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## The Fabric of Leadership: A Qualitative Study of Educational Administrators

by  
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This report is a summary of a Master's thesis by  
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Read this report for a summary of information  
regarding:

- A review of the literature and the conceptual framework for successful styles of leadership in the changing dynamics of a global environment.
- Discussion of effective transformational leadership.
- Personal interviews with six school principals and one business participant in Saskatchewan.
- Exploration of "What are the life experiences, values, and attributes of educational administrators that reveal aspects of transformational leadership?"
- Key findings, themes and implications for educator, administrative and school board action.

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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a critical component of administration in our world today. Organizations will require strong leaders to be successful in the constantly changing dynamics of a global environment which responds to environmental, social, political, legal, and technological factors. Success is the direct result of the shared values or visions of individuals who lead others on a collective quest for excellence.

Canadian educational institutions at all levels are experiencing the struggles associated with economic restrictions. In Saskatchewan, we are encountering the challenges associated with restructuring processes in the education sector, following the structural changes in the health sector. In addition, the provincial government initiative, School<sup>PLUS</sup>, is in the process of being created. These are very dynamic times, indeed.

This study (Moore, 2004) began with an extensive review of transformational leadership literature in both the business and education sectors. An overview of leadership literature within the Saskatchewan context and an overview of the conceptual framework are included in section I.

Believing there were outstanding leaders in education in Saskatchewan, this study questioned, “What have these educational leaders experienced in their lives and what characteristics of leadership would be exposed while hearing the stories of their lives?” Since this study was a narrative inquiry, personal interviews were conducted with six principals (rural/urban, elementary/secondary/ male/female, large/small schools). The results of the interviews are presented in section II: Patterns in the Leadership Fabric, including descriptions of the leaders, their life experiences, values and personal attributes.

Joseph Rost (1991) stated, “Leadership should not be studied from the perspective of a single discipline such as business leadership, educational leadership, or political leadership ... leadership studies require a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to fully understand and practice leadership” (pp. 1-2). In order to extend beyond the educational milieu to the business sector, a participant was selected from business. This business participant allowed the study to examine educational leadership from a different perspective.

In section III, the conclusions to this study and implications for educators, administrators and school divisions are presented. Suggestions for future research and concluding statements are also in this section.

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(Rost, 1991)

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## I. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Leadership: The Saskatchewan Context

Leaders, like educators, provide direction toward the successful attainment of a goal or project; whereas, managers carry out daily tasks, with little concern for goal attainment. Not only do leaders coach the individuals in their organization to do their personal best, but they listen to their colleagues' views and ideas in order to direct their organization on a realistic path to excellence. Leaders also use the collective wisdom of their colleagues, contemporaries and adversaries while directing their organization into the uncertain future. Leaders' personal experiences and perspectives are also invaluable when leading an organization.

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An organization whose leadership is not based upon the reality in which it functions and whose vision is not understood by all the individuals in the organization is bound for failure. Recently, a number of large corporations have had to re-think their vision and their approach to leadership within their organization. In fact, many highly successful organizations have disappeared in the past decade due to lack of responsible leadership.

Strong leadership is deeply grounded in values. The values of the leader must reflect the values of the organization; values that are complementary, rather than contradictory, are strong and provide the bases for cohesive leadership. Leaders who "walk the walk" and "listen to their hearts" will be successful in terms of values-based decision making. We are currently aware in the competitive, reality-based world of business that integrity is a value that has been overlooked while maneuvering for the cost-effective, profitable "bottom line." General H. Norman Schwarzkopf considered leadership to be a combination of strategy and character and felt if one must go, be without strategy.

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Ideal leadership is multidimensional – providing overlap in responsibility and areas of expertise – and collegial wherein leaders and followers work together sharing perspectives and ideas for the future of their organization. Future leadership will become more participatory because the expertise of all individuals in organizations will be required when making decisions that are global in nature.

Leadership in education varies little from leadership in business since both sectors are intrinsically focused on excellence ... albeit toward significantly different goals. Publicly-funded education is

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not-for-profit and business endeavors are keenly interested in profit for the owners and the shareholders. Effective educational leadership is definitely required in constantly evolving environments which are affected by current trends including both societal and political expectations.

In May, 1999, the Minister of Education appointed a 12-person *Task Force on the Role of the School* with representation from education, first nations, health, justice, labor, and social services. This task force "...conducted an extensive consultation and information gathering process..." (Tymchak, 2001, p. 1), that included a symposium of educational stakeholders from provincial educational organizations and first nations organizations. As members of the task force said, "We brought many beliefs and values to our work, but this work has been for us fundamentally a journey of consultation and discovery. We did not begin with a predetermined set of solutions in mind. We began by listening" (p. 2).

The Government of Saskatchewan *Task Force on the Role of the School* resulted in the School<sup>PLUS</sup> model. This Saskatchewan model for learning "...more actively [involved] family and community members, to help provide all children and young people with the support they need for healthy development and learning success" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2003, p. 1). School<sup>PLUS</sup> is

*...a new conceptualization of schools as centres of learning, support and community for the children and families they serve [which] builds upon the successful practices of schools and community partners and strengthens their capacity for meeting the needs of all children and young people through the creation of a new social institution directly supported by other human services ...health, nutrition, recreation, culture, social and justice for children and their families, as well as advanced learning opportunities for adults. (p. 1)*

Overall, the goals of School<sup>PLUS</sup> include providing Saskatchewan children and young people with access to the supports they need for school and life success, a shared responsibility for the wellbeing and education, and a harmonious and shared future with Aboriginal peoples (p. 4).

In a recent Saskatchewan Learning publication, five key characteristics of the "new school within School<sup>PLUS</sup>" were identified (Saskatchewan Learning, 2003, p. 4). Not surprisingly, one of these critical characteristics was leadership, supported with participatory and collaborative components.

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(Tymchak, 2001, p. 2)

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Prior to School<sup>PLUS</sup>, there were reviews and discussion papers prepared regarding restructuring of provincial school divisions. The *School Finance and Governance Review* (Saskatchewan Education, 1991), the *Saskatchewan School Trustees Association Task Force on Educational Governance – Final Report* (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1993) both recommended restructuring at the school division level to provide a wider range of programs and services, expanding the role of parents in providing advice and participation in decision-making at the school level (Saskatchewan Education, 1996, p. 3).

In addition, *Structuring Public Education for the New Century: Ensuring Quality Education for Saskatchewan Students* (Saskatchewan Education, 1996), suggested that any changes in structure must be made with the best interest of students in mind and must be based on a clear understanding of what the people of Saskatchewan want and need for education now and in the future (p. 5). The goal of restructuring Saskatchewan education was to both maintain and enhance the quality of education for all young people wherever they lived in the province.

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Currently, the provincial government is in the process of creating School<sup>PLUS</sup> using the collaborative, Saskatchewan model for change. At the provincial level, there are eight departments of government working together to create School<sup>PLUS</sup>, including Corrections and Public Safety; Culture, Youth and Recreation; Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Health; Justice; Saskatchewan Learning, Northern Affairs; and Social Services (Saskatchewan Learning 2003, p. 1).

This collaborative, cooperative approach to conducting business is not new in Saskatchewan. For decades, Saskatchewan has been the hotbed for cooperative ventures – the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, United Grain Growers, retail cooperatives, daycares, credit unions, and the birthplace of universal medicare. As well, the systems, structures and values in the province continue to support this cooperative spirit.

*Transformational leaders should be selected to continue to lead Saskatchewan schools into the future – to support and maintain the collaborative Saskatchewan spirit!*

Since the process for developing large structures within the province (including the education system) has been collaborative, collaborative approaches to leadership should be existent throughout the education system. Saskatchewan schools should be searching for and developing educational administrators to lead their schools in this open, facilitative, cooperative, participatory style of leadership. Transformational leaders should be selected to continue to lead Saskatchewan schools into the future – to support and maintain the collaborative Saskatchewan spirit!



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## Transformational Leadership

Change is prevalent throughout the provincial education system in Saskatchewan – revisions to curricula, amalgamation of school divisions, implementation of School<sup>PLUS</sup>, modifications to physical facilities, improvements to funding formulae, updating information technology, as well as the environmental, social, legal, political factors that continually affect schools. It was, therefore, expedient to explore leadership that is effective during times of structural change; namely, transformational leadership.

Leadership which has been utilized in the past will no longer function successfully in these unstable, ever-changing surroundings. The transactional approach to leadership which is based upon economic transactions between leaders and followers – payment for work completed and working for pay – appeals to the followers’ self-interest (Sashkin & Rosenbach, 1998) and only functions in a stable environment. Conversely, the transformational approach to leadership appeals beyond the followers’ self-interest and incorporates the idea that leadership involves non-economic sources of authority or influences (Sashkin & Rosenbach, 1998) – there is more to work than being paid!

In 1978, John MacGregor Burns published *Leadership*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning publication, in which he introduced the concept of transformational leadership. Burns stated that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality where the leader, the followers, and the social system in which they function are transformed (Sashkin & Rosenbach, 1998; Tichy, 1997).

In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner (1987) asked managers to write detailed memoirs of their own, greatest, most positive leadership experience. They analyzed these stories to identify common threads and further investigation revealed some specific attributes of transformational leaders – these leaders challenged the process, inspired a shared vision, enabled others to act, modeled the way, and encouraged the heart of their followers.

The educational leadership literature supported this participatory leadership approach – transformational leadership. Crow and Glascock (1995) claimed that transformational leaders in restructured schools served in non-hierarchical roles, inviting the participation of others. Tierney (1989) contended transformational leadership was moral action that promoted democracy connected to the culture of the organization and a reciprocal relationship amongst

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(Crow & Glascock, 1990)

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individuals, operating within a centrarchy rather than a hierarchy (p. 166). Regan (1990) upheld that school leadership required participation by both teachers and administrators – teacher empowerment, shared decision making and school restructuring – resulting in a flattened configuration rather than the hierarchical structure of most educational systems (p. 576). Leithwood (1994) asserted that transformational approaches to school leadership are appropriate to the challenges facing schools now since school restructuring will dominate the change agenda for school leaders for some time.

Canadian educational researcher, Michael Fullan (1998) claimed educational leaders at times will be looking for the unknown, charting unknown waters ... similar to the early explorers.

*The societal context for educational reform has radically changed. To be successful, future leaders of the school, district, or other levels will require very different characteristics than those expected of leaders in the last decade ... the education leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, paradoxically, will find greater peace of mind by looking for the answers close at hand and reaching out, knowing that there is no clear solution. (p. 10)*

In addition, James Krantz (1998) discussed the global situation in which there has been “rapid, profound turbulence in the social, economic and technological environments” (pp. 44-45). He asserted that all organizations will deal with vastly different conditions in which former leadership approaches no longer apply and these organizations will require the capacity to change, learn, and adapt quickly and decisively.

In a completely new view of leadership, Noel Tichy (2002) introduced “the virtuous teaching cycle” in his publication, *The Cycle of Leadership*. He suggested that successful organizations are teaching organizations in which leaders teach leaders, leaders teach followers, and followers teach leaders – reciprocal teaching and learning are built into the fabric of the organization. What a great opportunity for educational organizations in 2005!

Tichy (2002) claimed transformation to be one of the hardest things for leaders to accomplish – recognizing changes in the environment and responding appropriately – because it requires revamping ideas and redeveloping resources by throwing out ideas and businesses when they stop producing value and replacing them with new ones. He also introduced the concept of “hypertransformation,”

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Tichy (2002)

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which means the transformation from machine-age to information-age mentality where biotech and digital technologies have altered the landscape of business and everyday life (p. 25). Tichy (2002) also claimed:

*The knowledge revolution is reordering the ways that people relate to one another and to work. The instant availability of information has broken down the walls separating individuals, institutions, and economies... Further, in an always on, 24/7 world, everything is constantly in motion. Not only are there new technologies ... every day, but our vantage point changes each moment we get deeper and deeper into new territory. (p.26)*

## **The Conceptual Framework: Tichy and Devanna**

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the work of Noel Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna (1990). Tichy and Devanna's (1990) work was selected as the conceptual framework for this study because of their vast experience with effective leadership and change. They were renowned for their leadership research in organizations experiencing change of enormous proportions in order to facilitate corporate survival – organizational renewal. They studied major corporations in the business sector – General Electric, IBM, Chrysler Corporation, General Motors, Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Burger King, Whirlpool, Burroughs, Honeywell – and examined the individuals responsible for the successful turn-around of these major corporations, including GE's Jack Welch. Their studies resulted in identifying characteristics of transformational leaders who have been in great demand over the past two decades because they were able to comprehend big changes in the social and economic landscape and effect and inspire change (Tichy, 1997).

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Tichy and Devanna (1990) claimed that the transformational leaders they observed shared a number of common characteristics that differentiated them from transactional leaders, who are basically managers during periods of stability. The characteristics of transformational leaders were:

1. *They identify themselves as change agents.*
2. *They are courageous individuals.*
3. *They believe in people.*
4. *They are value-driven.*
5. *They are life long learners.*
6. *They have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty.*
7. *They are visionaries. (1990, pp. 271-280)*



The use of this conceptual framework created a foundation upon which to develop this study. Specifically, the interview questions for the participants which investigated the life experiences, the values, and the personal attributes of the selected educational administrators were developed in concert with these characteristics.

The figure below (Figure1) indicates the correlation between the questions posed during the interviews with the administrators and the leadership characteristics being investigated.

**Figure 1. Interview Questions Correlation to Leadership Characteristics**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Leadership Characteristic</b>
1. a) b) c)	Life growing up School experiences Most memorable people	N/A lifelong learner values
2. a) b)	Work history Motivation to become an educator	N/A courageous/lifelong learner
3. a) b)	Value in colleagues Your administration journey	belief in people values
4. a) b)	Overcoming challenges Most satisfying experience	risk taking/uncertainty values
5. a) b)	What sustains you as a leader Percent of time teaching	dreams/visionary lifelong learner
6.	Who you admire	values
7. a) b) c)	Identification of need Scenario #1: Serious illness of colleague Scenario #2: New, experimental program	change agent/courageous belief in people/values/ complexity/uncertainty change agent/courageous/ belief in people/values/ lifelong learner/ ideas person/ visionary
8.	How the school structure affects how you lead	change agent/risk taker
9. a) b)	Where education will be in five years Roles of parents, community, school in the future	change agent/ideas person/ visionary change agent/belief in people/ values/ ideas person/visionary

The interview questions (see Appendix A) were based upon the characteristics of transformational leadership and the process of systematically relating interview responses to core themes of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

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## II. PATTERNS IN THE LEADERSHIP FABRIC

The foundation for this section is based upon three investigative categories that developed from the visual representation of the data collected from the interviews with the participants. These three investigative categories are the patterns of the leadership fabric.

The tapestry of life experiences investigates the family environment and background, personal interests, education and work history of the participants.

The patchwork quilt of values examines the relationships the participants have with people they lead, their personal value systems, and their willingness to challenge their organization.

The flag of personal attributes explores the research participants' approaches to challenge, change, learning, and the future.

Susan Chase (1995) claimed, when we hear more particular stories, our analyses are stronger. Corresponding to her claim, the actual voices of the research participants are written in italics in this section.

As well, in order to clarify the responses from the leaders in this study, the first part of this section will describe the research participants and their backgrounds.

### The Research Participants: Saskatchewan Leaders

The participants in this study included six principals, in-school administrators, and one business participant with leadership experience in banking. Five of the leaders were women and two were men. Two of the educational administrators were principals in secondary school, three were principals in an elementary school, and one was the principal in an elementary school with community school designation. The business leader was a senior vice-president and provincial general manager. Three of the leaders were in large schools with a student population over 300, while three were principals in small schools with a student population less than 300. The business leader was the provincial general manager with a large population of bank employees, in excess of 300. Five of the administrators worked in urban settings, while two worked in rural settings.

Selection of the seven administrators was based upon their reputations as effective leaders. Figure 2 below indicates the comparative backgrounds of the research participants in this study. These pseudonyms were borrowed from my maternal grandfather, Neil Hamilton, his siblings, and my mother. They are listed in Figure 2 according to birth order.

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**Figure 2. Research Participants –  
Education and Business**

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>School Level</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Administrative Experience</i>
Neil	Male	Elementary	Urban	Large	20 years
Rose	Female	Secondary	Urban	Large	6 years
Keith	Male	Secondary	Rural	Large	4 years
Eleanor	Female	Elementary	Urban	Small	10 years
Lillian	Female	Elementary/ Community	Urban	Small	11 years
Donna	Female	Elementary	Rural	Small	14 years
Joyce	Female	Business	Urban	Large	13 years

## **The Tapestry of Life Experiences**

The personal life experiences of the participants in this study revealed some common threads. These rich, colorful and vibrant life stories wove a beautiful tapestry of administrators’ lives. Although there was beauty and strength in their combination, these three threads could also be observed individually.

The first thread common to all of the participants in this study was the unifying force of the family unit. In every situation, family provided a solid base upon which each of the administrators built their lives, both personally and professionally.

The incredible sense of support of and belonging to a family unit became evident while the participants were revealing their life stories. Many times during each of the interviews family members were referred to with reverence and admiration. Donna summarized her family’s support in the following excerpt:

*I think about all the opportunities that my parents provided for me. I was involved with dancing, and piano lessons, and ballet, and baton twirling and music. And I was in another organization ... and that also involved my parents being involved with me.*

*The first thread common to all of the participants in this study was the unifying force of the family unit.*

One family member was particularly significant to both Eleanor and Lillian. They indicated a specific attachment to their fathers. Both women referred to the rural setting in their recollections of their experiences with their fathers. Eleanor said

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*I spent a lot of time ... when we were on the farm I wanted time with my dad... So, I went with him on the fields; I hauled grain with him; I went with him to the barbershop. I was the only female allowed in the barbershop.*

Lillian also reflected:

*Being the oldest on a farm, I probably am closer to my dad. He probably thought I should have been a boy to take over the farm. So I did a fair amount of farm work with him. I could drive a grain truck and haul hay and bale.*

Perhaps it was the opportunity to spend quality time with their fathers that was significant to these women. Not only spending time with their fathers was significant, but also being in a place where their fathers were important, almost indispensable – the self-employed workplace.

The second thread – the golden fibre – woven through this leadership tapestry was the value of learning. This thread accented the successes of the administrators and provided the valuable bases upon which they made their choices and decisions.

During the interviews, the family connections to the education system began to surface. Four of the educational administrators had at least one parent involved in the education profession and the business administrator also had a direct connection to education. Joyce's partner was an educator. This information was unknown at the time of the participant selection, becoming a coincidental aspect of the research process.

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*My mother had been a teacher, but not actively teaching when we were growing up. She subbed the odd time, but mostly she worked for the Federal Government. (Donna)*

*My mom had been a teacher and had married my dad who was a farmer in the area ... My mom had to go back to university and get some training and try to get a teaching job as a married woman, which was very difficult to do because you were married and you weren't supposed to be teaching any more. So, I had a working mom from almost day one. (Eleanor)*

*My mother was a teacher, and she stayed home until my brother was three ... So my mother was at home most of the time until I was thirteen. My dad was a farmer ... And my dad was on the school board for almost ever. (Lillian)*

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*My dad was well educated for his time and his circumstances... He taught for a while ... He was given a probational, or provisional certificate, to substitute teach for his sister who was a certified teacher. (Neil)*

Joyce, the business participant, revealed during her interview, *well, it's interesting, because my husband is a teacher ... they were doing the same thing in Quebec when we were there, changing the entire curriculum.*

All of the administrators – with the exception of one – had been academically-focused throughout their schooling. Keith, who was not necessarily planning for a future in the academic world when registering for class in high school, stated:

*... the only optional classes the I could think of taking were not for preparation for university. They were filling the timetable and were rather easy. My parents weren't heavily involved, which is probably part of the problem. I needed more guidance, I think. I just was in with the wrong group of people.*

The other administrators were academically oriented individuals, receiving a great deal of direction, support and encouragement from their families, as Rose clearly said:

*... school was really important in my family and it was critical – that was my job. That was my first job, school, and to do well in school. I mean, we just knew that was an expectation of us and there was never an issue about going to university or anything. It was never a question in terms of that.*

In support of this philosophical perspective, Lillian stated:

*I had parents that were interested in our learning. And maybe had visions that this might be a good thing to take, so then I went to Teachers' College.*

These administrators all had positive school experiences, too, stating: *I loved school, ... school, for me, has come easy, I enjoyed it, so it wasn't real hard.* As well, these administrators were all on *university bound* courses, focusing on academics, with some individuals receiving *awards for academic achievement, scholarships for a year tuition to university, and a fellowship to graduate school.*

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In contrast to the educational administrators was Joyce's recollection of the secondary to post-secondary transition as

*... occasionally I did really well, but most of the time I didn't do that well because I was always doing all these other things. So I got to the point when I was trying to get into university, nobody would let me in because my marks were really only okay. I can remember wanting to go to the University of Guelph... which I was really interested in. And the big problem was they declined me. So I wrote them back and kept bugging them... finally, Guelph let me in... And the funniest thing happened – because I went to university with a number of Ontario scholars from my high school – these kids were getting 80, 90 averages. I was struggling in high school. And the most amazing thing happened in university. I mean, they were dropping out, flunking, and my marks every year in university just went up and up and up and up. And I think I graduated in my final year of university with the best marks I have ever had, any time at school.*

Joyce's recollection of the secondary to post-secondary transition indicated her change in focus which appeared to be evident in all the administrators as they progressed through their educational pursuits. All of the participants made the choice of continuing with their educational pursuits interspersed by practical/field experience.

The third thread in the tapestry of life experiences was the sense of community. The threads of the community framing the tapestry were the levels of involvement and employment each of the participants had beyond the family unit. The extensive involvement by the leaders in both their personal and professional communities revealed a rich dimension of the leadership tapestry.

There appeared to be either a high level of participation in the school and community activities or very little involvement by the administrators. One half of the administrators revealed that they had interests outside school and had been actively involved in school and community activities throughout their lives.

Donna stated that she

*... liked to get involved with a lot of things and a lot of people. And so I have always been really active in whatever I have done. I am one of those people who was always joining committees to help out with different kinds of things. And I still tend to do that – get involved in different areas and interests that I have.*

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Neil's community experiences were extensive and varied. He stated that his involvement in activities outside school greatly influenced his life and continued to do so when calling to mind a variety of personal interests including sports, arts, and agricultural activities. Neil maintained that he *did a lot of extra things* while at school because of a *very good teacher who really worked closely with [him] in extracurricular things like ball*. He also explained that he was always interested in team and individual sports and took a *pretty active role* even though he did not see himself as *really athletic*. Neil added that *art has always been a major part* of his life, but not necessarily a result of experiences at school since his schooling took place in a small rural school. He felt that his mother provided a great deal of encouragement in the artistic realm. Neil also stated

*I attribute a lot of my success to the 4-H Club. I had a very thorough, enjoyable experience in 4-H Clubs from age 10 to 18. And I took lots of roles there, executive roles, and the public experience in showing cattle, I think, gave me the confidence that I have fallen back on a lot.*

Donna, another actively involved participant, reflected on her personal experiences with a community organization. In her reflection, Donna claimed that the organization continued to influence her:

*I was really involved with Job's Daughters. I think that, for me, was a really good experience in terms of building my confidence and my ability to organize and to have to take a leadership role at a young age ... that was a good thing in high school because I had a stronger family relationship whereas a lot of kids were always out away from their parents and my parents were quite involved with me. And then my sisters were involved.*

Joyce continued to be involved in a community/church group throughout her school years. She stated:

*... I was always in some kind of organization outside of school... And then, even into high school I was always involved in our church group. And, in fact ... in high school, I was the president of our church group.*

The community involvement in these administrators' life experiences was very strong and very influential in their lives. Their extensive participation in their communities was, no doubt, mutually beneficial.

*The community involvement in these administrators' life experiences was very strong and very influential in their lives.*

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## The Leadership Quilt of Values

Joyce, the business participant, appeared to reveal the attitude of all the participants when stating, *I could only work for an organization where I thought that the values and the directions of the people that were driving the organization were right.*

Keith revealed his thoughts about values and his parental influence on these values. He stated

*... I learned most of my values from my mom and dad ... and I really see a lot of value that came from their parenting.*

*... when you are growing up, you don't really notice, that this is different than other people ... you don't realize what an impact it has on you until you start analyzing it and wondering why you are, why you believe this and why other people believe that, and you start putting it into perspective.*

I was inspired by Keith's personal reflections of his parents' value system and the effect this value system had on his life. When an adult can reflect upon who they have become and are cognizant of the underlying reasons for who they are, an additional dimension to their existence surfaces.

The values of the administrators in this study have also revealed some common threads. These rich, dynamic narratives created an intricate patchwork quilt of the leaders' stories. The quilt, as a metaphor for the leaders' stories, was an appropriate one since a patchwork quilt is made up of left-over pieces of fabric that on their own would have only sat in a closet, unused. However, once pieced together, these stories revealed a network of similarities while the surface designs remained individual. Once the pieces, the stories, were placed together with the other stories to create a covering and all of these stories were sewn together by the artist, they provided comfort, warmth and security – the hand-sewn values blanket, the leadership quilt.

The first part of the quilt was the thread – the relationships the administrators had with people in their lives – the glue that holds the work together. The administrators valued their colleagues' talents and abilities while providing empathy and support for their colleagues.

Again, Keith's response set the stage for relationships with others when he said:

*The values that I hold now and when I think of work ethic and the treatment of people ... I look at the way*

*I could only work for an organization where I thought that the values and the directions of the people that were driving the organization were right.*

*... I learned most of my values from my mom and dad ... and I really see a lot of value that came from their parenting.*

*The first part of the quilt was the thread – the relationships the administrators had with people in their lives – the glue that holds the work together.*

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*my parents dealt with other people. There was always compassion, there was concern for the dignity of other people ... there was a lot of loyalty. A lot of those things have certainly come through in the way that I act toward and believe in other people...*

Most of the leaders expressed pleasure when observing enthusiastic, hard-working colleagues' success. Eleanor claimed that when she saw growth in her staff – when she *recognized their talents and their abilities* and when she gave them *opportunities to use those talents and abilities and then they flew with it – it's wonderful!* Joyce also claimed that *if you can't empower front-line employees to make decisions and if you can't communicate an understanding of what's happening in the bigger world so they can make the right choices every day ... it will never work.* She continued by stating that

*Most of the leaders expressed pleasure when observing enthusiastic, hard-working colleagues' success.*

*Enabling others to become partners with you in making change is the most rewarding thing in the whole world. You know, I don't care if I ever get credit for it; I don't want credit for it. I would take more satisfaction out of seeing someone on the frontline being able to solve a customer problem or seeing them grow and being able to say, "You know, this is fun." To me, this is great.*

Both these leaders openly declared their personal satisfaction when working with their colleagues.

In order to ask both direct and indirect questions, two scenarios were presented to the administrators to allow them to focus and think through the situation, rather than give an immediate answer. Chase (1995) claimed that researchers are more likely to be successful when questions are oriented directly and simply to life experiences (p. 12). Therefore, both scenarios originated from actual situations that I observed as an educator.

I further examined the participants' relationships with people they lead through the indirect method by asking the following scenario, Scenario #1:

A teacher on your staff has recovered from a serious illness, has had a recent bout of ill health and has gone to their physician for a series of tests. Upon calling the physician's office for the results of the tests, the teacher has been informed that the physician is at a convention for three days in Vancouver and then on vacation for two weeks immediately following the conference. The teacher has come to you with this news and is obviously greatly distressed. How would you handle this situation?

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The responses to this scenario supported some of the more direct inquiries into the administrators' relationships with the people they lead. The responses shared by the leaders were sensitive toward the teacher and revealed an understanding of the emotional stress under which the teacher was placed.

Neil sensed it was necessary to *de-focus any responsibilities at school* and Keith felt, if necessary, he must *go around the contract or board policy to cover [classes] for this person*. They also stated a personal need to remove the teacher from the classroom responsibility to alleviate any further stress. They were empathetic toward the teacher; in fact, four administrators disclosed that they either had a teaching colleague in this position presently or had experienced this type of situation as administrator.

*The responses shared by the leaders were sensitive toward the teacher and revealed an understanding of the emotional stress under which the teacher was placed.*

*This is a pretty real scenario ... we have certainly experienced this kind of thing where a teacher is so distressed they can't work.*

*I have been through that a number of times. But just how much you do other than an unconditional personal support of them and attention to them ... it depends upon the case.*

*... if there wasn't someone else in their life that could help them directly, I think I would probably kick in and do what I could to be able to access those results... because two weeks could be a lifetime.*

Further to the illness scenario, Eleanor revealed a situation in which she demonstrated a counseling role when she said

*... I have had one really – a spousal abuse. She came in and I was the first one she disclosed to. Another one where she left her husband. He was having an affair with her best friend, and she was afraid of losing the house. So I phoned up the bank and said, "Look, we want to renegotiate this mortgage...so she has more money." And we had it all worked out...because she wasn't in the frame of mind to... but she needed it done. So, I don't mind doing those kinds of things.*

Eleanor also revealed that when she judged the situation warranted it and with her colleague's consent, she promptly referred her to the school division's employee assistance/counseling program. This counseling program was flexible enough to take on a client on the date of the referral.



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Joyce explained that *to take on the person's problem would be wrong*, and that her choice would be listening to the person and empathizing with the situation. She further explained that support to eliminate work responsibilities and to explore the options available and the feeling of the person involved could *help them to make a decision*.

It is evident from their stories that these leaders went beyond their professional relationships to assist their colleagues in need. It was also evident during the interviews that these leaders were sensitive to the needs of their colleagues and would only become directly involved in a personal situation when they felt their colleagues were requesting their assistance. Under no circumstances would they impose their professional power over their colleagues and try to control their lives.

The second part of the leadership quilt was the batting – the qualities of integrity, commitment and professionalism which each of the administrators valued – which provided warmth, comfort, and insulation from the elements. The family/home, education, and professional support networks all provided the participants with the support for their personal and professional lives.

The identification of individuals the administrators admired revealed the qualities the educational leaders considered to be critical to their existence. In every administrator's response to the individuals they admired, a reference was made to their immediate family members – mother, father, partner, siblings – their home support network. Keith stated:

*... people that I admire, like my parents. I think more people will have their parents as people they admire. I really think that without coming out and directly teaching by modeling, they certainly presented a positive value system for me. And I just see the things that I do with my kids today, and at some point it just brings back a memory. I remember my dad doing exactly what I am doing, like being at the hockey rink and coaching the teams.*

The articulation of specific values that these leaders admired in their immediate family members are clearly revealed by four of the participants. Keith began with a story reflecting his father's integrity.

*My dad had a real strong work ethic and his integrity was really obvious to me in his personality, even when I was younger. I still remember his finding a wallet with money in it, lots of money, and his immediate reaction was to look at the ID. And we took it back. And I asked him why he was doing that, and he explained to me how the money belonged to that person and maybe it was the*

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*last money that he or she had. And so those kinds of things stick with me ...*

Admiration for Eleanor's father, mother and brother was expressed in her account.

*... both my parents and for different reasons. My dad because, even though I was a girl, it made no difference. I was still absolutely and positively number one in his books. Gender had nothing to do with it. And so opportunities were given to me the same as they were given to my brother and I really appreciated that. And, again, I thought that was normal. My mom because she had been on her own by the time she was 15 and so she didn't put restrictions on me that a lot of kids had. I think I was 15 when I had no curfew... So I never had this problem of not getting along and not being able to communicate with my parents... And they became friends as opposed to the authority figures in my life. And they still have a great influence. I still find they support the things I do... My little brother, because he has a wacky sense of humor and we are a lot alike.*

Rose's high regard for her father and her partner were exhibited in her response.

*My dad has had the greatest influence on me in terms of the way I handle my life, how I see the world, how my partner and I react together. I respected what my dad did and I respected what he told me and I thought he was a really smart man... And my partner has a lot of influence on me. He is a kind man, and I have learned a lot from that.*

The following citation revealed Donna's respect for her partner's qualities.

*My partner because as much as I am a risk taker in my – I would really at some point like to have my own business – I am not a risk taker in the sense that I would actually quit my teaching job and do that. Whereas, he is the type of person that sees an opportunity and ventures forth. And I admire that.*

Neil stated, *I admire my mom, I think she is a pretty remarkable person.* Lillian reflected on her perspective when explaining *because*

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*I have been tied to education for so long, the people I admire are going to come out of that field.*

In all cases, these leaders chose to identify former and present teachers and university professors as individuals that they presently admired – their education support network. When referring to these influential individuals in their lives, several of the leaders identified particular qualities they felt have influenced them.

*I think my grade 11 and 12 principal was significant in having me discover who I was by being very objective and supportive, instilling confidence and recognition in us. (Neil)*

*I had a social studies teacher in my junior high school and he was young and he was enthusiastic – and he turned me on to history. And I remember him making me feel smart. I felt smart in his class. And there was lots of oral discussion in his room, and he just made me feel good. And he is the guy who influenced me to major in history and social studies at university. (Rose)*

*... my vocal teacher who possessed an accepting view of teenagers. She has been a strong mentor and female role model. In fact, she is now in her 90's and is still involved with my family ... my own children. (Eleanor)*

*... probably one of the only profs I have had that has made classes meaningful. She is actually delivering programs the way that we are trying to get teachers to deliver in the classroom... If she is presenting some information about instructional leadership and strategies, she is actually showing it in the classroom; there is group work, students involved in evaluating themselves and others, and a different dynamic in it ... when you are dealing with her, she will be concerned about you and your work... I wanted something that would be very useable, and we were able to develop that. I really appreciate when someone can work and be flexible and help to tailor it to your own needs. (Keith)*

Joyce maintained that she did not remember very many teachers, in the formal sense of the word, but she identified an individual who did some pretty remarkable things. When she was in a church youth group, he was one of the counselors. She explained that

*In all cases, these leaders chose to identify former and present teachers, and university professors as individuals that they presently admired – their education support network.*

*Joyce maintained that she did not remember very many teachers, in the formal sense of the word, but she identified an individual who did some pretty remarkable things.*

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*He came one day with a great, big, beautiful flower, and before he showed us this flower, he described it to us and said we had to figure out what it was, and, of course, nobody could, from the description. And he went on about how some things you can't describe; you just have to know and believe and see. But he was always doing interesting things like that.*

She continued to explain that he *opened her mind to some pretty interesting and different things*, and that she later discovered that he was *one of the senior people at Northern Telecom* when he was her youth group counselor and that he has since retired as *one of the very most senior people* at Northern Telecom.

Some administrators discussed the professional commitment and dedication of their colleagues. Neil claimed that he *admired teachers who were satisfied with being a teacher and being really good at it, and being fresh and enthusiastic, each year*. Lillian also explained:

*Some administrators discussed the professional commitment and dedication of their colleagues.*

*There are some teachers that I admire a lot... I suspect that one that would stand out is Darlene Link. Darlene is very talented, can get grade seven and eight students to do anything, anything she wants to. But she is organized, and she works at it, and she has the ideas and she is structured and all the rest of it. Any school I have been at, there's always somebody that stands out in that particular staff, either they work too hard or whatever.*

Following the interview with Lillian, Darlene Link became ill and has since died ... but her legacy as an educator lives on.

Eleanor continued within the same frame of reference when she stated that she admired

*... hardworking teachers. I think they have the toughest job in the school. I think people don't realize the demands – from when I started teaching until now, the curricular demands, the amount of knowledge that a teacher must have on a variety of topics. The curriculum has swelled, yet we have taken nothing out of it ...*

Keith explained that the senior math teacher on his staff was *always looking to see if he could help someone else out. It's a reflection of what I would like to see as an entire staff approach, like a team approach. And it certainly spreads.*

From a business perspective, Joyce also identified former

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and current colleagues and business associates as the individuals that she presently admired – her professional support network. She also identified specific qualities of colleagues and business associates that she found admirable. She claimed:

*I love working with people that are positive, because people who create an exciting and positive environment are people who are fun to be around. And when I think about some of the colleagues that I enjoy the most, they are always up, they are always curious, they are always laughing. They take their work seriously but not themselves. They take time to be playful, but they are dependable. When it comes down to doing solid, hard work they can do it. And I like people who are good thinkers, who can think through an issue, who can also debate an issue without being argumentative.*

She also stated that she admired *the senior people in the bank* and the *senior management team* that she worked with on a daily basis. She specified they were ethical individuals who had sound values and good management practices.

Four of the leaders revealed similar collegial qualities that they valued. First, commitment – a desire to try new things, do to things better and to be the best you can be. Second, integrity – a genuine respect for the children they work with and resolution to make sound decisions based upon children. Third, professionalism – a willingness to be flexible, versatile in their approach to teaching, and *doing what they do because they really felt strongly about it and enjoyed it.*

The third part of the leadership quilt was the patchwork design – the leaders’ dynamic and unique approaches to challenge – which provided a colorful texture to the quilt’s surface. The participants’ approaches to challenging their organization and taking risks were collegial, community-minded and fueled with personal strength and commitment. These approaches were as individual as the administrators themselves, and complete the artwork of the leaders’ stories quilt.

As in the relationships with the people they lead and personal value system sections, at one point in the interview, the leaders were posed a question directly, Scenario #2. This scenario questioned the leaders’ willingness to challenge the organization and its structure.

A new, experimental program has been placed in your school. How would you handle the personnel selection, direction of the program, boundaries and evaluation of this program?

*From a business perspective, Joyce also identified former and current colleagues and business associates as the individuals that she presently admired – her professional support network*

*Four of the leaders revealed similar collegial qualities that they valued... commitment... integrity... professionalism...*

*The third part of the leadership quilt was the patchwork design – the leaders’ dynamic and unique approaches to challenge – which provided a colorful texture to the quilt’s surface. The participants’ approaches ... were collegial, community-minded and fueled with personal strength and commitment.*



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All seven of the leaders expressed concern about the objectives for the program. Eleanor said that the program in her school *would never have been dropped on them – that’s not how we do business, but rather it would have been something that we would have asked for and we would have been excited to have.* Joyce, the business leader, stated that the *senior team* would be informed and *those people affected by the pilot must be involved* in an experimental pilot in her organization.

Eleanor continued that the program *would be very participatory and not led necessarily by me ... it would be a group thing.*

Neil also felt that *you need to get parental support, you need to get staff support, you need to communicate as much as you can –* realizing the strength of the context within which the program is placed. He addressed the assessment of the program as well when he stated, *your evaluation should come from all the players, so in this case the parents, and the students, and the staff.*

When Donna discussed her approach to the experimental program, she reflected upon the processes she used as the principal of a newly-opened school. Donna was very comfortable when responding to this scenario and she had obviously thought a great deal about new staff, new facility, new community and new programs in her present administrative position. She stated:

*We usually talk as a group and we make decisions based upon the group consensus. First of all, our whole staff would be made aware of what’s going on. We would talk about it as a staff as to what was going to happen and when we were doing this program, what were going to be the benefits to kids... and get some feedback from parents if it was that kind of thing, maybe through the parents association.*

In Neil’s response to the experimental program scenario, he reflected upon his previous administrative position where he was instrumental in restructuring (dismantling) a school program that had been in place for a number of years. Neil claimed:

*It would be kind of a double-edged challenge because being a model within the school, the rest of the staff (even though they weren’t directly involved) would be responsible for it, and its success would depend on how they regarded it. So it would be a really critical effort. I think you have to be really careful, trust your judgments, run the idea by the people that you trust, people who have influence within the school.*

*A new, experimental program has been placed in your school ...*

*... the program would be very participatory and not led necessarily by me ... it would be a group thing.*

*... your evaluation should come from all the players ... the parents, and the students, and the staff.*

*... our whole staff would be made aware of what’s going on.*

*... you have to be really careful, trust your judgments, run the idea by the people that you trust, people who have influence within the school.*

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Similarly, Joyce referred to a *huge cultural shift* that was taking place in her banking organization. She explained:

*The focus of our frontline employees has been shifted nearly 180 degrees from being administrative in focus, in terms of managing the bank's books, to now managing financial solutions for customers.*

This *cultural shift* has created an *organization in transition*, resulting in people who were *excited* and *people who didn't like it*. Joyce stated that *it is cruel to make people work in an environment where they no longer want to be and no longer fit*.

The shift in banking that Joyce described is very similar to the dismantling of school programs to which Neil alluded (and, definitely, the restructuring/amalgamating of school divisions that is being experienced in Saskatchewan presently). All these organizations are looking toward the future and anticipating the needs of their clients. This future gazing results in their looking closely at the present organization and examining its strengths and its weaknesses – conducting a needs assessment. Following the assessment, it is necessary for both organizations to change their current directions, to take an about turn, and to realize that some integral changes must be made in order for their organization to be successful in the future.

Three of the leaders revealed their strong sense of self-worth during the course of the interviews.

Donna reflected upon her personal growth as an administrator and the realization that *no matter what you do, there is always going to be that small group of people who don't have satisfaction with anything you do*. Donna also mentioned that one of her colleagues calls her *the cheerleader* because she thinks positively and declares support for projects in her school division. She revealed that she is often chosen to sit on committees and chair conferences because the director knows that if you *tell the cheerleader, she will lead this thing through*.

Joyce claimed that she has a *habit of not saying "No" to things*, and that she has the ability *to get along with people... not to burn bridges*. She affirmed this attitude when she stated

*... I had a little theory that I would never knowingly let people lose face. I would never push them into a corner so badly that they would come back out and attack me. I would always kind of give them an escape route. So, it might sometimes look like you lost – but you didn't, because they know as well as you know that they lost. But they didn't hate you, and they didn't crack... And, therefore, I always got on the team; people wanted me for their projects. People wanted to work with me.*

*... it is cruel to make people work in an environment where they no longer want to be and no longer fit.*

*The shift in banking that Joyce described is very similar to the dismantling of school programs...*

*...it is necessary ... to take an about turn, and to realize that some integral changes must be made in order for their organization to be successful in the future.*

*... I had a little theory that I would never knowingly let people lose face.*

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Lillian said that she is *probably stronger than a lot of people*. She recalled that she was a healthy person with a *fairly healthy attitude about how things are going on*. She also mentioned that she does not panic easily, and surmises that her response style has *come with experience*.

Neil stated that in order to *overcome the bumps* that you must possess a strong sense of self-confidence and *really believe in yourself*. Neil revealed his self-confidence has *never faltered* even though he has been through *some pretty challenging times*, professionally, yet *not really threatening or challenging personal times*. *I have always felt positive about what I have been doing and how people regarded me in what I have been doing*.

*...to overcome the bumps, you must possess a strong sense of self-confidence and really believe in yourself.*

## The Flag of Personal Attributes

When reflecting upon the attributes, qualities and characteristics of the participants – their approach to challenge, change, learning, and the future – common threads emerged once again. These leadership stories have created a smooth textured flag. The fabric brilliantly reflects their core values and the emblems display the leaders' attributes waving proudly for everyone to see. Just as national flags are similar in texture and size, yet they differ in design, so are the flags of these leaders. Actually, the themes that emerged from the attributes perspective were recurring similarities that occurred in the life experiences and values categories.

The first emblem common to all the administrators in this study was the family crest – the strong family support systems of partners, parents, siblings, children, aunts, uncles, and close friends. A direct result of this crest, symbolic of family support, was the personal strength of these leaders who, when faced with a challenge, used a *cognitive approach* to thinking it through.

Several of the administrators began to discuss their approach to challenge by affirming the importance of a strong support system, both personally and professionally, when dealing with the complex adversities associated with leadership.

Eleanor stated that her partner has been a *wonderful support* even though he was very busy with his own career. She also said that her parents have always been supportive of her professional endeavors,

*The first emblem common to all the administrators in this study was the family crest – the strong family support systems of partners, parents, siblings, children, aunts, uncles, and close friends.*

*...no matter what it is, I can call them and they will drop everything, whether I am doing a musical and need a stage built or changed ... my dad is a handyman. My mom still comes in on weekends and helps me get set up ...*

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Rose also stated that her partner was a support even though they were *really focused on their jobs*. She and her partner shared their professional experiences, especially since they do not have children. She stated, *he likes to hear my stories*.

Lillian explained that she felt *really fortunate to have a supportive home*. She and her partner had one child and did not have a *big family to look after*.

Neil also explained that he had a *good support team*. He felt that this support team was *critical*. His partner, who was also a teacher, was very supportive. His parents were also very interested in his professional endeavors, giving him an *intrinsic sense of value and success*.

The second emblem – the key to success – integral to every leader’s flag was the love of change. In fact, these administrators were energized by change and claimed that change is the only constant about the future. Their collegial, team approach to leadership revealed these leaders as facilitators and agents of change.

*The second emblem – the key to success – integral to every leader’s flag was the love of change.*

When addressing problem solving, Joyce discussed her attraction to challenges and to change. She revealed her love of change and the challenges it brings when stating that

*...I love change ... if I drive to work too many times the same way, I will say, “I wonder if I can drive to work a different way.” I really don’t like things to stay the same too much ... I have always liked change. I never wanted it to be the same. And I can live with a lot of ambiguity ... and living with a little bit of ambiguity is okay. And that kind of makes it fun because sometimes the unexpected happens, which is good. And I am not sure I could live in a world that was predictable. I mean, I can hardly wait for the next technology invention. I can hardly wait to read about what’s happening next ... so it’s kind of a curiosity I have about the future.*

Neil’s approach to change was revealed when he stated:

*I think you have to demonstrate that there is a value in what you do and if you have to do something that would be more effective, you have to be able to professionally demonstrate that. And there is room to be really academic about things ... I think that’s a very, very important part of our role. I think we have to be leaders in professional academics.*

Neil also explained his personal, thoughtful approach to problem solving. He claimed that he has always *been careful* and that

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*being a principal is no different that any other job, in that you only get out of it what you put into it. He contended that he has put a lot into it and that he has really thought his way through a lot of things and prepared himself well for his assignments. He personally felt that this mental preparation to thinking things through – his cognitive approach – has assisted him a great deal in his professional endeavors.*

Joyce concluded by referring to change as *the only thing that's constant about the future*. She attested that *you need to get comfortable in some respects with being slightly uncomfortable, you need to be comfortable with a bit of chaos – but it's exciting*.

Also, these two administrators shared their personal approach to change in detail, explaining the simplicity of the process. Neil reflected on the process he used in the school environment.

*I am learning to simplify and to target more specifically what has to happen. I am learning the value of measuring change, evaluating, determining where we are at, and measuring our effectiveness ... I think a lot of the things we do just to succeed and to be effective – the common sense things – can be explained in theoretical ways ... If you follow the theory, you can be effective. But if you don't have the theory and it's just your way, and it works, you do it.*

Joyce also reflected on the simplicity of the leadership process she used to facilitate change in her banking organization.

*... if you look after the customers and if you look after your employees, the rest of it hardly matters ... And your people will do it for you if they feel compelled and confident about their abilities. I see my job as being an advocate of the customer and in some respects an advocate of our front-line staff ... I can enable them and empower them to do their jobs and that's the only leverage I have.*

The third emblem on the flag of personal attributes was the school crest which displayed the leaders' desire for continuous learning wherein they read professionally, possess an appetite for how things work, have a direct interest in the classroom and the frontline, and get excited about learning new things. They adapt easily to their work environment and understand that all successful people have failed at one time and have learned from this failure.

Several of the leaders openly discussed their adaptation to their work environment. Keith stated that when he sees bumps he *looks at them more as challenges ... every problem really is an opportunity*.

*... change... the only thing that's constant about the future.*

*The third emblem on the flag of personal attributes was the school crest which displayed the leaders' desire for continuous learning ...*



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Rose said overcoming the challenges *came with maturity and experience and seeing what you worried about two years ago is stuff that you might not worry about now*. Donna also explained that seven years ago when she started, she *would have taken personally* the dissatisfaction of her colleagues but now she is *a lot tougher*.

Joyce reported her inspiration from others in her work environment, her learning environment:

*... one of the most inspirational things for me was when I read about the chairman of the bank when I first started. And there was one particular time when I didn't think my job was working out very well and I didn't like it very much. And then I read about the chairman's "dark days." And I thought, "How could the chairman of the bank have 'dark days?' I mean, he is the chairman and hasn't he always been successful?" And the more you learn about successful people, I think the more you realize how many times they have failed.*

*... the more you learn about successful people, I think the more you realize how many times they have failed.*

Joyce also discussed the amazing accomplishments of the Canadian hero, Rick Hansen, who orchestrated the "Man in Motion Tour" in 1987, wherein he traveled around the world raising the awareness of the necessity for increased funding into spinal cord injuries and research. She admitted:

*... when you hear his story about the calamity of errors, a person with any sense would have known when to quit. He had so many problems trying to get that thing launched. So I think it's not about how quickly you win but how persistent you are at working through the problems. I think there is a fine line between being so persistent and trying to do something that just won't work.*

*... it's not about how quickly you win but how persistent you are at working through the problems.*

The desire for continuous learning was expressed by a number of the leaders. Keith stated that the challenge of maintaining the integrity of the classroom has *allowed him to continue to learn*. Eleanor revealed that she remains current, continues to *read professionally*, and to *get excited about things*. She continued that if she *stopped getting excited, then it's time to get out*. Joyce explained that the reason she *ended up in this job is because she has an insatiable desire to know how things work*.

*The fourth emblem for these personal attributes flags was a golden arrow, directed toward the future.*

The fourth emblem for these personal attributes flags was a golden arrow, directed toward the future. These leaders derive a great deal of satisfaction from working with positive, enthusiastic, dedicated,

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hardworking colleagues and understanding that the future simply means, "doing more with less." Their predictions for the future include the best allocation of limited resources by having larger schools, closing smaller schools and banks, and the belief that technology will be a driving force. These leaders also believe that future school leadership will be participatory, possibly using the community school based model throughout the provincial school system for collective decision-making at the school level. Interestingly, these predictions were made three years prior to the creation of *The Task Force on the Role of the School* (May, 1999) and *School<sup>PLUS</sup>: A Vision for Children and Youth* (Tymchak, 2001). Only one participant revealed his reticence with directly involving parents and communities in the school.

Several of the leaders predicted that technology would be a driving force in education in the future. Eleanor stated that *technology is a big, big issue and we are trying hard to be at the forefront*. Donna claimed that *technology will play a greater role*, but she was *not sure that financially it would be a reality*. Rose maintained that the *biggest change is going to be in technology*, while Joyce predicted that technology would have an impact upon education and that continuing adult education will increase with *different point of contact for learning*, where learners are at home and, perhaps, in teams that are networked together. She also suggested that schools and school boards *need to get out with their message* because when dealing with change, it is best to *take the heat and work it through with people*.

Nearly all of the research participants foresaw the roles of parents, community and school becoming more participatory. Eleanor predicted that the roles of the educational partners would follow the community school model, participating in school decisions. Lillian also speculated that the community school model would work *anywhere that the parents or guardians are in the school, and the teachers – everybody working together*. Neil suggested that parents need to continue to have an increased involvement in schools and his *experience would tend to support a greater community school relationship for joint programming, joint service support for the community – facilities, personnel, resources*. Donna stated that she would like to *see everyone working together for the good of the kids ... I think the more people you have involved, the more stakeholders that you have involved, the more people you have on your team*. Rose also indicated that she would like to *see parents and community involved ... I think that's a wish on the part of educators, and if we stick to the traditional mechanisms to get parents involved, we are not going to get them out ... someone has to have the energy to change what we do to get parents involved*.

In contrast to the other leaders in the study, Keith foresaw the changing roles of parents, community, and school *could be a little*

*Several of the leaders predicted that technology would be a driving force in education in the future.*

*... schools and school boards need to get out with their message because when dealing with change, it is best to take the heat and work it through with people.*

*Nearly all of the research participants foresaw the roles of parents, community and school becoming more participatory.*

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*dangerous* when the involvement was being legislated by the government. He speculated *when you start getting people from outside starting to administer schools, we end up with confusion.*

Finally, these leaders clearly revealed that they loved working with people who are positive, creative, exciting, fun to be around and who take their work seriously, but not themselves.

*... these leaders ... loved working with people who are positive, creative, exciting, fun to be around and who take their work seriously, but not themselves.*

### **III. LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Moore (2004) study was a narrative inquiry, investigating leadership within the context of effective educational leaders' lives. This study explored, "What are the life experiences, the values, and the attributes of selected educational administrators that reveal aspects of transformational leadership?"

The questions central to this study were explored through the interview process. They focused on the leaders' life experiences, values, and attributes, while searching for similarities between the participants selected for this study and the characteristics of transformational leaders.

This section will present the conclusions to the study, and implications for educators, administrators, and school divisions based upon the findings of the study. This section also includes suggestions for future research and the concluding statements.

#### **New Patterns in the Leadership Fabric**

*Our challenge is to transform ourselves and our institutions to meet the challenge of the new reality without losing the things that we value the most.  
(Tichy & Devanna, 1990, p. 281)*

What are the life experiences that reveal aspects of transformational leadership? When the Moore (2004) study began, the life experience sub-categories were not correlated to the transformational leadership characteristics, as indicated in Figure 3 which follows. The investigative sub-categories of life experiences are family environment growing up, family background, personal interests, education history, and work history.

As a result of this study, a new component of transformational leadership is now evident – a new pattern in the leadership fabric. And the new patterns in the leadership fabric will be unique to each leader – especially when life experiences become a component of this fabric.

*...As a result of this study, a new component of transformational leadership is now evident – a new pattern in the leadership fabric.*

Of particular interest was the fact that five of the leaders have direct family connections to the education system. Either their parents or their partners have been employed as educators.

In every situation, family provided a solid base upon which the participants built their lives, both personally and professionally. The value of learning and the extensive involvement by these leaders in both their personal and professional communities were also evident.

The major variation between this study and current literature on transformational leadership was the emergence of the leaders having a strong family support system. Previous studies into leadership do not appear to have researched or referred to the familial relationships of the leaders.

*The major variation between this study and current literature on transformational leadership was the emergence of the leaders having a strong family support system.*

***Figure 3. Investigative Categories, Research Sub-Categories and Characteristics of Transformational Leadership***

<b><i>Investigative Categories</i></b> (Moore, 2004)	<b><i>Research Sub-Categories</i></b> (Moore, 2004)	<b><i>Transformational Leadership Characteristics</i></b> (Tichy & Devanna, 1990)
Life Experience	·Family Environment	N/A
	·Family Background	N/A
	·Personal Interests	N/A
	·Education History	N/A
	·Work History	N/A
Values	·Relationships with People They Lead	·Belief in People
	·Personal Value Systems	·Value Driven
	·Willingness to Challenge the Organization	·Courageous Spirit
Attributes	·Approach to Challenge	·Complex Problem Solver
	·Approach to Change	·Change Agent
	·Approach to Learning	·Life Long Learner
	·Approach to the Future	·Visionary

What are the values that reveal aspects of transformational leadership? Patterns among the leaders' values were very evident. Perhaps these similarities among them were simply reflecting "good, old prairie values" where work ethic, family oriented and community based support systems, adaptability, a value for learning and sharing are the bases for success. Only two leaders, Rose and Joyce, have relocated to the prairies from large urban centres; whereas, the other

*Patterns among the leaders' values were very evident. Perhaps these similarities among them were simply reflecting "good, old prairie values"...*

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five leaders have grown up on the prairies.

These leaders valued their colleagues' talents and abilities while providing empathy and support for them. The family/home, education, and professional support networks all provided these leaders with support for their personal and professional lives.

As well, these leaders' approaches toward their organization and taking risks were collegial, community-minded and fueled with personal strength and commitment. These leaders possessed the inherent qualities of individuals who were willing to challenge the structure and to take calculated risks to the betterment of the organization.

What are the attributes that reveal aspects of transformational leadership? These leaders' attributes would be ideal qualities for an outstanding leader to possess. As mentioned previously, they had strong family support systems of partners, parents, children and close friends. The leaders had an appetite for learning, professional reading, finding out how things worked and getting excited about new things. They also adapted easily to their work environment and believed that all successful people have experienced failure and have learned from this failure.

The leaders in this study were energized by change and their collegial, team approach to leadership clearly revealed these leaders to be facilitators and agents of change. Of course, they derived a great deal of satisfaction from working with positive, enthusiastic, dedicated and hard-working colleagues.

These leaders believed that future school leadership will be participatory, possibly using the community school model for collective decision-making at the school level.

Upon close examination of the fabric of leadership, the data revealed corresponding characteristics in the leaders' life experiences, values and attributes – new patterns in the leadership fabric. The leadership participants of this study appeared to possess:

1. a strong family support system
2. a collegial approach to leadership
3. an admiration for learning
4. personal strength and commitment, and
5. an attraction to challenge and change.

With the exception of the “strong family support system,” the characteristics of transformational leaders appeared to be evident in the effective leaders researched in this study. Figure 4, which follows, displays the characteristics of transformational leaders used as the conceptual framework and the corresponding leadership themes that emerged – the characteristics of the effective leaders who participated in this study.

*These leaders' attributes would be ideal qualities for an outstanding leader to possess.*

*Upon close examination of the fabric of leadership, the data revealed corresponding characteristics in the leaders' life experiences, values and attributes – new patterns in the leadership fabric.*

**Figure 4. Conceptual Framework  
and Characteristics of Effective  
Educational Leaders**

<i>Conceptual Framework (Tichy and Devanna, 1990)</i>	<i>Characteristics of Effective Educational Leaders (Moore, 2004)</i>
1. Change agent	Attraction to change
2. Courageous individual	Attraction to challenge
3. Belief in people	Collegial approach to leadership
4. Value driven	Personal strength and commitment
5. Lifelong learner	Admiration for learning
6. Ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty	Personal strength and commitment
7. Visionary	Attraction to challenge and change

Based upon the characteristics of the leaders in this study, there appeared to have been general support for the conceptual framework’s characteristics of transformational leadership. All of the leaders in this study displayed characteristics of a transformational leader, to varying degrees.

*All of the leaders in this study displayed characteristics of a transformational leader, to varying degrees.*

## **Implications for Educators, Administrators and School Divisions**

The following section outlines the suggested implications for educators, administrators and school divisions based upon the findings of this study. Since the effective leaders that were interviewed appeared to possess the qualities of transformational leaders, to varying degrees, it is timely to address transformational leadership as an integral component of leadership in school systems. These organizations will undoubtedly require strong leaders to be successful in the constantly changing dynamics of a global environment.

*... it is timely to address transformational leadership as an integral component of leadership in school systems.*

## **Implications for Educators**

1. The collegial leadership style of transformational leadership could also be used in the classroom and be transposed into classroom leadership – transformational leadership for the classroom where students are encouraged to be good followers, good listeners, and, in turn, good leaders.



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2. Teachers could identify students who have some of the qualities identified in this study now. Tichy (1997) stated, “I have a very simple thesis: All people have untapped leadership potential, just as all people have untapped athletic potential” (p. 8). Tichy also suggested that “...not everyone can be an Olympian but through training and encouragement and offering opportunities to exercise leadership ... some have natural talent for good ideas and getting people to carry them out ... others have to work at expanding their horizons, thinking bigger ideas and persuading others” (p.8).

## Implications for Administrators

1. Every opportunity should be taken to see other leaders at work, resulting in Jack Welch’s boundaryless organization in action – learning from each other in the real world, rather than in meetings. The classroom visitation and teacher exchange models could be expanded to include administrators.
2. Collegial administrative work groups could replace monthly school district meetings for principals and school district administrators. In a previous assignment as a community school principal, Eleanor worked with other community school principals and they conducted their own area meetings. She also explained with their “collective energy” they planned and developed projects together while sharing information and resources. Information that is required to “manage” an organization can be transferred electronically, while face-to-face meetings for leaders could be held quarterly in a less structured, less formal environment – perhaps at a school or local coffee house. Tichy (1997) claimed

*In winning companies, any meeting that does not leave the participants better prepared and more eager to do a better job is considered a failure and a waste of time ... just as you would not permit a fellow employee to steal a \$200 piece of office equipment, you shouldn’t let anyone walk away with the time of his or her fellow managers. (p. 15)*

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## Implications for School Divisions

1. Similar to mentorship, collegial administrative work groups could replace monthly school district meeting for principals and school district administrators. As mentioned above, meeting time is valuable and should not be squandered.
2. Ask prospective administrators/leaders in the school division to discuss their list of accomplishments in relation to their personal leadership characteristics. Advertisements for educational leaders could also follow this lead (Wepner et al, 2002).
3. Interview questions for prospective educational leaders (principals, superintendents, directors) could include queries from a variety of components of leadership – specifically, based upon the leadership themes from this study: strong family support system, collegial approach to leadership, admiration for learning, personal strength and commitment, and an attraction to challenge and change. Some suggestions are:
  - 1) Questions directed toward the personal/family aspects of their lives – family environment, family background, and their stories about growing up.
  - 2) Questions directed toward the personal aspects of their lives – personal interests, education history, work history.
  - 3) Questions directed toward prairie values – strong work ethic, family oriented support systems and community involvement, adaptability, value for learning and sharing.
  - 4) Questions regarding difficult times in their lives are important questions to ask because they provide responses to emotional situations; for example, What challenges have you faced in your life? How did you overcome these challenges?

Since four leaders in this study had life-altering experiences, my initial response to these revelations was that effective leaders must have had these life-altering experiences. Sashkin and Rosebach (1998) stated that leadership characteristics are developed, built upon experience (p.73). Tichy (1997) stated that having suffered and recovered gives people a self-confidence and self-reliance that allows them to be unencumbered by the need to bend to popular will. It is this freedom that gives them the ability to make decisions based on reality, even though they may be unpopular or contrary to conventional wisdom (p. 212).

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Leadership scholars also claim there is an important connection between early childhood experiences and hardships and the shaping of character. Joyce, the business leader, also reflected on the bank chairman's "dark days" and then stated, "...the more you learn about successful people, I think the more you realize how many times they have failed."

4. A mentorship program could be developed for future leaders. Rather than reading a textbook, listening to a lecture, attending a seminar or conference where information is often second- or third-hand, in a mentorship program the leadership style is presented directly to the prospective leader, providing an opportunity for feedback and observation of a practicing leader. This program could definitely become a model or professional development meeting the needs of the individual leaders – just as teaching meets the needs of the child.

## **Suggestions for Future Research**

1. Future studies could investigate the existence of familial support in leaders by asking questions directed toward the personal aspects of leaders' lives – family environment and background.
2. Future studies could investigate the existence of prairie values – strong work ethic, family oriented/community based support systems, adaptability, value for learning and sharing – and their connection to leadership.
3. Three participants predicted the community school model would be used in the future and School<sup>PLUS</sup> has arrived. A study could investigate the relationship between effective leaders and successful School<sup>PLUS</sup> models and their leaders.
4. How do we get more transformational leaders in education? Presently, we have managers and leaders as educational administrators. Their reputations reveal whether or not they are managers or leaders; however, personal interviews could facilitate the identification of leaders and they could, in turn, mentor the managers in their leadership styles.

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5. Research could be conducted in classrooms of teachers to see whether or not the classroom teachers possess the characteristics of transformational leaders. Both the teachers and the students could be observed in this environment as opposed to this study which only accessed information from the leaders' perspective, not the followers.
  6. Future research in transformational leadership in education could include group interviews of the leaders and detailed vignettes when creating a scenario for a response from the leaders which, incidentally, could be given to them prior to the interview to facilitate more thorough responses.
  7. Research could be conducted in technology and change from the leadership perspective. Technology has greatly affected our lives both personally and professionally. As a result, current changes in education appear to be adding to the stress. Change during our technologically advanced times appears to be "too much" when, actually, it may only be the combination of technology and change simultaneously affecting our lives.

## Concluding Statements

I am confident in stating that the effective educational leaders that participated in this study possessed the characteristics of transformational leaders. Further to the question, the effective leaders who participated in this study appeared to possess the qualities necessary to take on the responsibility for revitalizing an organization now and in the future.

According to Michael Fullan (2002), successful leaders combine five core mindsets of competencies: possessing moral purpose, understanding change, developing relationships, generating and sharing knowledge, and building coherence (pp. 3-4).

Fullan's (2002) research supports the results of the Moore (2004) study. A comparison of Fullan's leadership qualities and the characteristics of effective educational leaders that emerged from this study follows in Figure 5.

*... the effective leaders who participated in this study appeared to possess the qualities necessary to take on the responsibility for revitalizing an organization now and in the future.*

**Figure 5. *Qualities of a Successful Leader and Characteristics of Effective Educational Leaders***

<i>Qualities of a Successful Leader</i> (Fullan, 2002)	<i>Characteristics of Effective Educational Leaders</i> (Moore, 2004)
1. Possessing moral purpose	Personal strength and commitment
2. Understanding change	Attraction to challenge and change
3. Developing relationships	Collegial approach to leadership
4. Generating and sharing knowledge	Admiration for learning
5. Building coherence	Personal strength and commitment Collegial approach to leadership

In conclusion, the essence of this study was that effective leaders who have strong family support systems, collegial approaches to leadership, admiration for learning, personal strength and commitment, and attraction to challenge and change were, indeed, transformational leaders. These leaders are likely to provide excellent leadership for the future. They are outstanding models of leadership who are willing to venture into unknown territory and who exemplify good leadership in education and business.