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Dan L. Bickmore

High levels of teacher's regularly leaving a school, defined here as teacher turnover, negatively impacts student performance through losses of institutional memory, increased hiring and professional development costs, higher rates of novice teachers, and the loss of human and social capital (Pil & Leana, 2009; Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Several factors impact teacher turnover, in particular working conditions and school context (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzono, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Ladd, 2011; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Researchers have identified principal leadership as one working condition variable that affects teacher turnover, concluding that the quality of principal leadership may be one of the most significant variables impacting turnover (Allensworth et al., 2009; Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2011; Burkhaouser, 2017; Kraft, Marinell, & Shen-Wei Yee, 2016; Ladd, 2011).

Principal impact on turnover occurs indirectly through how she/he organises other school working conditions (Allensworth et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2011; Burkhaouser, 2017; Kraft, Marinell, & Shen-Wei Yee, 2016; Ladd, 2011), as well as the principal's direct interactions with teachers (Author & Author, 2010a; Kraft, Marinell, & Shen-Wei Yee, 2016; Scherff, 2008). How principals organise working conditions and interface with staff may be dependent on the interaction of personal attributes and administrative experiences and how these interactions are represented in professional dispositions (Crow, 2006; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman , 2000; Northouse, 2013). Professional dispositions are theorized to guide principal practises (Crow, 2006; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Helm, 2010; Murphy, 2000), and national

United States (US) eduational leadership standards include principal dispositions that are meant to direct effective leadership practises (Lindahl, 2009; Sanders & Kearney, 2008).

School context also impacts teacher turnover. A growing body of evidence points to higher teacher turnover rates in US charter schools than in traditional public schools (TPS) in the US (Miron & Applegate, 2007; Stuit & Smith, 2012). Although researchers have speculated as to why teacher turnover rates are higher in charters schools (Stuit & Smith, 2012), few studies have examined how charter school working conditions might impact teacher retention or turnover and, more specifically, how charter school principal leadership affects teacher turnover (Ndoye, Imig, & Parker, 2010).

The purpose of this embedded case study was to examine charter principals' dispositions and practises that might have contributed to high rates of teacher turnover in two charter schools. Because this study specifically investigated the impact three charter school principals in two schools might have had on teachers leaving the schools they lead, for the purposes of this study, teacher turnover was narrowly defined as those teachers that left the school. Further, we use the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's (2011) definition of professional dispositions to frame this study, 'Professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities' (p. 89). As an overarching question that guided the study, we asked: How did these principals' professional dispositions and practises affect working conditions and impact teacher turnover?

Findings indicated that principals' dispositions were related to practises that seemed to affect working conditions, which in turn, negatively influenced teacher turnover. Principals' dispositions centered on autocratic and managerial leadership, and a narrow focus on state

accountability appeared to lead to practises surrounding termination and non-renewal of contracts, problematic interactions with teachers, and limited supportive structures for teachers. We conclude with questions about how the context of the charter school may have played a part in these principals' dispositions and implementation of related practises.

Literature Review

Researchers indicate student outcomes are negatively affected as teacher turnover rises at any given school (Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013), with 25% or greater annual teacher turnover rates being considered particularly high (Allensworth, et al, 2009). Teacher turnover rates in the US vary depending on the number of years a teacher remains teaching, with higher rates of teacher turnover occurring for teachers in their first five years (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). According to Raue and Gray (2015), of the new teachers who stay in teaching, 38% leave the first school in which they teach within four years. On average, approximately 15% of all teachers leave a school annually in the US (Keigher & Cross, 2010). Teachers with less than four years of experience have much higher teacher turnover rates, with first year teacher turnover approaching 23% (Keigher & Cross, 2010). Schools with high percentages of novice teachers are thus, susceptible to higher rates of turnover.

Principal Leadership and Working Conditions

Researchers have examined a variety of working conditions that appear to influence teacher turnover and retention, including quality of facilities, time for planning or working with colleagues, school safety, work load outside class time, professional development, empowerment in personal and schools decisions, salary, student behaviour, school culture, student demographics, and principal leadership (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Burkhauser, 2017; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Kraft, Merinell and Yee, 2016; Ladd, 2011; Leithwood,

2006). Of this long list of working conditions that have emerged within the literature, however, several key factors that improve teacher retention have surfaced – a school culture of collaborative responsibility, teacher empowerment and involvement in decisions, student behaviour, a safe working environment, and the quality of principal leadership (Allensworth et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2011; Ndoye et al., 2010). Comparing teacher survey data to working conditions and student achievement in Massachusetts, Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2012) concluded that while a wide range of working conditions are important to teachers in forming decisions to stay or leave schools, 'elements that are social in nature matter most' (p. 14). Specifically, three social factors were identified – collegial productive working relationships with school colleagues, a school culture that is characterized by mutual trust, respect, openness, and principal leadership that is supportive and creates school environments conducive to learning. Further, these same three factors, in addition to community support of parents and the broader community, were also associated with higher student achievement (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012).

Recent studies have more explicitly identified principal leadership as the most salient factor in teacher decisions to stay or leave schools in the US (Allensworth et al., 2009; Boyd et al., 2011; Burkhauser, 2017; Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016; Ladd, 2011). For example, using survey methodology, Boyd et al. (2011) investigated school contextual factors and first year teacher turnover in New York City (US) schools. These contextual factors were teacher influence over their own work and school decisions, administrative support, staff relations, facilities, and safety. The researchers concluded that school administrator support was the only factor, 'that significantly predicts teacher retention decisions after controlling for other school and teacher characteristics' (2011, p. 323). School administrator support was defined as, 'the extent to which

principals and other school leaders make teachers' work easier and help them to improve their teaching' (2011, p. 307). Rather than focusing on first year teachers, Kraft, Merinell and Yee (2016) also used the New York City School Survey of all middle grade teachers to elicit working conditions that may influence teacher turnover and student achievement. According to Kraft and colleagues, "School administrators' leadership skills emerge as particularly salient for whether teachers decide to remain at their school" (p. 1439) and the impact of the principal on student achievement is indirect and occurs through their influence on the working conditions and climate within the school.

In a survey study of North Carolina (US) teachers, Ladd (2011) examined six teacher working conditions compared to teacher intentions and final decisions to remain at their schools – leadership, teacher empowerment, time factors, professional development, facilities and resources, and teacher evaluations. Ladd (2011) summarized the results stating, 'Among the working conditions factors, the dominant factor, by far, is the quality of school leadership… the higher the perceived quality of school leadership, the less likely teachers are either to plan to leave or actually leave the school' (p. 256). Burkhauser (2017), also using the teacher survey data of school working conditions in North Carolina, confirmed and extended Ladd's work. Surveying all middle grade teachers rather than only first year teachers, Burkhauser focused specifically on the effects principals had on teacher perceptions of their working conditions. The principals' influence permeated all dimensions of teacher working conditions surveyed. Burkhauser determined that 'principals play a key role in improving teachers' perceptions of their school environment which has been shown to affect their leaving decisions' (p. 140).

The multifaceted influence principals have on teacher turnover is established by Allensworth, Ponisciak, and Mazzeo (2009) in their study of working conditions and teacher

turnover in Chicago (US) Public Schools, 'Principals set the expectations for teachers' work and shape the working conditions in the school… The principal, who is the teacher's supervisor, can provide direct support to their practice' (p. 30). Examining district personnel records and school data the authors conclude personal interactions with teachers appear to be one element of direct support that influences teacher perceptions and intentions to stay at their schools and remain in the profession. In a case study of two novice teachers over two years, Schreff (2008), concluded that the lack of principal personal interactions and support was a major factor in the two teachers leaving their schools and the profession. In contrast, using a mixed method design of the induction programmes of two middle schools, Author and Author's (2010b) case study findings suggested that the principal's development of a school climate of support, including structured positive interactions between the principal and novice teachers, led to teachers staying at the school and having a positive perception of the profession. Also using case study methodology, Waddell (2010) confirms that positive relationships between principals and teacher supports teacher retention.

How principals impact organisational structures, school cultures, professional and personal interactions, and prioritize other important teacher working conditions, such as collaboration, in addition to their personal interactions with teachers might all impact teacher decisions to stay at a school. Evidence is mounting that principals' impact on organisational structures that enhance human and social capital, such a professional development and scheduling structured time for collaboration, impact teachers' willingness to stay at schools (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; author & author, 2010a; Smith, & Ingersoll, 2004). It is the multi-layered influence principals might have on the entire school programme that undergirds their high impact on teacher turnover and retention.

Teacher Turnover in Charter Schools

School setting is also a predictive factor of teacher turnover. Charter schools in the US

are publicly funded schools approved by state government entities and granted greater autonomy

over curriculum, instruction, and management than TPS (Zimmer 2009). Charter schools are

typically governed differently than traditional US public schools. Whereas TPS are almost

exclusively part of a school system or district and governed by elected school boards, charter

schools are governed by boards that are comprised of members either recruited or invited to

serve by charter founders. Acquiring autonomy from the oversite of a school system and less

government regulations are common reasons founders choose to charter a school (US Charter

Schools, 2010). In return for greater autonomy, such as hiring practises and length of workdays,

policy expectation of charter schools include greater innovation and improved student outcomes,

including reducing inequities among socioeconomic and ethnic student groups (Lubineski &

Weitzel, 2010). However, researchers have noted that the accountability measures for charter

school effectiveness has rested primarily on student standardized test scores (Miron, 2010;

Wohlstetter, Smith, & Farrell, 2013). As a result, some researcher have outlined that the trade-

off between greater autonomy and accountability has increased pressure felt by charter schools

administrators to improve standardized test scores (Author & Author 2014; Gawlik, 2012).

Controlling for demographic variables, research indicates turnover rates in US charter

schools are twice the rate of comparable TPS (Miron & Applegate, 2007; Stuit & Smith, 2012).

Further, researchers noted that involuntary turnover (the dismissal of ineffective teachers) may

be higher in US charter schools than TPS in the US (Miron & Applegate, 2007; Stuit & Smith,

2012). The more current literature on teacher evaluations suggest there might be a need for

higher rates of involuntary turnover as a means of increasing student achievement (The New

Teacher Project, 2012), and that charter schools, with principal autonomy, have a greater ability to remove ineffective teachers (Miron, 2010). Yet, research conducted by Miron and Applegate (2007) and Stuit and Smith (2012) suggested involuntary turnover did not account for the large difference in rates of turnover of teachers from charter schools compared to TPS in the US. Additionally, research by Stuit and Smith (2012) indicated working conditions were more important to charter teachers than TPS teachers. Miron and Applegate (2007), in their evaluation of teacher turnover in charter schools, indicated that teacher satisfaction with school administration was one of four working condition that were significantly associated with teachers remaining in their charter schools.

Thus, as with TPS, charter school principals play a key role in the retention and teacher turnover in charter schools. US charter principals might be more instrumental than TPS administrators in teacher turnover because of autonomy given to charter leaders. A central tenet of the charter school movement is that school leaders have greater latitude in staffing, including hiring, firing, and non-renewal of teacher contracts (Wohlstetter et al., 2013).

Theoretical Frame: Dispositions and Practises

In exploring teacher turnover in these two charter schools, we framed our research through the interaction of two theoretical perspectives. First, Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman (2000) proposed a theoretical model of effecitve leadership predicated on a leader's personal attributes which influence the leaders' competencies, such as knowledge, social judgement and skills, and problem solving skills. In turn, this combination impacts the leader's ability to effectively problem solve. Leadership performance is the result of how well the leader is able to solve complex organisational problems. A leader's personal attributes and competencies are shaped by career expereinces and environmental influences which affect

competencies, problem solving, and performance. Leaders competencies to solve novel problems are developed over time as they deal with organisational issues that require interacting with people while managing tasks. Performance is measured through the practises in which the leader engages and how those practises result in effectively solving organisational problems (Northouse, 2013).

Principal dispostions, the second theoretical perspective supporting this research, intesects with Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman's (2000) leadership skill model through personal attributes described in the model. A leaders' dispositions, professional beliefs, value system, attitudes, ethics, and principles are part of the personal attributes of the leader described by Mumford et al (2000). Principal disposition influence performance through their contribution to problem solving as displayed by the leaders' practises.

Exploring principal dispositions and how they interact with principal practises and performance is a relatively recent research focus associated with school leadership (Crow, 2006). As Crow suggests:

> Until recently, principal preparation and professional development in the USA focused exclusively on knowledge and skills. But the values and dispositions that a beginning principal carries into the job and develops on the job are critical for the way the role is enacted (2000, p. 319).

Principal dispositions as an element of effective leadership gained prominence in the US with the advent of the national Council of Chief State School Officers (1996, 2008) Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) principal standards (Lindahl, 2009; Sanders & Kearney, 2008). In the original 1996 standards, principals were expected to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions within six standards. Dispositions were defined as beliefs and values that lead to

specific leadership behaviours within each standard. The framers of the standards acknowledge that dispositions 'often occupied center stage' (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 8) in how principals make decisions.

The concept of dispositions stems from the field of social psychology, where research findings suggest dispositions are the manifestation of sets of attitudes, personality traits, and beliefs, which, if tracked over time, can predict future behaviour (Ajzen, 1987). As Perkins (1995) noted, 'dispositions are the proclivities that lead us in one direction rather than another…' (p. 275). From the education field, Katz and Rath (1985) contended that dispositions lead to habits of behaviour, which appear in a variety of situations over time. In both the social psychology and educational literature, researchers have expressed difficulty in the measurement and identification of disposition (Ajzen, 1987; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007; Bussey & Welch, 2014; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Diez, 2007; Green, 2013; Pregot, 2015). Ajzen (1987), in reviewing the social psychology research, concluded dispositions could be inferred from overt behaviour, but also from verbal responses, if these responses consistently occurred over time.

School leadership researchers have attempted to confirm which leadership dispositions are associated with effective principal leadership. Identification of effective school administrator dispositions are gleaned from research of effective principal practise rather than research of principal dispositions (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Green, 2013; Schulte and Kowel, 2005). Green (2013), as an example, identified 49 dispositions associated with effective principal leadership in the literature. These dispositions included trust, honesty, compassion, and openness, of which many, but not all were included in the ISLLC standards.

Confirming that such dispositions are associated with effective practise is difficult

because dispositions are a reflection of behaviours over time. Some researchers have attempted to develop instruments to identify and screen individuals with dispositions associated with effective school leadership practises. Bussey and Welch (2014) in a review of 10 such instruments, concluded that none were tightly aligned with dispositional elements outlined in the literature. More importantly, these instruments 'reduced the complex and dynamic manifestation of human dispositions to paper-and-pencil, web-based self-assessments, or 360 surveys.' (p. 34). Bassey and Welch further concluded, 'Given that dispositions are demonstrated through a variety of leader behaviours, the most fair or accurate measure would ideally be a qualitative multistep process administered over time' (p. 34).

Few studies have specifically set out to examine principal dispositions over time and how these dispositions play out in practise and school outcomes (Crow, 2006; Garcia-Garduno & Martinez-Martinez, 2013; Green & Cooper, 2013; Martin, 2009; Pregot; 2015; Wasonga, 2010, Wasonga, & Murphy, 2007). If, as researchers argue, dispositions are critical to effective leadership (Crow, 2006; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Helm, 2010; Murphy, 2003) then more studies outlining how principal dispositions interact with school outcomes is warranted. This may be particularly true in charter schools were principals have greater latitude and autonomy to enact their beliefs and attitudes. As to the date of this issue we are unaware of any studies that specifically examine charter principal dispositions and how dispositions are reflected in principal practises that lead to performance and school outcomes over time. In this study, we examine principal disposition as a component of individual attributes that contribute to problem solving and performance through examining principal practises related to high rates of teacher turnover in the charter school context.

Methods and Data Sources

The research presented in this study is embedded within a three-year comparative case study (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2012) of how charter principals, new to their schools, enacted leadership in two charter schools, Castle Elementary School (CES) (All names pseudonyms) and Quest Middle School (QMS) (Author & Author, 2014). Although two different school levels with potential differences in leadership contexts, as a comparative case we focused on the leadership similarities between the cases as outlined by Merriam (1998) and Yin (2009). Chartered by the local school district to allow parental choice, CES had been in operation for 12 years as the study began. QMS was a take-over charter middle school that opened the first year of the study. Both charter schools were considered high poverty (95% free and reduced lunch), with high percentages of African American students (on average 91 and 87% respectively). School demographics were similar to the comparable traditional district schools in the urban area in Louisiana in which the two charter schools were located.

Three principals were involved in this study over the three years at two campuses, one at CES and two at QMS. Mr. Allen took the helm of CES as a first year principal with three years of teaching experience. Mr. Dixon, who had three years of administrative experience in charter schools and six years of teaching experience, all in charter schools, opened QMS. Mr. Sellick took over the principalship of QMS the second year of the study when Dixon transferred to a second school operated by the same chartering organisation. Sellick had 3 years of teaching experience in charter schools, and 2 years as a school administrator in charter schools in the southwest. None of the three principals had administrative endorsements and all had been alternately certified as teachers.

In the State of Louisiana, as in customary in other states, principals are required to obtain certification requirements. Commonly, this is obtained through a masters' program specific to

school leadership, but can also be achieved through alternative certification routes. According to the Louisiana Department of Education website, "All Louisiana schools are led by appropriately credentialed and effective school leaders (Louisiana Department of Education, 2017). However, charter school principals in Louisiana are exempt from obtaining school leadership certification and are also exempt from other requirements of TPS principals such as holding a valid Louisiana Type B or Level 2 teaching certificate or three years of teaching experience in his/her area of certification (Louisiana Department of Education, 2016).

The data sources in the original case study included a total of 64 teacher and principal interviews (37 and 27 respectively), school observations, and artifacts. We selected the original participants based on convenience and criteria sampling (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007). Ten charter schools had approached the college of education in which we worked for support. From this pool we asked two schools with different grade configuration, where the principal was new to the school, to participate in our original comparative case study that examined how principals new to their charter school enacted leadership.

The issue of teacher turnover surfaced at the end of the first year of the original study when 9 of 12 (75%) of all teachers in CES and 21 of 33 (64%) of all teachers in QMS left the school, most by choice. The teacher turnover issue continued throughout the three year study, affecting teachers involved in the study. In the first year of the research, five teachers from each school were randomly selected to participate in the study interviews. Over the course of the study, it was necessary to replace six to seven interviewees each year due to turnover, with only one teacher interviewee out of the 10 original teachers still at either school by year three (See Table 1). All of the teacher participants who volunteered for the original study left the school by choice. Additionally, data indicated that, on average, 30 to 40% of the teachers each year were

first year teachers at these schools, and 60 to 70% had less than 4 year of teaching experience in any year. The actual turnover rate was difficult to assess because of mid-year turnover, which ranged from one to four teachers each year at each school.

[Insert Table I about here]

As an embedded case study (Stake, 2006), we re-analyzed the original data, focusing on how these charter school principals' dispositions and practises may have contributed to the high teacher turnover rates. In the original study, an eclectic coding scheme was used (Saldaña, 2013), applying open and in vivo codes emerging from the data related to principals' leadership dispositions, knowledge, skills, and practises. For this embedded study, the original first cycle codes related specifically to teacher turnover and retention were culled and then examined separately as a unit of analysis. Additional first level codes were added to the original coding process. The constant comparative method was employed using only the principal interviews to categorize codes and consolidate categories into themes that described principal dispositions related to teacher turnover (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Simultaneously, a separate constant comparative analysis was employed to develop categories and themes that described principals' practises or non-practises related to teacher retention and turnover.

In this second analysis, principal and teacher interview data, observational field notes, and artifacts were analyzed. In this phase, the researchers together and line-by-line, achieving inter coding agreement (Saldaña and Omatsa, 2018). We used only principal interviews and field note data in the first constant comparative analysis as dispositions are inherent to the individual's beliefs. Alternately, we used both principal and teacher interviews, field notes, and artifacts in the second analysis based on the notion that principal practises are observable behaviours for which both the principal and the teacher can describe principal actions and form perceptions of

those actions.

We addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability through multiple processes in the original case study and embedded analysis of data (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 2010), including prolonged engagement with the research sites, data, and analysis, triangulation of data, three participant member checks and audits of transcripts, multiple individuals collecting and analyzing data, and eliciting critical feedback from colleagues related to our analysis and write-ups. As former traditionally trained school and district administrators and career educators, we also were cognizant of our biases toward traditional preparation programs for teachers and administrators. Thus, we elicited the critical feedback from colleagues, three teacher participants, and teachers and administrators in charter and TPS schools related to our analysis and write-ups as a means to bracket such bias. We accomplished this by asking this feedback group to read drafts of our work, similar to Patton's (2002) member checking strategy.

Study Findings

We present the findings in two sections. These sections represent the themes that emerged from the two constant comparative analyzes of the data. The themes associated with principal dispositions that appeared to influence principal practises are presented in the first section. In the second section, we describe the themes that emerged related to principal practises that have potential impacts on teacher working conditions. These two sets of themes are presented to address the overarching question that framed this study: How did these principals' professional dispositions and practises affect working conditions and impact teacher turnover?

Principal Dispositions

Three themes emerged related to principal dispositions. These themes were: (1)

autocratic disposition; (2), managerial disposition; and (3) narrow focus on accountability disposition.

Autocratic dispositions. Principals had a strong agenda and expectations for teacher performance and behaviour. Each repeatedly expressed that teachers would not remain at the school if they did not meet this agenda. An actual statement by Mr. Allen at CES epitomizes this disposition for all three principals when he described what might happen if teachers didn't meet his expectation,

> It's my way or the highway. I see it one way you see it a different way and, we, if we're going to work together, see the same way. If that's not going to happen find somewhere else and I need to find someone that's going to see it my way.

This disposition – that teachers should have an unwavering focus on the principal's agenda – never changed over the three years of the study or across principals. This loyalty to the principals' view was labeled differently by the three principals but was essentially the same concept. For Allen (CES) it was 'meeting high expectations,' and for Dixon and Selleck (QMS) it was 'professionalism.'

All three principals also felt they were better served by having non-experienced teachers who they believed were more willing to follow their agenda as represented by Dixon at QMS,

> Some experienced teachers, they bring their own mentality. That's a good part of the Teach for America Teachers; they are brand new and very responsive and… they kind of follow 100%. But whenever a teacher comes from a different system they bring their own mentality and this is, 'We used to do it this way,' and they don't want to be responsive … follow the instruction like we expected.

In tandem, requiring loyalty to the principal's agendas and a belief that novice teachers were

more willing to be response to the principal's expectations were fundamental dispositions held by each principal.

      Managerial Dispositions. Principals placed limited value on developing teacher capacity, expressing expectation that teachers should be prepared to do their jobs when hired. Selleck (QMS) represented the principals' general dispositions related to supporting teacher development, 'As a principal I don't see my job teaching every teacher how to teach because, you know, it's their job. They went to school for four years for that.' Allen (CES) also expected teachers to take ownership of their own development, but also expressed his role in clearly identifying his expectations to teachers. When asked what he thought his role was in teacher development he stated he should make clear '…what my sort of non-negotiables were which are sense of urgency, relentlessness, no excuses and that would be my expectation moving forward.' When specifically asked how he supported struggling teachers who did not meet his expectations, however, he stated, 'Fire them. No I'm kidding.' However, he continued by stating, 'The teachers that really want to bring it to the next level… are gonna remain and the other ones probably will self-select themselves out.'

      Principals' dispositions affecting how they developed teacher capacity were also influenced by beliefs associated with their own competence related to effective instructions. Each principal expressed, on multiple occasions, that they lacked instructional knowledge and skill. Allen phrased his lack of instructional background in terms of instructional leadership, 'I'm not the instructional leader… I'm the fiscal leader… I don't necessarily know all or any [instructional practises]. I'm not afraid to admit it.' Selleck echoed this sentiment by stating, 'I'm confident with helping them [teachers] with their work, but not teaching. Not teaching.' Helping teachers with their work for the QMS principals meant giving them the resources they

felt they needed to teach, such as textbooks and programmes for assessment and instruction.

The combination of expecting teachers to be proficient in their work from day one and principals' perception of their lack of instructional leadership skills seemed to influence their dispositions toward professional development. Providing professional development did not seem to be a priority for principals. Of the 120 principal passages coded as *Principal Priorities* only six were related to providing professional development for teachers. Allen at CES accounted for five of the six codes. Overall principals seemed to view building teacher capacity as a necessary nuisance.

Principals also expressed little value for long-term development of social capital defined as 'the actual and potential resources embedded in relationships among actors' (Leana & Pil, 2006, p. 353). High levels of social capital in a school result in outcomes beyond the collective individual capacity of the teachers in the building (Ishimara, 2012; Leana & Pil, 2006; Pil and Leana, 2009). There was only one coded passage under *Principal Priorities* that referenced developing relationship among teachers. In our first interview with him in the first year of the study, Dixon at QMS stated, "I wanna set up the school culture like a family". However, Dixon did not repeat this sentiment in any subsequent interviews.

Each principal prioritized developing a positive culture, the code *Culture as a Priority* having 30 principal coded passages. However, they spoke about school culture generally in terms of changing the culture to be more outcome based, 'data driven,' and centred on high expectations for students. The notion of a culture that acknowledged or developed relationships among staff and faculty as a resource was rare. The value of faculty relationships in developing culture occurred in only one instance. When discussing grade level and department meetings at his school, Dixon stated, 'So they are sharing ideas and it really helps set up the school culture.'

In combination with principals' lack of commitment to personal interactions and relationship building directly with teachers, the data indicated that principals saw little value in developing social capital as a resource for improving school or student outcomes.

Narrow focus accountability disposition. Each principal directly stated or intimated that they had high expectations of teachers. As noted earlier, high expectation often translated to teacher's adhering to principal directives and goals. Principal goals generally translated to higher student performance, as measured by improved state test scores. Although principals expressed priorities other than test scores for their schools, the principals clearly valued improving state test scores as the primary indicator of their school's success, as noted by the volume and intensity of codes related to testing. As an example, of the 120 individual codes derived from principal interviews in the code category labeled *Principal Priority, Mission, and Goals*, 76 were related to state testing. The next highest volume of codes in this category were those related to hiring effective teachers at 15 total codes.

Each principal discussed both the desire and perceived necessity to improve the school's state rating, which was based primarily on the state's accountability test. Each principal expressed multiple times what Selleck (QMS) stated succinctly, 'My major goal is raising test scores.' Principals fervently believed the school and their effectiveness was measured by state testing. Mr. Allen's (CES) statement reflects this belief, 'My more short term goals are to essentially shift our bell curve from where it is now up a notch in terms of standardized scores, what everyone else will look at.' When asked why he was so focused on test scores as his ultimate goal, Dixon (QMS) responded, 'Because it is the only measure. It's kind of sad that, basically science fair results in the region wide, you know, in the regional science fair and everything – it is based on the test scores and nothing else.'

This high value placed on test scores coloured principals' view of teacher effectiveness, placing improved test scores, along with teacher compliance, as primary indicators of whether to keep or release a teacher. The three principals had a similar formulaic process for determining whether teachers were going to be released or invited back as expressed by Selleck (QMS): 'We just did the chart [teachers to be invited back]. I would say fifty percent student achievement, fifteen or twenty percent professionalism, and the remaining thirty percent is observations.' Although expressed in various ways, each principal repeatedly outlined how improving test scores was the greatest determinate of teacher effectiveness and their primary indicator of whether to keep or not invite a teacher to return.

Principal Practises

Principal practises derive from multiple dispositions. We present three themes associated with principal practises that emerged from the data. These practises provide a picture of the principal dispositions previously outlined that indirectly impact teacher working condition. These three themes were: (1) non-renewal and termination; (2) teacher/principal interaction; and (3) formal structural supports.

Non-renewal and termination. Throughout the course of this study, principals used their autonomy to non-renew contracts and terminate teachers liberally. As an example, in the first year of the study Allen (CES) informed half of his teachers in March that their contracts would not be renewed for the fall. He felt these teachers were not meeting his expectations, particularly related to using data to drive instructional practises that he believed would improve test scores. He later discussed how, in retrospect, dismissing teachers this early in the school year was a mistake because it led to a 'toxic' school climate. Allen continued, however, to use non-renewal for two of his 12 teachers both the second and third years of the study.

The QMS principals were less forthright about non-renewal. As an example, Dixon simply did not tell teachers whether they had a job or not the following year waiting for state test scores. This uncertainty contributed to teacher turnover as expressed by Ms. Camp, 'They [administration] told us they were not going to let us know until after our [state exam] results come in…. I know a lot of teachers are looking elsewhere…' This same pattern of uncertainty at QMS continued with Selleck the following two years.

Mid-year terminations occurred regularly at both schools. Although we did not directly ask principals or teachers about mid-year terminations, we have evidence of 11 occurrences, five at CES and six at QMS. In interviews, participants, both teachers and principals, discussed these terminations and why the incidence occurred. In all instances, participants stated the firings were not due to teaching incompetence or safety issues. Instead, teachers and principals agreed, staff were terminated for not meeting principal expectations of professionalism or when they had disagreements with the principal. Ms. Crosby provides an example, "She [teacher fired] questioned when he [Dixon] did things that were kinda unprofessional". Principals appeared to use an authoritative leadership style when teachers questioned principals' expectations. Job related insecurities often resulted in teacher expressions that the environment was stressful. Although other working conditions besides job security led to teacher perceptions at each school, we noted open codes such as *chaotic* and *survival* to describe the climate of the school for teachers in relation to their sense of job security. Ms. Lake, an experienced teacher, described how teachers felt principal personnel practises affected teacher working conditions,

> People are afraid they're going to lose their jobs. There was an honest conversation at one of our faculty meetings on Friday. …he [Allen] said, you know, 'Some of you are worried, and quite honestly you should be. Maybe you need to reevaluate whether or not

you want to be here.' … so everyone starts to get paranoid about whether or not they're

good enough because affirmations aren't given and so you're just kind of left, like, 'Well,

are my scores going to be good enough and I get to stay?

Although manifested in slightly different iterations, principals' use of autonomy to determine

ongoing employment was perceived by teachers to result in less than desirable working

conditions.

Principal/teacher interactions. Interactions between principals and teachers, beyond

employment issues, were often strained. Teachers were not included in decisions, principals'

visibility and personal interaction with teachers was inconsistent, and feedback to teachers on

performance was limited and/or teachers perceived feedback given as ineffective.

Almost all decisions at both schools were made by the principal. Ms. Pressely, who acted

as the English Language Arts department chair at QMS confirmed the limited involvement of

teacher in school decision-making, 'Well we have our department heads, but as far as decision

making goes, I mean, it's kind of, like, out the window. So we really don't have any input.' Mr.

Dixon (QMS) directly confirmed teacher perceptions, 'I believe it's my responsibility to kind of

do, for every single factor that involves the real leadership in this school. Absolutely.'

Personal interactions with the principals varied by school and principal, but were

perceived by teachers to be limited, distant, or not supportive. At CES, Allen was very visible in

classrooms and throughout the school and had multiple one-on-one interactions with each

member of the teaching staff. However, teachers perceived Allen to be dogmatic and

unsupportive to them personally. As a result of unilateral decisions and limited two-way

communication, most teachers expressed distrust of Allen. Ms. Lake was the most direct, but

represented interviewees at CES over the three years, 'I've had some concerns about, like, I'm

not sure I trust him now when it comes to stuff now...'

In contrast, the principals at QMS were rarely visible in classrooms, hallways, or during school time. Teachers interviewed perceived that almost no relational interaction with the principals existed, and further, principals were seen to be unapproachable. Ms. Meyer, an instructional coach at QMS summed up teachers' perceptions of principal relationships with teachers, '… they didn't care!' Perceptions by teachers at QMS that principals were uncaring seemed to result from a lack of personal interactions.

How principals provided professional feedback to teachers also resulted in a lack of professional trust. Although Allen was frequently in the classroom, he rarely provided feedback to teachers, either positive or negative, leaving teachers to wonder about his motives for the visits and competence related to providing effective feedback related to instruction. Allen saw no need in providing formal feedback to teachers when he visited classrooms and expressed his sense that observations were a form of quality control and power over teachers, 'I really shy away from the whole formal observation. I think every observation is a formal observation quite frankly, it's like I'm always in there so I'm always watching.' Ms. Levy discussed how observations and lack of feedback were seen as monitoring and controlling, 'He pops into classrooms, but remains kind of like a shadow-type figure… teachers aren't necessarily teaching at this point in the year because they love their profession; a lot of it is fear-based.' Mr. Walker represented all the teachers interviewed at CES when he discussed how this lack of principal feedback was viewed as a lack of instructional competence,

> I'm not sure how comfortable our principal is with making a lot of suggestions,
> recommendations. …It's not that he's ever given silly recommendations or ideas, I just
> think that, you know, overall I get the sense that maybe he's, you know, not the 'pro' at

that [teaching].

Because principals at QMS rarely visited classrooms, even for formal evaluations, there was almost no evidence of feedback or professional advice provided to teachers. Over three years, no teacher stated either principal had a face-to-face conversation with them about their teaching. Even feedback from formal evaluations conducted by the principals was given by email or a checklist form left in teacher boxes. Teachers at QMS, without exception, believed the principals' instructional background and knowledge was limited and that effective instruction was not a priority to principals. Ms. Meyer epitomized teacher perceptions of principals, 'They were not concerned about instruction… I don't think they actually knew what effective instruction was. I don't even know if they knew what the term meant. I'm not being sarcastic. I'm being totally honest.' Similar to interviews at CMS, teachers at QMS indicated that the lack of professional feedback and interactions with the principal lead to less than desirable working conditions, where uncertainty and lack of trust were characteristics of the culture.

Formal Structural Supports. Organisational structures that could potentially support teachers personally or professionally were inconsistently implemented, absent, or ineffective. Specifically, collaborative structures were either not in place or if present, poorly and/or inconsistently implemented. Professional development was limited and there were no specific organisational structures in place to induct novice teachers.

At CES, there was a vague understanding that grade level teachers (two teachers per grade) were to develop curriculum together. Time during the school day for collaboration was not provided in the schedule. As one teacher explained, 'There's just not a lot of sharing of information. You walk into that person's classroom and you see things being done and you ask about it and that person is hesitant to share.'

Instead of encouraging collaboration, Allen provided teachers with a great deal of

autonomy, which veteran teachers like Lake felt was detrimental to new teachers explaining:

> [T]eachers have the autonomy to choose what they think is best for their students. And I
> think that's a good philosophy when you have veteran teachers… I think that that is like
> taking a new teacher out to the sea and saying, 'Swim to the shore.' It's just very
> overwhelming.

Further limiting collaboration and intensifying issues of work place stress at CES was the bonus structure implemented by Allen. Bonuses were given to teachers for student performance, primarily based on state testing. Allen provided teachers with student performance goals called the Golden Ticket Goal in the third year of the study. Teachers earned bonuses if they met this set of goals. Allen intimated that teachers may not be invited back if they did not meet the goal. As Jackson, one of the instructional coaches at CES stated about teacher reaction to the goals,

> They think that if they don't meet their Golden Ticket Goal they're going to be fired. …I
> have my best teacher say to me, 'Every day I feel like I'm getting punched in the stomach
> because I'm not meeting one of those goals.'

The premium placed on teacher autonomy in combination with the lack of collaborative structures and individual bonus plans that seemed punitive appeared to lead to a stressful environment for teachers, particularly novice teachers at CES.

In juxtaposition, at QMS, principals had organised the school around subject and grade level teams. The actual functioning of these collaborative structures was limited. Administration did not monitor meetings and assigned department chairs had full autonomy on what to discuss. Most teachers felt these collaborative meetings were unproductive and time ill spent as expressed by Ms. Chaplain, 'We check-in and the department chair will say, 'Here's our agenda. Do you have any other comments, questions, concerns, blah, blah, blah.' And usually it's over in fifteen

minutes.' Collaborative meetings did not occur after mid-February when preparation for testing increased.

Like CES, principals at QMS provided a great deal of autonomy to teachers. Veteran teachers appreciated the autonomy given them, but often felt there were mixed messages as far as autonomy. Ms. Chaplain discussed this issue,

> And that was the other weird thing, they were like, 'Sure, sure, yeah; do it your own way.' And then it would come test time, like mid-terms or finals and they would be, like, 'You all need the same test.' And I would be, like, 'Wait a minute; we all just did different things… It didn't make any sense, you know?

At QMS, novice teachers also felt unsupported as expressed by Mr. Gentry during his second year, 'I needed modeling… I haven't really got anyone to stand there and say, 'You could have done this better, here's what you need to do.' The mixed messages of collaboration and autonomy and the need for more structure for inexperienced teachers appeared to be factors in the high teacher turnover at QMS.

Professional development, as an organisational support to teachers, was also limited, disjointed, or ineffective at both schools. Principals experimented with delegating professional development to instructional coaches. Teachers generally viewed these coaches as ineffective because they were not given release time to visit classrooms or they had limited teaching experience themselves. The exception was Ms. Jackson, a National Board Certified teacher with 20 years experiences hired to provide coaching for teachers at CES the third year of the study. Her presence also highlighted Mr. Allen's lack of curricular and instructional expertise. Ms. Lake again summarizes the limited instructional support given by principals, 'I think pretty much it's recognised throughout the building that if you have a question about instruction, you go to

Jackson; if you have a question about business or management or infrastructure of the school, you go to Allen.'

Other than attempts at coaching and collaboration, principals scheduled school trainings several times a year, including inviting guest speakers related to address a topic chosen by the principals or sending one or two teachers to a training. These were one-time episodes without follow-up. Teacher indicated that these redeliveries did not occur. When interviewed in the spring, teachers could not recall most professional development experiences that occurred during the school year as indicated by Mr. Pressley, 'We've had a workshop, Assessments, through the Department of Ed that I attended maybe a month ago. …But other than that, I can't think of anything right now.' At both schools, professional development, a key tool in developing a positive work environment for teachers, was not viewed by teachers as supporting their work or building their capacity as teachers.

The lack of organisational structures to support teachers may have had the most impact on novice teachers. Principals did not structure any specific induction supports for new teachers, even though each year a significant portion of the teaching staff was in their first or second year. Ms. Lake suggested the lack of support for novice teachers lead to a 'churn and burn' culture at the at CES. Ms. Pressley explains how the high rate of novice teachers affected QMS,

> More than half of our staff, either their contracts were not renewed or they went
> somewhere else so we have mostly all new teachers. So that's difficult when you're
> trying to focus on instruction and curriculum and discipline and management because
> they don't have the experience. It's just challenging because it's a lot of chaos.

Novice teachers were not provided orientations, mentoring, or ongoing training at either school; instead, they were given additional workloads. Of the five first and second year teachers

interviewed over the three-year study, all were required to take on multiple extra duties such as after school tutoring, club advisor, and/or Saturday school. Principals were either indifferent or did not prioritize support for new teachers as only one comment about supporting novice principals appeared over the three years, 'We saw many first year teachers. We had some classroom management problems. I think we couldn't give that much support as administration as well, because we were busy with the other things' (Mr. Selleck).

The frequent threat of non-renewal of contracts, termination of teachers liberally, limited positive interaction with principals, and the lack of organisational structures to support teachers appeared to lead to teacher perceptions of poor working conditions. The working conditions outlined by participants portray an environment conducive to teacher turnover. The evidence presented indicates a connection and chain from principal dispositions to high rates of teacher turnover in these two charter schools.

Discussion

The interplay between principal dispositions and practises seems intuitive and is clearly advocated by organisations that support the preparation and development of principals' (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, 2008; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011). Research specifically examining principal dispositions and how leaders enact leadership, however, is still sparse (Crow, 2006; Garcia-Garduno & Martinez-Martinez, 2013; Green & Cooper, 2013; Martin, 2009; Pregot; 2015; Wasonga, 2010, Wasonga, & Murphy, 2007). Additionally, context plays a role in the interaction of dispositions and practises (Silcox, Cavanagh, & MacNeill; Wasonga, 2010). Silcox, Cavanagh, and MacNeill (2004) outlined this interaction, 'The divergence and convergence between personal dispositions and the context in which leadership is exercised causes the principal to behave in certain ways' (p. 4).

Our analysis supports the nascent research suggesting principal dispositions, practises, and context are intertwined.

The practises associated with these principals' dispositions occurred in the context of charter schooling in Louisiana (US). Charter leaders, from a policy standpoint and often by state statute, are given direction to develop innovative practises and are given the autonomy to do so in exchange for producing positive and measurable outcomes, such as improved state test scores (Gawlik, 2008; Wohlstetter et al., 2013). This growing market-driven approach to schooling places greater responsibility upon the principal by awarding increased autonomy and heightened expectations for results. Gawlik's (2008) analysis of national survey data indicated that charter principals perceive themselves to have greater autonomy to make school level decisions including those related to personnel, professional support, and general working conditions within the school. Lousisiana, a state noted as a model of charter schooling by state and national leaders (Jindal, 2013; Resmovits, 2014), provides extensive flexibility in how school leaders hire, fire, compensate, and support teachers (Lousiana Administrative Code Bulletin 126, 2012). According to proponents of charter schooling in the US, Lousiana charter laws are ranked high for the autonomy given schools and with an overall favourable context to support such flexibilty (Center for Education Reform, 2014; Ziebarth, 2014). The principals in this study within the context of charter schools in Louisiana had a great deal of autonomy to innovate and develop the working conditions necessary to retain teachers, yet these principals' dispositions and related practises were not conducive to developing such an environment.

There may be many working condition factors that influence teacher turnover not directly associated with the principal, such as student behavior and the unique needs of novice teachers. However data analysis indicated that principal dispositions in this current study appeared to be

related to practises that affected working conditions, which in turn seemed to impact teacher turnover. Principals' attitudes, values, and beliefs that decisions and expectation should rest almost exclusively with the principal and that these decisions and expectations were non-negotiable, that the primary measure of teacher effectiveness was student test scores, and that hiring the right teachers was the preferred means to improve student outcomes rather than developing teacher capacity and social capital resulted in practises that reflected these dispositions. These dispositions appeared to result in principals liberally using or threatening to use non-renewal of contracts with teachers for questioning or not meeting principal expectations and for poor student performance on state testing. In some cases, not meeting principal expectations for professionalism resulted in teacher termination.

Principals rarely shared decision-making or developed effective structures for distributing leadership across the school. According to teachers, interactions between principals and teachers provided limited room for developing positive relationships either personally or professionally. Organisational structures that could improve teacher capacity and social capital and which evidence suggests supports teacher retentions, such as collaborative structures, professional development, and new teacher induction processes (i.e., assigned mentors), were generally not present or poorly implemented. Overall, the practises principals enacted or failed to enact were not aligned with the development of workplace conditions that have been found to support teacher retention such as collaborative structures, induction support, and supportive personal interactions with teachers (Allensworth et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2011; Loeb et al., 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Instead, the practises enacted corresponded with an authoritarian style such as outlined by McGregor's (1960) Theory X approach to leadership.

The alignment of principals' dispositions and practises poses interesting contradictions

between principal dispositions, practises, and the outcomes desired by the principal. Principals were most concerned about student learning as measured by test scores, yet their practises were counter to actually achieving this goal. Principals preferred novice teachers because of their assumed pliability and positive attitudes; however, they were unwilling and/or unable to provide the necessary professional development to support them in improving practises that would improve student outcomes. Similarly, principals did not value instructional supervision or feedback that had the potential to improve teacher practises and resulting student test scores. Most perplexing was principals' seeming unconcern for the rate of teacher turnover. Although teacher turnover has a significant effect on student outcomes (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013), it appears these principals did not understand or wish to acknowledge the negative impacts continuous teacher 'churn and burn' had on student test scores and learning. These dispositions and practises created the climate of teacher fear and mistrust that actually encouraged teachers to leave the school and undermine the principals' primary goal.

Conclusions and Implications

We began this research with an overarching question that framed the study: How did these principals' professional dispositions and practises affect working conditions and impact teacher turnover? We conclude with three additional questions that surfaced from this study: a) How did these US charter principals develop such dispositions? b) Are these principals' dispositions and practises representative of other charter principals, and c) Does greater principal autonomy, whether in US charter or TPS, contribute to the dispositions outlined here, specifically as they relate to a more autocratic perspective?

These study findings may be informative to those in similar contexts or as further evidence of the theoretical link between principal dispositions and practice (Firestone, 1993).

However, this study cannot definitely answer the questions posed. We can only speculate based on Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman (2000) model of leadership that these principals' career experience and knowledge might have impacted dispositions leading to principal decision-making. The charter principals in this study had limited teaching and leadership experience. They had minimal previous exposure to high impact schools and the Louisiana charter context. Mumford and colleagues suggest knowledge and experience are central to effective problem-solving and decision-making in organisations. March's (1988) theory of decision-making further outlines that dispositional preferences influence decision making and organisational problem solving.

Although we speculate about the connection among lack of experience, dispositions, decision-making and problem solving, this study is significant as it layers upon previous research that indicates leader dispositions are connected to their practises by influencing how they problem solve and make decisions (Garcia-Garduno & Martinez-Martinez, 2013; Green & Cooper, 2013; Martin, 2009; Pregot; 2015; Wasonga, & Murphy, 2007). In this study, leader dispositions affected decisions about instructional leadership and working conditions that further affected school climate and teacher working conditions, and ultimately, teacher turnover. This study also provides a touchstone to examine further, how context may affect leaders' dispositions, decision-making, and subsequent practises, specifically in charter schools where principals have greater autonomy in choosing solutions to solve organsational problems. The limited research related to charter principal dispositions suggests that charter principals choose charter leadership because of the autonomy given them, the challenges the charter schools affords them, and a sense of mission to school reform (Gross, 2011). Meredith (2009) and Schorr (2002), in case studies of charter schools, have outlined this combination of principal autonomy

and urgency as a disposition frequently labeled 'no excuses.' This 'no excuse' disposition as it relates to teacher performance might be associated with principal practises outlined in the study presented here, and which may hinder developing supportive principal practises for teachers. Courtney and Gunter (2015), in a study of head teachers in the UK, also noted that the policies that increased autonomy in combination with increased accountability led to principals embracing a vision of 'no excuses' related to teachers. As the authors note, 'dissenting or non-conforming teachers are either disposed of, or their professional identities re-written such that what remains is unrecognisable and, importantly, compliant.' (p. 405).

However, researchers have indicated a wide variation in working conditions in charter schools (Crawford, 2001; Ndoye, Imig & Parker 2010; Wohlstetter, Smith & Parker, 2013) and TPS in the US (Allensworth, Ponisciak, & Mazzeo, 2009; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Ladd, 2011; Leithwood, 2006), suggesting similarly wide variations in principal dispositions and principal practises. Although as a case study, the results of this research cannot be generalised, they are nevertheless, important findings that offer a glimpse into principal leadership in two US charter schools. They are especially important given the rapid expansion and politcal advocacy for charter schools in the US (Education Commission of the States, 2012; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2012; US Department of Education, 2009). Building on this initial study, future research should examine the nexus of principal automony, dispositions, and practises as it is related to the high rates of teacher turnover in both charter and traditional public schools.

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