Resources (How)
Superintendent /AO	Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present that passion is cultivated by sharing power with others in a CoP</li> <li>Share that the CoP provides time for passions to flourish</li> </ul>	Initial Proposal	Presentation, Pamphlet about communities of practice
Principals	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate that the CoP can promote passion in education through distributed leadership</li> <li>The CoP provides opportunities for principals to be inspired by other principals</li> </ul>	Initial Proposal	Webinar, Zoom.us or other video conferencing software for geographically distant schools, face-to-face presentation to local principals, Pamphlet about communities of practice

Provincial K-12 Operating Committee	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illustrate that by building passion in a CoP, standards will increase</li> </ul>	After initial proposal idea is accepted by the AO and principals	Presentation at the Provincial K-12 Operating Committee Meeting
Local Operating Committee	AO & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show that the CoP can provide a voice to the local committee</li> </ul>	Propose after approval from Provincial Operating Committee	Town hall meeting with AO and Principal
Clergy	Superintendent & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight that the CoP will build passion and participation in service opportunities within the church</li> </ul>	Propose after approval from all stakeholders listed above	Presentation using Zoom.us or other videoconferencing software
<b>Key Message: Potential</b>				
Stakeholder	Person Responsible (Who)	Action Steps (What)	Frequency (When)	Estimated Resources (How)
Superintendent /AO	Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the CoP as a vehicle to grow instructional leadership and build capacity in principals</li> </ul>	Initial Proposal	Presentation, Pamphlet about communities of practice
Principals	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share that the CoP provides an opportunity to collaborate to improve practice</li> <li>• Promote that the CoP can change the organizational structure for acquiring new skills</li> <li>• Demonstrate how CoP can facilitate the development of</li> </ul>	Initial Proposal	Webinar, Zoom.us or other video conferencing software for geographically distant schools, face-to-face presentation to local principals, Pamphlet about communities of practice

		a community of learners		
Provincial K-12 Operating Committee	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain that the CoP helps develop competency and professionalism</li> </ul>	After initial proposal idea is accepted by the AO and principals	Presentation at the Provincial K-12 Operating Committee Meeting
Local Operating Committee	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underscore the shared resources that are available for professional development through the CoP</li> </ul>	Propose after approval from Provincial Operating Committee	Town hall meeting with AO and Principal
Clergy	Superintendent & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present that belonging to the CoP provides networking that will build the school for church growth</li> </ul>	Propose after approval from all stakeholders listed above	Presentation using Zoom.us or other videoconferencing software

Table 2

*Ongoing Stakeholder Communication Action Plans*

<b>Key Message: Prayer</b>				
Stakeholder	Person Responsible (Who)	Communication Steps (What)	Frequency (When)	Estimated Resources (How)
Superintendent /AO	Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing Spiritual Growth Plan developed in the CoP</li> </ul>	When completed (within the first year)	Presentation, Emails, Pamphlet
Principals	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating and report in the CoP on the effectiveness of the Spiritual Growth Plan</li> </ul>	Bi-monthly	Zoom.us Web conferencing, online tools for sharing materials
Provincial K-12 Operating Committee	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the shared vision and goals of the Spiritual Growth Plans</li> </ul>	Annually	Presentation, Newsletters, Promotional materials

Local Operating Committee	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the local spiritual initiatives</li> <li>Approve and fund other initiatives developed in the CoP</li> </ul>	Monthly	Presentations, Emails, Principal's report
Clergy	Superintendent & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate with clergy to the church at large the spiritual initiatives</li> </ul>	Monthly	Church bulletin announcements, Emails, Pamphlets
Teachers	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate and discuss initiatives</li> </ul>	Monthly	Staff meeting, Emails
Parents	Principal & Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate spiritual goals and opportunities</li> </ul>	Monthly	Newsletter, Website, Emails
<b>Key Message: Passion</b>				
Stakeholder	Person Responsible (Who)	Action Steps (What)	Frequency (When)	Estimated Resources (How)
Superintendent /AO	Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share new vision and mission ideas proposed in the CoP</li> </ul>	After each CoP	Meeting, Email, Telephone
Principals	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate approved vision directions to the principals</li> <li>Phone or video calls to individually touch base with the principals</li> </ul>	As needed Monthly	Newsletter, Superintendent memo, telephone or video calls
Provincial K-12 Operating Committee	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicating any new visions for approval at the annual meetings</li> </ul>	Annual	Presentation, Newsletters, Promotional materials
Local Operating Committee	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on how the vision is being implemented each month</li> </ul>	Monthly	Presentations, Emails, Principal's report
Clergy	Superintendent & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe passion initiatives and share completed school passion projects with the church</li> </ul>	Monthly	Church bulletin announcements, Emails, Pamphlets
Teachers	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share new vision and mission goals</li> <li>Connect the local passion of the teachers with CoP goals</li> </ul>	Monthly	Staff meeting, Emails, In-servicing

Parents	Principal & Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate progress towards vision and mission goals</li> </ul>	Monthly	Classroom or School Newsletter, Website, Emails
<b>Key Message: Potential</b>				
Stakeholder	Person Responsible (Who)	Action Steps (What)	Frequency (When)	Estimated Resources (How)
Superintendent /AO	Change Agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the topics covered in the CoP</li> </ul>	After each CoP	Meeting, Email, Telephone
Principals	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow up on needed resources for capacity building</li> <li>Share any policy changes</li> </ul>	As needed	Superintendent memo, emails, telephone, cloud storage for resources
Provincial K-12 Operating Committee	Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share CoP professional development initiatives and training</li> </ul>	Annually	Presentation, Newsletters, Promotional materials
Local Operating Committee	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share CoP professional development initiatives and training that will be shared with the teachers</li> </ul>	Monthly	Presentations, Emails, Principal's report
Clergy	Superintendent & Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the professional learning and capacity build in both the school and the leadership to instill support and confidence in the system</li> </ul>	Monthly	Church bulletin announcements, Emails, Pamphlets
Teachers	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain new instructional learning techniques and best practices learned in the CoP</li> </ul>	Monthly	Staff meeting, Emails, In-servicing
Parents	Principal & Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate and new instructional practices being used at the school and new curricular expectations</li> </ul>	Monthly	Classroom or School Newsletter, Website, Emails

### **Communication within the Community of Practice**

Within the onsite CoP, communication will be face-to-face. For the online CoP, video conferencing software such as Blackboard Collaborate, Skype, and Zoom would be used. Emails and forums would also be used to quickly exchange Ministry of Education and district information between the AO and the principals. A private Bootcamp, Google + community, or Moodle environment would be set up for principals and the AO to share information that would help facilitate deeper learning on the subjects discussed in the CoP. Additionally, the superintendent or AO would have monthly contact via telephone or skype with each principal individually. This conversation would also help to encourage and support individual participation and sharing within the CoP. The principals would receive training on using the technology needed and helpdesk support would be available to troubleshoot any additional issues. These communication tools would be provided at no additional expense to the principals.

### **Next Steps and Future Considerations**

Once the CoP is established and functioning effectively within the district, the positive perceptions from the stakeholders could be used to promote additional administrator CoPs or teaching professional learning communities (PLCs). Smaller CoPs could be established for prospective elementary and high school principals while other professional learning communities might be implemented by the principals within the schools.

The district could invest in an aspiring leaders CoP that would operate as a leadership development program for teachers who express interest in administration. The vision and goals would focus on the traits needed to grow into effective leaders. Participants of the CoP could also support each other through master's degree programs in administration and leadership. In addition, the aspiring leaders CoP could build relationships with each other that would follow



them regardless of where they become a principal. This initiative would also continue to develop and support goal and key message of building potential.

Building on the momentum of the CoP, a local principal may also feel encouraged to develop PLCs within his or her school. Currently there are no PLCs operating within district schools. A logical next step involves supporting the principals in the development of these local PLCs. The local PLCs would allow the principal to have further positive impact on student learning by improving and advocating collaboration at the teacher level. As the teachers would all be located within the same school, technology would not be needed to facilitate collaboration. However, the principal could use the technology skills developed in the CoP to set up online areas for his or her teachers to share resources. Likewise, the resources shared in the CoP, like the protocols, would provide the principals with valuable tools to frame how to address and problem-solve local issues with their teachers.

PLCs could also be developed across the province by linking teachers with similar environments together. Primary teachers could form an online primary PLC with other primary teachers across the province or across the country that would focus on the best practices for primary education. Intermediate and secondary teachers could also participate in their own PLC groups. Christian teachers could collaborate and teachers could be encouraged to join subject-specific organizations to collaborate with others with similar academic passions. Furthermore, teachers would also be encouraged to join secular learning communities outside of the parochial system. These PLCs would function to build competence and collaboration among teachers that often work alone.

The implementation of a new teacher PLC within the district would also provide needed support to new teachers in their roles. As new teachers are hired in schools across the province,

this community would primarily be an online community. After the completion of this OIP, the AO would have a better understanding on how to build collaboration and cooperation in an online environment. The lessons learned from the current OIP would be invaluable as the AO embarks on a PLC to develop relationships and teaching skills with new teachers. The new teachers would be exposed to an online peer mentorship environment that would be able to develop its own vision and goals to meet their unique needs.

Another future consideration for the CoP would be to propose its implementation at the national level with the national office. Data gathered on the usefulness and benefits of the CoP would be compiled and published in a proposal to the education director for the national chapter. The national proposal would follow the same format as this OIP. However, the proposal would recommend the implementation of separate national elementary and high school CoP. For the national CoP to be effective, it would need to be limited in size to foster collaboration and cooperation. This national CoP would train other leaders to act as change agents within their own provinces. In addition, the current CoP members could mentor other principals across the country which would continue their own professional growth. With support, other administrations in other provinces would be able to develop similar provincial CoPs like the one described in this OIP.

Unlike the provincial CoPs, the national CoP would have a more limited scope in its implementation. One suggestion, to the national chapter, would involve focusing on leadership development as opposed to policy development. Since the provinces are quite diverse in their curricular and governmental expectations, a focus on leadership development through collaboration and mentorship would provide the basis for a shared vision for the national CoP. To ensure success, the national CoP would need to be supported financially by both the

presidents of the national and provincial chapters. In addition, the national CoP would require more reliance on technology since the schools under the national chapter umbrella are found in seven of the ten provinces. Fortunately, many of these challenges would be identified and addressed in the current OIP.

Given the anticipated success of the OIP, I view the CoP as an opportunity to change the perceptions of educational systems operating in isolated schools and classrooms. By providing a successful example of how collaboration and cooperation strengthens the system, teachers and principals can be encouraged to develop their own formal and informal collaboration networks. In addition, I anticipate a stronger educational system in the district as the AO focuses on supporting and building capacity in its principals. The current issues of compliance and distrust that have negatively affected the schools and communities would be resolved and replaced with a system of trust and continuous growth. Furthermore, the district would bolster the government's perception of our school system. This initiative, if successful, would promote the district as a cutting-edge school system with a reputation for supporting student learning and the mission of the church. In a society where parochial school systems are attacked, it is imperative that those who serve are united together. Ecclesiastes 4:12 reminds all Christians that "A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken". The community of practice developed through the implementation of this OIP will allow the church, principals and the AO to stand united in the efforts for educating students in the faith.

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## Appendix

### Change Implementation Plan

