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Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System: Experiences of Administrators

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Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System:
Experiences of Administrators

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Educational Administration and Leadership

by

Pamela Stacey Quebodeaux

B. A. McNeese State University, 1974
M. ED. McNeese State University, 1986

May 2010

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This dissertation is dedicated to the Quality professionals throughout the world who
exist in every organization.

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Abstract

The Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence outline effective practices and core values that have assisted businesses, health agencies, government institutions, and several school systems in the United States to improve performance within their organizations. Recent studies of school districts from across the nation have indicated some degree of success with implementation of the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence. This phenomenological study of principals' experiences with implementation of Quality in Education (based on the Baldrige Education Criteria) within the Calcasieu Parish School System answers the question: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education?

Data were collected through individual interviews and questionnaires. Participants included ten principals who had been engaged in this district implementation effort for at least three years, as well as their administrative directors. Transcription, coding, and analysis resulted in emerging themes and key findings, which were organized as benefits and barriers to implementation of this school reform initiative. Benefits were identified as data-based decision-making and use of student data binders, a narrow focus and working smarter, not harder, and increased student responsibility for learning, parent communication and faculty input. This was accomplished through district support with professional development and the work of Quality mentors. Barriers were identified as teacher turnover and continual training of new staff, implementation of other programs, lack of faculty buy-in, and time. This study informs the literature of implementation issues with school reform initiatives.

Quality, Total Quality Management, Quality in Education, Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for
Performance Excellence, Baldrige, continuous improvement,
school improvement, school reform, administrators, principals

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence is a school reform model that is fairly new in education. The Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence outline effective practices and core values that have assisted businesses, health agencies, government institutions, and several school systems in the United States to achieve improvement of performance within their organization (Blazey, Davison, & Evans, 2000). According to Broder (1999), Malcolm Baldrige, the late United States Secretary of Commerce who served during the Reagan Administration, recognized that in order for American organizations to be competitive in the global marketplace during this age of information they would have to restructure themselves. Baldrige started a competition for companies that focused on customer satisfaction and a relentless drive for quality. Winning the Baldrige Award became a prestigious honor for American business, which led to the addition of government, healthcare, and education criteria for the award (National Institute for Science and Technology, 2007). With the addition of the education criteria, a new structure for performance excellence in education was established.

Within a school or school system, elements that are addressed through the Baldrige criteria include a focused vision, a concentration on continuous improvement through the analysis of data, a long-term perspective, conceptualization of schools as “systems,” and an overall emphasis on core processes rather than individual improvements (Blankstein, 1992; Bonstingl, 2001). Several tools assist educators in understanding core processes. Examples include Pareto charts, flowcharts, fishbone

diagrams, histograms, and checklists, to name a few (Satterlee, 1996). Teachers and staff are continually learning, collaboration and teamwork become the norm, and all efforts are focused on meeting student needs and ensuring learning. Leadership provides the framework for implementation while supporting staff and students (Bonstingl, 2001).

American education is firmly rooted in paradigms of the past. America has entered the 21st century equipped with school calendars developed in the 17th century, teaching methods of the 17th and 18th centuries, and classroom designs developed in the 19th centuries. Instructional design theorists expound the need to move from the industrial age to the information age (Reigeluth, 1999). For our country to compete against countries with advanced economies our educational system must improve. Schargel (1996) noted that the problem is that our schools have failed to keep pace with the changing demands of our country and the global marketplace. Sustained economic growth can only occur through a highly-skilled, world-class workforce made up of individuals equal to or better than the best workers in the world. Educational transformation can be achieved through a systemic change in the way our schools are organized and run and in the ways in which teaching and learning take place.

Though some controversy exists (Kohn, 1993; Banister, 2001), efforts to improve quality methods utilizing the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence may hold potential for fundamentally improving K-12 education. The Baldrige criteria address many issues that other failed reform efforts have not, including data-driven decision-making, systems thinking, changes in school culture, and leadership (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). A myriad of articles have been published

describing the efforts of schools and school districts utilizing the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for improvement efforts, but there are very few empirical studies on the outcomes of Baldrige implementation efforts.

Of the 16,000 public school districts in the United States only a few (approximately 200) were using the Baldrige criteria or Total Quality Management (here within referred to as TQM) methods in the mid 1990s (Detert & Jenni, 2000). According to the Alliance for Performance Excellence (2008), there are thirty-seven states which give state-level quality awards. Of those awards, twenty-three school districts have received state-level recognition since 2000. At the 2007 National Quality in Education Conference held in St. Louis, Missouri, attendees represented thirty-one states and four countries (Martin, 2007). According to Geri Markley, Education Division Chair of the American Society for Quality, it is very difficult to determine an exact number of districts utilizing Baldrige due to the fact that the districts may not be communicating this information outside of the district.

When the Baldrige Award for business was established in 1987, there was a dual impact on education (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). First, some districts began to independently translate and apply the criteria in their own organizations. Second, the application of Baldrige to the education arena began to gain strength as states began to include educational institutions in eligibility for state quality awards on the criteria. New Mexico, Tennessee, North Carolina, Florida, New York, and New Jersey have provided specific initiatives and statewide support that encourage the use of the Baldrige criteria in schools. Six states, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, and Texas, are part of the Baldrige in Education Initiative, a collaborative effort between national

education and business organizations and those states to promote use of Baldrige to raise student achievement.

Context of the Study

Like other districts throughout the nation, the Calcasieu Parish School System (CPSS) in the state of Louisiana has been engaged in a Quality in Education initiative (hereafter referred to as Quality) utilizing the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence for the past nine years (C. Chiasson, personal communication, August 3, 2007). A push from the local Chamber of Commerce fueled the effort to improve education within the district, which began with a School to Work Grant. Business/school partnerships forged through this grant propelled the discussion of Quality in Education. Research from the business community led to the identification of school systems in other states that were engaged in implementation of Quality with some degree of success. This research led to a pilot implementation of four schools with the initiative and a commitment from the business community to support the effort.

According to Chiasson, in 2004, the Calcasieu Parish School Board approved funding for the hiring of Quality “mentors” to support the district’s implementation of Quality in Education and the Quality Department was formed. Today, there are three mentors, all of whom are former classroom teachers, housed in the Curriculum & Instruction building, who work throughout the district to assist schools and departments in the implementation of Quality. The mentors are supervised by the Public Information and Quality Officer who oversees the development and implementation of Quality deployment strategies district wide. Training and planning in Quality practices are offered to school system teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators and central office

staff. Alignment of all system processes and development of goals and action plans are continually addressed through the Quality Department. According to the District Accreditation Standards Assessment Report (2008), the Calcasieu Parish School System ranked 14th among 69 Louisiana school districts in its District Performance Score based on accountability measures. A five-year trend showed a movement from 16th to 14th place, with 54% of schools making gains in their School Performance Scores.

Twenty-three school districts throughout the country have received state-level recognition for Quality implementation since 2000 (Alliance for Performance Excellence, 2008). In the state of Louisiana, no school districts have received the state Quality award. According to the Louisiana Quality Foundation (2008), there were no school districts, other than the Calcasieu Parish School System engaged in a district-wide approach utilizing Quality. To date, some teachers and principals in all fifty-eight schools in this suburban school system located in Southwest Louisiana have received training in Quality. This nine-year effort to improve schools, utilizing the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, has no definitive results other than sustained support from the business community and a belief by some within the school system that the initiative is making a difference.

The Role of the Principal in Implementing Quality

The principal plays a critical role in school reform. Bonstingl (2001) affirmed that responsibility for quality processes, systems, and outcomes rests with management. Workers, acting by themselves, cannot create the system-wide conditions under which quality processes take places. Newmann (2000) referred to the concept of “school

capacity” and those components which determine it: teachers’ knowledge, skills, dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources, and principal leadership. He iterated that school capacity is undermined without quality leadership. Elmore (2000) said,

The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result.
(p. 15)

The Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence identify leadership as the first category within the Baldrige framework (National Institute of Technology Standards, 2009). The Criteria are built on eleven core values, one of which is visionary leadership. This core value specifies that leadership (the principal) should set directions and determine customer focus, as well as create clear and visible values and high expectations. These expectations, values, and direction should be based on stakeholder needs. The principal must create systems, strategies, and methods to achieve performance excellence. The identified values and vision should guide all organizational activities and decisions. It’s up to the principal to encourage, motivate, and inspire the entire faculty to contribute, learn, innovate, and change. Principals serve as role models for planning, communicating, coaching, reviewing performance, and validating efforts of the workforce.

The Baldrige criteria are non-prescriptive (Walpole and Noeth, 2002). The criteria do not prescribe what to do. It is expected that organizations will determine how to address them. According to Tammy Hebert (personal interview, February 2010), the role of the principal is very important in implementing Quality within the CPSS. Principals are expected to support the Quality initiative by becoming knowledgeable in the Baldrige framework and acting as a role model for Quality processes. They should identify clear expectations for their school and inspect and monitor those expectations. Principals should use data to drive school decisions and offer opportunities for stakeholder input to improve their schools.

Statement of the Problem

Implementing Baldrige successfully within a school context involves a long-term perspective and a focus on improving teaching and learning. Training in Baldrige theory, the systematic use of Quality tools, and the leadership of the principal are critical factors in achieving common goals and ultimately determining a school's success (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). While many school districts have begun to implement the Baldrige criteria, limited empirical data exist detailing how, why, or in which contexts implementation can succeed. Baldrige does not specify or prescribe a specific method for addressing the requirements of the criteria. Institutions are expected to decide how to address these areas within their own contexts.

The Calcasieu Parish School System is the fifth largest district in Louisiana and the largest employer within the parish itself (District Accreditation Standards Assessment Report, 2008). As a community leader in the business world, the district employs over 5,100 full and part-time employees. CPSS also operates the largest food

service program and transportation fleet in the area. To successfully manage such a sizeable organization, the school system leadership is challenged to adopt effective internal processes, systems thinking, and to focus on quality improvement throughout the organization.

CPSS began implementation of Quality in Education nine years ago based on a recommendation from the business community. This grass-roots effort served the need to create a better prepared workforce coming from the Calcasieu Parish School System. While a field study (McCardle, 2005) in the CPSS was completed based on teacher self-assessments of implementation, there have been no definitive reports on the experiences of administrators within CPSS schools. The CPSS has no formal mechanisms in place to determine outcomes of this district-wide initiative that has been sustained for nine years. To further substantiate the need, a recommendation from the Quality Assurance Review Team of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) in October 2008 determined that CPSS should “implement a formal and continuous program evaluation at all levels to identify, extend, and sustain best practices that support student achievement” (p. 8). The report stated the need for a system-wide process to ensure that results of improvement efforts are considered and used to inform the decision-making process at both the district-level and the school-level.

Teachers and principals continue to utilize Quality tools and implement Quality practices, but the outcomes have not been evaluated. The undertaking of this study is not to evaluate the success of the implementation of Quality, but rather to capture the experiences of those delegated with the task of leading this initiative. This research will

provide information to those seeking to implement and sustain Baldrige-based reform strategies as well as those who are often accused of ignoring the implementation experiences of school leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The analysis and description of principals' experiences with Quality in Education can lead to a beginning understanding of the value that educational leaders place on this model, what the impact might be for school improvement, and why there might be barriers for implementation. There was clearly a need to measure the impact of the implementation of Quality in Education in terms of school improvement. While a few schools within the state of Louisiana had engaged in some form of Quality implementation, the Calcasieu Parish School System was the only school district in the state of Louisiana engaged in district-wide deployment of Quality (Louisiana Quality Foundation, 2008). The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System and to understand the experiences of principals with the implementation of this initiative.

Research Question

The question that this project hoped to answer was: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education?

Importance of the Study

This study has importance for educators, policymakers, and researchers. Throughout America, educational leaders are striving for improved student achievement. The strict guidelines of *No Child Left Behind* are prompting educators to work diligently to find the right recipe for successful school improvement in the hopes of

attaining increased student achievement (Marino, 2007). In today's environment of accountability and high-stakes testing, it is essential for schools to be focused on performance results. Educational leaders who know and understand performance excellence know that school results must deliver value to students and stakeholders, promote educational quality, and sustain the organization.

The seven categories of the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria are designed to help schools capitalize on their strengths and identify areas for improvement (National Institute for Science and Technology, 2007). There is clearly a need for more information on the value of implementing Baldrige in Education as a means of school improvement. Educational problems can be quite complex, but not unsolvable. Baldrige offers policymakers and legislators numerous opportunities for consideration including the compatibility of Baldrige with state-mandated and federally-mandated assessments. This study can inform other educational organizations who are utilizing the Baldrige Criteria as a reform effort. This research can also inform the district personnel of the Calcasieu Parish School System who are leading the Quality in Education initiative about the experiences of principals with this implementation. It can also serve as a reference point for schools or districts at the state and national levels who are considering such an initiative.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study involved schools within the Calcasieu Parish School System (CPSS) and the principals who have been engaged in implementation of Quality in Education for at least three years, as well as the administrative directors of those principals. Data collection for this study took place between April and December 2009.

Definition of Terms

Data Binder: A classroom organizational tool for students to track their own data. This tool and the process of keeping data teach students how to reflect, set goals, and develop action plans for improvement (Byrnes, 2005).

Quality in Education or Quality: The name for the initiative that began in the Calcasieu Parish School System in 2000. The initiative includes training in the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, the theories of Total Quality Management, and the use of Quality tools.

Quality Tools: An important part of the Quality process is a group of techniques and statistical tools that allow a visual presentation of problems and their root causes thereby helping the user to propose solutions (Schargel, 1994). Refer to Appendix A for a complete listing.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The personal and professional knowledge of the researcher as it relates to the implementation of this initiative could prove to be a limitation. Every effort was made to report all information honestly and accurately.

Because the focus of this study was one school district in the state of Louisiana, which has implemented a district-wide approach based on the Baldrige Education Criteria, it was delimited to the principals in the schools within the Calcasieu Parish School System.

Theoretical Framework

School reform and accountability have propelled the need for schools to improve. Organizational theory, Total Quality Management, systems-thinking, and the Malcolm

Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence provide the theoretical framework for this study. Viewing schools as organizations, operating with a “focus on the customer,” understanding the various systems within a school/district, and measuring an organization against a set of standards are common approaches now used in school reform efforts. What was once used as a business theory approach now has new meaning for the education community. The cornerstone of this framework is the emphasis on continuous improvement of organizational processes.

Classical organizational theory focused on the division of labor, functional processes, and span of control (Taylor, 1911). This led to a focus on workforce motivation and the development of Theory X and Theory Y by Douglas McGregor. In his 1960 book, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, McGregor proposed the two theories that begin with the premise that the role of management is to bring together production factors, which include people, for the economic benefit of the organization. The assumption of Theory X is that people work only for money and security. Theory Y proposes that under the right conditions most people want to do well at work (Balfour & Marini, 1991).

The work of W. Edwards Deming and the theories of Total Quality Management (TQM) focus on the inherent motivation of workers as assumed with theory Y (Bonstingl, 1992). Deming is the American statistician whom Japanese leaders today give credit for their “postwar miracle.” From the fifties to the nineties, Deming taught Japanese managers and workers the principles of his philosophy. Deming worked extensively in Japan following World War II. Japan's highest quality award, the Deming Prize, was named after him. Largely ignored by his own country, the impact of Deming was not

understood until documentaries of his work were broadcast throughout America in the early 1980s. At that point, American business and industry began to adopt “quality” as an approach for organizational improvement.

These positive approaches to management and organizational development coupled with systems thinking ultimately led to the development of the concept of organizational improvement (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). Deming’s approach and TQM were both forerunners of the Baldrige criteria. In the mid-1980s, many industry and government leaders realized that a focus on quality was no longer an option for American companies but a necessity for participation in an ever expanding, and more demanding, competitive world market (National Institute for Science and Technology, 2007). However, many American businesses either did not believe quality was important for them or did not know where to begin. The Baldrige Award was envisioned as a standard of excellence that would help American organizations achieve world-class quality.

In 1987, the *Baldrige National Quality Program*, based in the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology, was established by an act of Congress to recognize high performance by organizations in the private sector. The award was modeled after the Deming Quality Prize and named for Malcolm Baldrige, who served as the United States Secretary of Commerce from 1981 until his death in 1987 (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). Annual awards were based on applicants’ responses to seven essential criteria composed of identified indicators of organizational excellence (Byrne & Schaefer, 2006). The awards were based on an organization’s ability to implement criteria in seven categories: leadership, strategic planning, customer and

market focus, information and analysis, human resources focus, process management, and performance results. The criteria as described by Byrnes, (2006) are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 *Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence*

Leadership	This category addresses leadership and how they set the tone and vision, bring passion, care, and concern for all stakeholders, are key participants in strategic planning, and create a measurement system with in process targets.
Strategic Planning	This category describes a systematic and regular process in which leaders review vision, mission, core values, and use an environmental scan and review of previous results to identify strategic challenges.
Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus	This category is the subject of an annual needs and expectations assessment performed with current and future students and key stakeholders.
Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management	This category relates to how data are aligned, collected, and analyzed for tracking day-to-day operations and overall organizational performance levels relative to strategic goals and action plans to support organizational decision-making.
Faculty and Staff Focus	This category focuses on how people are organized to do their work, how work is organized, how performance is managed and evaluated, and how the work system is improved to meet the strategic objectives.

Table 1 *Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, cont.*

Process Management	This category addresses both the learning-centered and support processes.
Organizational Performance Results	This category provides information about the effectiveness of action plans developed to address strategic goals and objectives.

Originally focused on manufacturing and small business, the National Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence Award for Education was adopted in 1998 (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). Since then, five K-12 school districts have received the Baldrige Education Award: Community Consolidated School District 15 in Palatine, Illinois; Chugach School District of Alaska; Pearl River School District in Rockland County, New York; Jenks Public Schools in Jenks, Oklahoma; and Iredell-States District in North Carolina (National Institute for Standards and Technology, 2008).

The primary goals of educational organizations are teaching and learning. The Baldrige Criteria help schools focus on well-executed assessment strategies, yearly improvement in key indicators, and proven leadership in performance improvement relative to similar organizations in a systems context (Byrne & Schaefer, 2006). Figure 1 depicts the Baldrige Education Criteria Framework as a systems perspective. The conceptual framework connects and integrates the seven categories. Categories 1, 2, and 3, leadership, strategic planning, and customer focus, represent the leadership triad. These categories interact together to emphasize the emphasis of leadership on students, stakeholders, and strategy. Categories 5, 6, and 7, workforce focus, process

management, and results, represent the results triad. These categories interact together to emphasize the workforce and key processes that accomplish the work of the organization. Category 4, measurement, analysis, and knowledge management is critical to the effective management of the system through the utilization of data. Within the framework, all actions point toward results (National Institute of Science and Technology, 2009, p. 1).

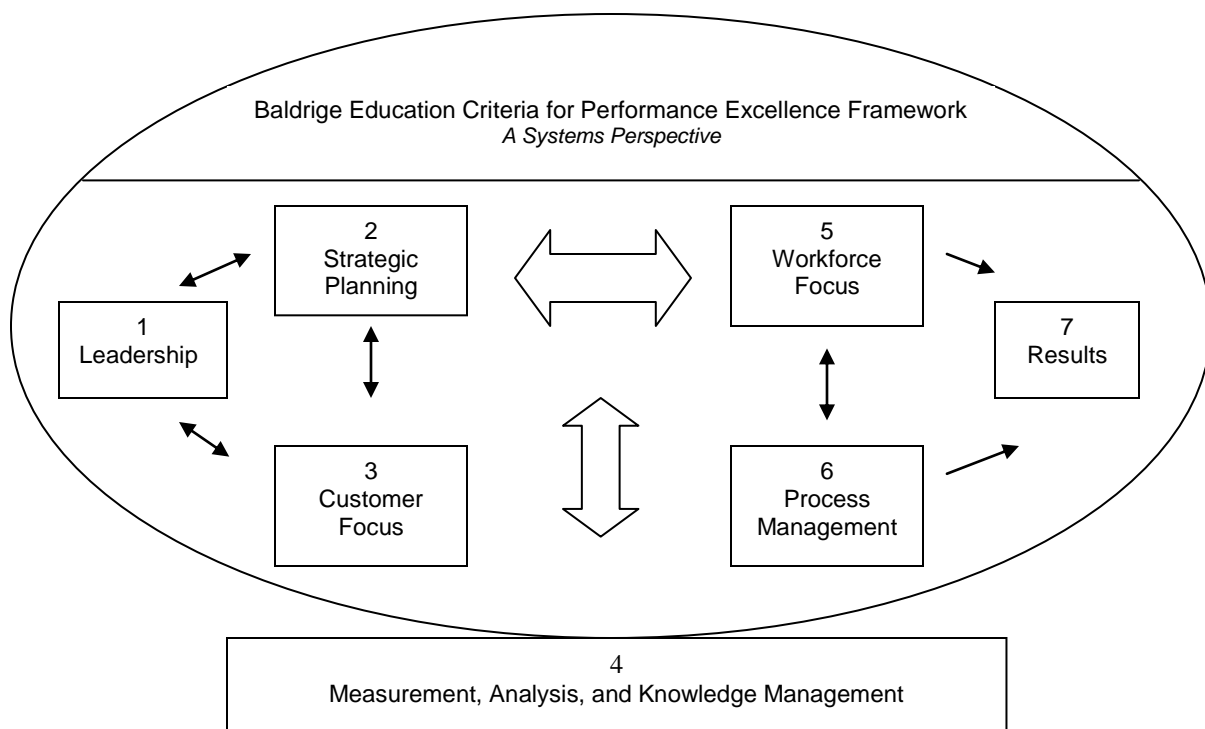


Figure 1: Baldrige Education Criteria Conceptual Framework

The Baldrige Framework illustrates a “systems perspective.” This focus on aligned systems and integrated processes supports the emphasis of Theory Y on removing obstacles and barriers that prevent student success (Tassell, 2003). With the theoretical knowledge of Deming’s work and the thought of schools as “organizational

systems,” which are grounded in Theory Y philosophy, education leaders throughout the United States are now considering the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence as a means to achieving continuous school improvement.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction, context, statement of the problem, purpose, research question, importance of the study, scope of the study, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations, theoretical framework, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the relevant literature. Chapter 3 includes the research design and methodology, data collection procedures, instrumentation, data analysis, and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 addresses the findings within the study including the collection of data, analysis procedures, and emerging themes. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and this researcher’s conclusions as well as implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore the implementation of Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System and to understand the experiences of principals with the implementation of this initiative. Implementation was based on the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence and was initiated by recommendations from members of the education committee of the Chamber Southwest and the Calcasieu Parish School to Work Coordinator.

The underlying premise of school reform and accountability is that schools must improve. Organizational improvement, management theory, and systems thinking have been theorized by many experts (Mooney & Reiley, 1931; Scott, 1961). The Baldrige Criteria were developed to provide businesses an opportunity for self-assessment. These criteria were copied from successful organizations. The success of business with this framework has fueled the interest of educators nationwide looking for models to drive improvement within schools (Walpole & Noeth, 2002).

The review of literature follows a conceptual framework (Figure 2) that begins with a review of organizational improvement theories and the evolution of Total Quality Management (TQM). An analysis of systems thinking and related theory that ties into organizational improvement will connect the framework to the development of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence. A close examination of school districts that have implemented Baldrige as a solution for school improvement will provide the context for a study of the implementation within the Calcasieu Parish School

System. This will lead to an examination of the historical context of the accountability movement and school reform and why schools within the Calcasieu Parish School System need to improve.

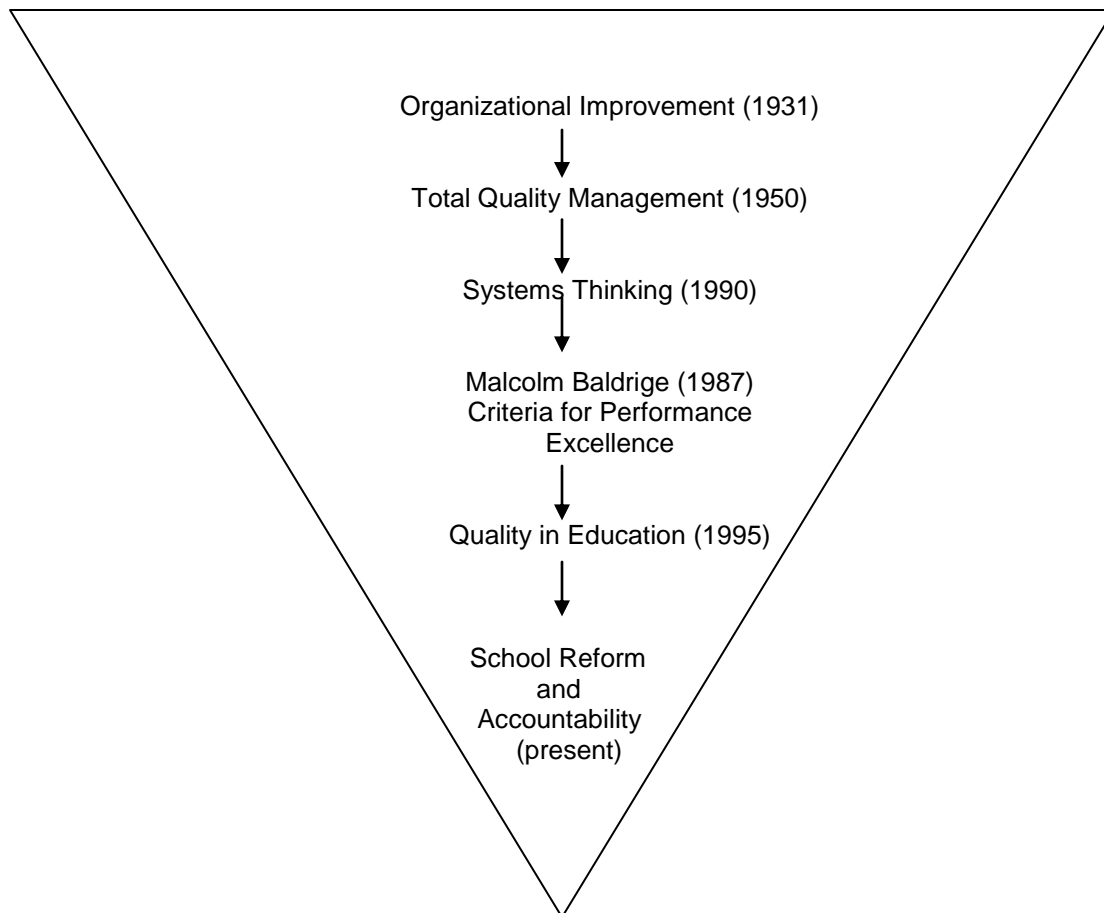


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for Research Study

Organizational Improvement

One cannot look into organizational improvement without first understanding organizational theory. The first systematic approach to organization is attributed to the publication of *Onward Industry* by Mooney and Reiley (1931). Numerous books and

theories followed. Classic organization theory is built around the division of labor, the functional processes, structure, and the span of control (Scott, 1961). The neoclassical theory of organization follows the four pillars of classic organization theory, but introduces the relationships to isolation of the worker, motivation, leadership, staff relationships, and individual differences. Modern organization theory focuses on the study of the organization as a system.

An organization can be viewed as a vehicle for accomplishing goals and objectives. The segment of society which has most intensely engaged in organizing is business (Scott, 1961). The role of management was initially that of assembler of factors of production, including people, for the economic benefit of the company. In the early 1960s, organizational theorists began examining organizational leadership from humanistic and philosophical points of view. Abraham Maslow delineated a hierarchy of human needs—physiological, safety, sense of belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow postulated that human behavior is motivated only by unsatisfied need. Douglas McGregor examined an extensive body of knowledge building on Maslow's work (Safferstone, 2005). McGregor's premise became that workforce motivation was a key issue in the success of the organization, which led to the evolution of Theory X and Theory Y (Balfour & Marini, 1991).

In Theory X, management assumes that employees are inherently lazy and will find many ways to avoid work and responsibility thus creating a need for close supervision. Tight structures for control and incentive programs become the means for boosting more motivation. Theory X managers place blame on people rather than the system (Goldman, 1983).

In Theory Y, management assumes that employees are self-motivated, enjoy physical and mental challenges of their jobs, and if given the opportunity will be willing contributors to the improvement of their workplace. Theory Y managers remove barriers that prevent the self-actualization of their workers (McGregor, 1960).

Theory X and Theory Y are guiding principles rooted in theoretical approaches to management, organizational development, and improving organizational culture, including Total Quality Management Theory and the works of W. Edwards Deming.

Total Quality Management

Post World War II efforts of Japan to reverse a well-established reputation of cheap products were driven by the recommendations of W. Edwards Deming, an American statistical expert. In 1950, Deming began a quality crusade promising the Japanese that if they would embrace the philosophy of Quality Management, they would capture the world market within five years (Bonstingl, 1992). A cornerstone of this new philosophy was Deming's 14 principles based on the assumption that individuals want to do their best and that it is up to management to improve the system. According to Blankstein (1992), these principles were:

- 1) Create constancy of purpose for improvement of product and service.
- 2) Adopt the new philosophy.
- 3) Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality. Build quality in the first place.
- 4) End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price alone.
- 5) Improve constantly and forever every process.
- 6) Institute training on the job.

- 7) Adopt and institute leadership.
 - 8) Drive out fear.
 - 9) Break down barriers between staff areas.
 - 10) Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the staff.
 - 11) Eliminate numerical quotas for the staff and goals for management.
 - 12) Remove barriers that rob people of pride of workmanship.
 - 13) Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement for everyone.
 - 14) Put everybody in the organization to work to accomplish the transformation.
- (p. 72)

Deming's philosophy proved to be extremely successful in Japan. In June 1980, NBC broadcasted the program "If Japan Can...Why Can't We," a documentary that garnered national attention that ultimately fueled the quality movement in America. All eyes turned toward understanding the philosophy of Total Quality Management (Bonstingl, 1992).

The quality principles instituted by Deming and others such as Walter A. Shewhart led to the evolution of the Total Quality Management philosophy (Fields, 1993). Total Quality Management created a fundamental paradigm shift in business and industry by focusing attention on the customer whose requirements and needs ultimately began to drive the work process (Rhodes, 1992). The management of quality required behavioral changes within the worker that were rooted in learning theory. These changes required changes in organizational culture so that values and attitudes held by all employees were internalized (Bright & Cooper, 1993). Total (the commitment

of all) Quality (meeting customer requirements) Management (collaboratively) is the daily belief and behavior of effective TQM organizations (Fields, 1993).

There is a tremendous amount of literature expounding the importance of TQM philosophy to organizations as well as much information on techniques and tools such as surveys, flow-charts, and team-building activities. However, there is very little empirical research to serve as a guide for implementation of a broad Total Quality Management system (Hackman & Wageman, 1995). A study conducted by Gatewood and Riordan (1997) analyzed questionnaire data from 281 employees of a Canadian life insurance company. Organizational practices, quality principles, employee attitudes, and customer satisfaction were analyzed. Results demonstrated that 1) organizational practices can be used to develop the three central principles of TQM (customer focus, continuous improvement, and teamwork) within an organization, 2) the presence of the three TQM principles is related to employee attitudes, and 3) employee attitudes are linked to the ultimate goal of TQM, customer satisfaction. Future research suggestions include the identification of additional organizational practices which develop quality principles.

Systems Thinking

Deming's concept of quality was based on a system context. He defined a system as a network of interdependent components that work together to accomplish the aim of the system. A system must have an aim, for without an aim there is no system (Deming, 1994). Warwick, a proponent of systems thinking (1995), defined a system as a network of processes, functions, and elements within an organization, which work together to achieve the purpose of the organization.

In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, author Peter Senge (1990) emphasizes systems thinking because it integrates the disciplines for organizational improvement. The premise is that unless a “system” is changed, it will continue to produce the same results (Isaacson & Bamburg, 1992). The American education system is not broken. It is operating exactly as it was designed to operate. We cannot restructure or reform; we must change the system (Leonard, 1996).

Warwick (1995) determined that the responsibility for system improvements belongs to the leader of the system. Workers within a system can make recommendations, but only leaders can implement them. He stated, that “People work *IN* a system. Leaders work *ON* the system. Everyone works toward continual improvement *OF* the system to achieve the aim.” (p. 25)

Proponents of systems thinking in education believe the fault lies in the failure of thinking of school in terms of a system (Bonstingl, 2001). Without improving systems, education has undergone change after change followed by subsequent reversal to former practices (Jenkins, 1996). Continual change must be replaced with improvement. Education cannot afford expensive changes and the ensuing debates over the efficiency of change. The answers to school improvement may lie in systems thinking. Failure does not come from the workers but from the system. Administrators are responsible for school improvement, not the teachers, students, or parents. School improvement means less failure and more success. Children are born motivated to learn. It is the system that must change.

Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was created by Public Law 100-107 and signed into law on August 20, 1987, by President Ronald Reagan. The findings and purposes of the law stated that

- 1) The leadership of the United States in product and process quality has been challenged strongly by foreign competition.
- 2) American business and industry realize that improved quality of goods and services go hand in hand with improved productivity, lower costs, and increased profitability.
- 3) Strategic planning for quality and improvement are essential to the well-being of America's economy,
- 4) Improved management understanding of worker involvement and statistical control can lead to dramatic improvements in cost and quality of manufactured products.
- 5) The concept of quality improvement is directly applicable to small companies as well as large, service as well as manufacturing, and the public as well as private sector.
- 6) In order to be successful, quality improvement programs must be management-led and customer-focused.
- 7) Several industrial nations have combined quality audits with national awards giving recognition to the very best.
- 8) A national quality award in the United States would improve quality and productivity (Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act, 1987).

The Award was posthumously named for Malcolm Baldrige, United States Secretary of Commerce from 1981-1987, whose contributions to long-term improvement in efficiency and effectiveness of government were grounded in his managerial expertise. The Award was created for three business categories--manufacturing, small business, and service. The Award was based on a company's ability to implement criteria in seven categories: 1) leadership, 2) strategic planning, 3) customer and market focus, 4) information and analysis, 5) human resource focus, 6) process management, and 7) business results (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2002a).

The success of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for businesses spawned a tremendous appeal in the Baldrige business criteria as a road map to steer quality improvement efforts and attain organizational excellence in the business arena (Karathanos, 1999). Numerous states as well as private and public organizations have developed awards' programs emulating the Baldrige program. Businesses can increase their competitive edge by identification and recognition as a role model organization through recognition in this program (Karathanos & Karathanos, 2005). Award winners were considered role model organizations with exemplary processes leading to excellence in products and services. The hope was that other organizations would learn from Baldrige Award winners and that performance excellence would fuel the American economy in the 1990s (Byrnes & Baxter, 2006).

Quality in Education

Implementation by the Japanese in the 1950s of Deming's theories and TQM resulted in an international model to which many aspired (Bonstingl, 2001). Deming's teachings point businesses, education systems, and society in new and promising

directions. Deming encouraged educators to foster school environments in which strong relationships of mutual trust and respect replace suspicion, division, and fear; and in which leadership empowers students and teachers to make continuous improvements in the work they do together. Deming emphasized that school should be a place where students, teachers, and administrators take pride and find joy in the work they do together. He believed it was the responsibility of administrators to remove barriers that would prevent this.

Key constructs of TQM are: the customer is the receiver of quality; the organization's goal is continuous improvement; and, continuous improvement occurs when one knows who the customer is, and what his or her needs are (Sagor & Barnett, 1994). In education, students are the most important customers.

In the early 1990s, business leaders in places such as North Carolina, Texas, and Florida were the first to propose using the Baldrige criteria to transform education (Siegel, 2000). After receiving positive results within their own organizations, these pioneers were willing to support similar reform efforts with their education partners.

The Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence were piloted in 1995. In 1998, "Education" was officially adopted as a fourth category for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (Walpole & Noeth, 2002). In 2001, the first two education awards were given to Chugach School District in Alaska and Pearl River School District in New York. Viewed as an education reform effort, the Baldrige criteria address many issues that other failed efforts have not, including leadership, data-driven decision making, changes in school culture, and systems thinking.

Eleven core educational values are incorporated within the Baldrige criteria, often referred to as the framework for implementation (Karathanos, 1999). These eleven core values as listed in the 2007 Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (p. 24) are:

- 1) Visionary leadership: Senior leadership sets direction, creates student-focused, learning centered climate; clear and visible values; and high expectations.
- 2) Learner-Centered Education: High developmental expectations and standards; a faculty understanding that students learn in different ways at different rates; an emphasis on active learning; early and frequent formative assessment; summative assessment when appropriate or required; student self-assessment; and a focus on transitions from school to school or school to work.
- 3) Organizational and Personal Learning: Learning is a regular part of daily work for students, staff, and faculty; practiced at all levels of the organization; focused on solving problems at their source; sharing knowledge throughout the organization; driven by opportunities to effect change.
- 4) Valuing Faculty, Staff, and Partners: A commitment to faculty, staff, and partner satisfaction, development, and well-being.
- 5) Agility: The capacity for faster and more flexible responses to the needs of students and stakeholders.
- 6) Focus on the Future: An understanding of the short-term and long-term factors that affect organizations and the education market.

7) Managing for Innovation: Emphasizes the importance of making meaningful change to improve the organization's programs, services, and processes.

8) Management by Fact: Measures and indicators are selected to understand factors that lead to improved student, operational, and financial performance.

These measures and indicators drive decision-making.

9) Public Responsibility and Citizenship: The belief that an organization's leaders should stress its responsibilities to the public and the need to practice good citizenship.

10) Focus on Results and Creating Value: Performance measures should focus on key results that should be used to create value for students and stakeholders.

11) Systems Perspective: Focuses on managing the whole organization, as well as its components, to achieve success.

The Baldrige model emphasizes data-driven decision making and customer focus. According to Richard J. Noeth, director of ACT's Office of Policy and Research and a co-author of the report, *The Promise of Baldrige for K-12 Education*, the Baldrige model is compatible with both state-mandated and federal-mandated assessments. The ACT report, issued in 2002, identifies success stories across the nation in school districts where improvements have been made in improving dropout rates, increasing student achievement on state tests, increasing admissions rates to colleges/universities, and closing the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students (Walpole & Noeth, 2002).

Quality in education is not a business process, it is a people process. It promotes self-worth, dignity, and respect. It focuses on the human spirit, expands the mind of

everyone involved, and promotes problem-solving. It is the way that educators can fix both the parts and the whole (Fields, 1993).

Schools and School Districts Utilizing the Baldrige Education Criteria

During the last fifteen years, several schools and school districts have reported performance improvement results that are attributed directly to implementation of the Baldrige criteria. These schools and districts located throughout the country have recognized that in this age of accountability, utilizing a results-focused approach is essential for even good schools to get better (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2007).

The Lake Washington School District in Kirkland, Washington, reorganized its central office staff, building administrators, and support personnel into four work teams (Scarr, 1992). Teams worked to assist schools in the development of a three-year strategic plan. Work teams engaged people at all levels within the organization. The ultimate results were that the focus of the district transformed from a narrow compartmentalized view to a broad, far-reaching perspective.

In March 1992, the Burlington, New Jersey Public Schools began a Baldrige initiative focusing on improvement in attendance and tardy rates (Abernathy & Serfass, 1992). Root cause analyses determined that students were not challenged enough by the curriculum, parents lacked education and motivation, teachers lacked sufficient understanding of the needs of the students, and data systems and procedures were not aligned. As a result of the initiative, the district developed potential solutions, implemented standardization, and had results to prove the success.

At George Westinghouse Vocational and Technical High School in Brooklyn, New York, a model was developed creating the learning of skills through high expectations for all (Schargel, 1994). This model was driven through the quality process with a focus on performance rather than on time. Students were expected to become problem-solvers rather than rely on school leaders to come up with solutions. Schargel believed that if TQM can be successfully used in an inner city school such as Westinghouse, then it can be successfully used in schools throughout the country.

Pinellas County Schools in Tampa, Florida, ranked very high in student performance in 1998 after several years of implementation of the Baldrige criteria (Hutton, 2000). Steps on their quality journey included training the teacher's union cabinet, developing internal expertise, winning the Florida Governor's Sterling Award, and developing a Quality Academy as well as the Classroom Learning System.

The Brazosport Independent School District in Freeport, Texas took bold steps utilizing quality principles to improve student achievement dramatically (Davenport & Anderson, 2002). The district won the Texas State Quality Award in 1998 and received a site visit from the national Baldrige examiners in 1999 after four years of implementation of the Baldrige criteria (Goldberg & Cole, 2002). District leaders utilized the principles of Quality for a period of six years and passing rates for students on the Texas state assessment in reading for economically disadvantaged improved from 47.6% in 1993 to 97.4% in 2001. Through district leadership, development of the eight-step process, and improved performance results on the state test, Brazosport became a model for implementation of quality principles (Davenport & Anderson, 2002).

Craven County School District in New Bern, North Carolina, adopted a systems approach to improvement that was driven by customer requirements, needs, and expectations following the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence (Rivenbark & Wheeler, 2008). Goal teams in both instructional and non-instructional areas operated at both the district-level and the school-level. The use of team managers and mentors helped support and drive alignment from the district to the school, and, ultimately, to the classroom. This process was utilized for the district's successful accreditation within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement.

School Districts that Received the Baldrige Award

Pearl River School District in New York and the Chugach School District in Alaska were the first education organizations to receive the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige Award for Performance Excellence (Pederson, 2001). Pearl River School District's accomplishment was a result of the district's dramatic increases in student and parent satisfaction, the increase in number of students graduating with a Regents' diploma, the number of special education students within the district taking the SAT I exam, and the Pearl River School District "balanced scorecard," a scannable composite of progress indicators providing continuous up to date tracking of district performance (Pederson, 2001). The Chugach School District began a comprehensive restructuring effort in 1994 and progressed from a school district in crisis to one of student performance excellence (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2007). Student achievement gains in reading, math and language arts rose dramatically during a five-year effort.

Community Consolidated School District 15 in Palatine, Illinois received the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2003 (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2003). Highlights of their improvement efforts include: Improving reading levels of second grade students throughout the district, increasing “enthusiasm for learning” in reading, math, and science for eighth grades students, and improving satisfaction levels of faculty and staff.

The Jenks Public Schools of Oklahoma (Baldrige Education Award recipient in 2005) adopted a team-based learning approach that resulted in multiple awards and recognition of students, faculty, and staff for academic achievement. The district motivated faculty and staff to develop their full potential by focusing on continuous improvement and recognizing performance excellence (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2007).

The Iredell-Statesville Schools System located in southwestern North Carolina received the Baldrige Education Award in 2008 (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2008). This diverse K-12 public school system of 21,000 students demonstrated an increase in graduation rates of students from 64 percent in 2003 to 80.7 percent in 2008. The district ranked third among 115 districts within the state in student attendance, and the district’s ranking in SAT scores rose from 57th in 2003 to 7th in 2008. Teacher turnover rate was below the state average with waiting lists for most job openings.

Recent Studies of Baldrige Implementation

A study of perceptions of faculty and staff of a university that won the Baldrige Award was conducted by Dettman (2004) to determine how well the faculty and staff felt

the university implemented the Baldrige criteria and to identify perceptions of positive and negative changes. Findings determined five common themes as: the university's recognition as a center of excellence, pride in affiliation, positive exposure, conduit for continuous improvement, and increased communication. Negative themes included perceived opportunity costs, training needs, a lack of continuous improvement, increased workload, a disconnect between the Baldrige Award and the mission of the university, campus climate, increased quality expectations, decisions being made not following the Baldrige model, and insufficient employee recognition. The study also noted a more positive perception of the implementation by faculty than that of staff and support staff.

In 2004, Cornin conducted a study of a New York school district's efforts to improve using Total Quality Management principles and Quality Award criteria. The study focused on district leadership, strategic planning, perceptions by stakeholders on the student/stakeholder category, and the review of examiners from the 1994 New York Governor's Excelsior Award and the 1995 Malcolm Baldrige National Education Award Pilot Study. The study determined that the principles underlying Total Quality Management—strong leadership, communication, collaboration, teamwork, customer focus, data collection and analysis, and continuous improvement—were critical to the success of the quality initiatives within the district.

Another study focusing on the perceptions of district personnel with implementation of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence by LeRoy (2004) addressed the impact on collective teacher efficacy. Data from three school districts in Texas, North Carolina, and New Mexico was collected. Conclusions were

that implementation of the Baldrige criteria requires a long-term commitment, alignment is a key process that begins at the senior leadership level, and the more mature a district's deployment of the criteria, the greater the impact on collective teacher efficacy. One recommendation for future research was to study other educational organizations that have implemented Baldrige to determine the most effective methods to facilitate implementation of the Baldrige Criteria.

The perspectives of classroom teachers in a rural southwestern school district on implementing a "systems approach" were detailed in a study by Hoy (2007). As the researcher, Hoy identified her role as a coach in the "systems approach" model based on the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria and Total Quality Management. The results of this phenomenological study determined that tensions emerged between the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and the systems approach, and their frustration with the implementation. Findings concluded that the professional development system and time for practice and refinement with the implementation were left out according to perspectives of teachers. Teachers verbalized their lack of input in the implementation process. Hoy's implications for action included that district leadership in charge of implementing a systems approach should: with input from principals and teachers, evaluate all old and new initiatives and discard those that do not add value; seek input from principals as well as teachers to determine what is working with school and classroom implementation; and, establish a process for soliciting input and feedback from all stakeholders in the system.

In 2005, McCardle conducted a study of teachers' perceptions on the impact of Baldrige-Based Quality classrooms in the Calcasieu Parish School System. A survey

consisting of 20 questions directly related to the Baldrige categories was administered to 500 teachers across the district. Teachers were asked to rank themselves according to their ability to use Quality tools and processes. The survey was completed by teachers with less than three years experience and by those with up to 27 years experience. Experience with Quality implementation ranged from one to seven years experience. Findings from the study determined that those teachers who perceive themselves as strong classroom leaders have witnessed continual growth in classroom performance. The study also determined that those teachers who frequently use Quality tools and processes have seen an increase in student classroom performance. A limitation of the study was that findings were based on an internal survey conducted by the teachers themselves.

School Reform and Accountability

During the past three decades, the quality of American education has become everyone's business. It was articulated frequently and became the focus of numerous public forums. One of the most profound statements came from a 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, which reported that the American educational system lagged far behind every other industrialized nation in the world (Karathanos, 1999). This sombering acknowledgment was an affirmation that the United States might be overtaken as the world's leading economic power (Cornin, 2004). Many school reform efforts have arisen since this landmark study. Just as business and industry had to take a close look at what was not working within the existing system, education gurus have pointed out that schools are modeled after a concept known as "Taylorism," the basis of the assembly line method utilized by people such as Henry Ford for mass production of automobiles

(Shanker, 1990; Goodlad, 1984; Schargel, 1994). Leaders of enlightened corporations such as Xerox have suggested that schools need a design that is relevant for our times—a cohesive framework that would include cooperative learning, team teaching, and site-based management (Blankstein, 1992). Schools should act like long-lasting companies, which preserve their mission and core values while their key business practices and operational strategies adapt to a changing world (Collins, 2001).

The school reform advocates point toward initiatives that focus on internal solutions. Schools are most effective when they share vision and values, collaborate within teams, foster collective inquiry, are willing to experiment, commit to continuous improvement and a results-orientation, and work together as a professional learning community (Dufour, 1998). What appears to separate high-performing schools from low-performing ones is not the technical aspects of schooling, but more the elusive aspects such as a school's mission, culture, and staff and student beliefs. This insight might explain why school improvement is so challenging (Barley, Apthorp, & Goodwin, 2007).

The American educational system is only one of numerous modern institutions that have not kept up with consumer demands (Sagor & Barnett, 1994). Government and the corporate sector have come to realize that their customers are the only meaningful assessors of quality. America is being challenged by foreign competitors who have invested heavily in education, research and development, and technology (Spellings, 2006). Students in other nations are outperforming American students on standardized tests, particularly in science and math. This national problem has demanded a comprehensive solution.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, ushering in a new era in education. This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act heralded a major change in direction for the schools of America by expanding the federal government's role in education (Paige, 2002). This expanded federal role brought about a multitude of requirements for states and districts including the expectation that 100 percent of the nation's public school children achieve proficiency in reading and math (Hardy, 2002). Education reform embraced a new level of maturity. The focus of reform became improving student achievement by improving the quality of education that students receive. For the first time, states began tracking which schools were failing which students, but more importantly the law required states to help schools succeed (Paige, 2002).

Baldrige as a Means of School Improvement

A focus on results is essential for schools in today's education environment of accountability and high-stakes testing. Educational leaders with knowledge and understanding of performance excellence know that school results must deliver quality to students and stakeholders, promoting educational value and organizational sustainability. The Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence are designed to help education organizations improve ("Baldrige in Education: Performance Excellence Delivers World-Class Results," 2008).

The application of TQM principles has been criticized by some educators as inappropriate. The thrust of the criticism has been the application of a business model to an education setting and in particular on the use of the term "customer" (Kohn, 1993). Other critics fear that the emphasis on performance factors may inhibit creativity,

curiosity, and a love for learning, all of which are not measurable on standardized tests (Banister, 2001). While it may be perfectly logical from a business perspective to generate a collection of qualitative measures on a yearly basis for annual comparison, a closer look may yield serious flaws. Business organizations may be able to streamline processes and reduce variation in order to become more efficient in the manufacturing of a specific product. On the other hand, schools are full of unique human beings who come from a variety of backgrounds and with a wide range of needs.

Although there are some vocal critics against schools as businesses, there appears to be more evidence in favor of utilizing a business approach as a solution for education (Byrne & Schaefer, 2006). Since the main goals of education organizations are teaching and learning, the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence help schools focus on well-constructed assessment strategies, yearly improvement on key performance indicators, in particular student learning, and demonstrated leadership in performance improvement.

There is also a heavy push from business for education to improve. A United States Census Bureau survey of 3,000 businesses reported extraordinary gaps between schools and the workplace, the fact that employers tend to disregard the grades and evaluations of recent hires, the use of consultants for internal training, and the hiring of recent U.S. graduates for career path positions (Caster, 1995). The results of a survey on the success of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for businesses were published in *Quality Progress* in May 1995 (Bernowski & Stratton, 1995). Results indicated that uses of the criteria are many and included for use as a source of information on business excellence (71% of respondents), to improve existing

processes company wide (43% of respondents), and for formal assessment company-wide (37% of respondents).

The Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence outline effective practices and core values that have assisted businesses, health agencies, government institutions, and several school systems in our country to achieve improved organizational performance (Blazey, Davison, & Evans, 2000). The systemic application of the criteria has assisted some education organizations with the improvement of student achievement and performance results.

Previous studies have determined that what was once an approach utilized solely by business has implications for success within the education community. This study determined the implications for the Calcasieu Parish School System, which has a huge investment of time, resources, and community support in Quality in Education. While empirical studies by Dettman (2004), LeRoy (2004), Cornin (2004), and Hoy (2007) have focused on perceptions of higher education personnel in New York; school district personnel in Texas, North Carolina, and New Mexico; and teachers, there has previously been no study targeting experiences of administrators, particularly school principals, concerning implementation of the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. This study hoped to address the gap in that area of research.

Studies conducted in the 1990's determined that the role of the principal was the *key* to the improvement of schools (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Keller, 1998; Krug, 1993; Portin, Shen, & Williams, 1998). Now, more than ever, in today's arena of heightened expectations, principals are under constant pressure to improve teaching and learning. Principals must be visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, disciplinarians,

public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and policy experts (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, & Meyerson, 2005). They are expected to facilitate the needs and interests of parents, teachers, students, district office officials, unions, and state and federal agencies, and they need to be sensitive to the widening range of student needs. While the job description can be overwhelming, it signals that the education field has begun to give overdue recognition to the critical role of the leader of the school, the principal.

Summary

The review of literature begins with organizational improvement addressing the evolution of Total Quality Management, Systems Thinking, and the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria into Quality in Education. Research studies document that a number of schools and school districts throughout the country are utilizing Quality for the purpose of school reform and improvement. This study of the experiences of principals with the implementation of Quality in the Calcasieu Parish School System adds to the existing body of knowledge.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of Quality in Education (Quality) in the Calcasieu Parish School System (CPSS) through the experiences of principals. A sample of principals who had been leaders at their schools for at least three years and the administrative directors who supervised the principals served as the participants for this research study. The principal sample was representative of the demographics of the fifty-eight principals within the Calcasieu Parish School System including school levels, gender, and ethnicity.

This chapter explains the methodology utilized to complete this phenomenological study. It includes the following sections: research question, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research design, role of the researcher, sampling method, interview guide field testing, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Research Question

After an extensive review of the literature, the following research question was posed: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education? This question examined the experiences of principals who had been engaged in this district-wide effort for at least three years.

Statement of the Problem

In the new millennium educational leaders have felt the enormous pressure placed on them to realize substantial improvements in student achievement.

Additionally, there is mounting pressure on education leaders for continual school improvement from those seeking alternatives to public education. The direction for change within schools must lead to more effectiveness, productivity, and efficiency (Goldberg & Cole, 2002). Under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) of 2002, all states were required to establish a school accountability system based on student achievement. According to *Bulletin 111* of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Louisiana's accountability system aligns with NCLB and requires that all schools be measured on adequate yearly progress. These accountability labels are based on a school's performance score, as well as performance of subgroups. Every public school system in Louisiana is held accountable for the continuous improvement of its schools. Growth targets, growth labels, rewards, and sanctions are based on annual school performance scores of individual schools. The pressure for schools to improve comes from many directions.

In 2000, the Calcasieu Parish School System began implementation of a school reform effort, Quality in Education, with four pilot schools (C. Chiasson, personal communication, April 2007). To date, some teachers and principals in all fifty-eight schools have received training in Quality. This effort was fueled by a push from business and industry in 2000 and with support from the superintendent, a pilot of four schools began. As more and more schools chose to adopt a Quality approach voluntarily, the initiative became a mandate in 2006.

A study conducted by McCardle (2005) surveyed classroom teachers within the CPSS on their perception of their ability to use Quality tools and processes. The study included a select population of teachers with levels of implementation experience from

one to six years. This study found that those teachers who perceive themselves as strong leaders in the classroom have witnessed continual growth in classroom performance. It was also found that those teachers who frequently use the Quality tools and processes have also seen an increase student performance in comparison to years prior to the inception of Quality. The recommendations for future research concluded that schools desiring continual improvement of classroom and student performance should investigate training for their personnel in Baldrige-based Quality in Education.

With the exception of this field study targeting perceptions of teachers engaged in the implementation of Quality, no research on this phenomenon had occurred. The CPSS had no formal mechanism in place to determine outcomes of this district-wide initiative, and yet the Quality initiative had been sustained for nine years. A Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) Accreditation Report recommendation further substantiated the need that CPSS should “implement a formal and continuous program evaluation at all levels to identify, extend, and sustain best practices that support student achievement” (p. 8).

Because responsibility for a school’s implementation of Quality lies primarily with the principal, an understanding of the experiences of principals who were leading this process within their schools was critical in developing a beginning understanding of the outcomes of this implementation. The Quality initiative was based on the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence, which is a set of criteria utilized by organizations for self-assessment and organizational improvement (National Institute for Standards and Technology, 2007). This study explored the experiences of ten

principals who were implementing Quality in Education within the Calcasieu Parish School System.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the implementation of Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System. The research detailed the experiences of principals implementing the Quality in Education initiative. Since implementation began in 2000, no research had been conducted to determine the experiences of principals or to identify outcomes of this initiative.

Qualitative Research Design

“Qualitative inquiry is a style of research based upon the assumption that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds...thus there are many ‘realities’ rather than one, observable, measurable reality” (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 97). This qualitative study presents the realities of participating school principals who were engaged in the implementation of Quality in Education within their respective schools. This research takes the form of a phenomenological study in which the researcher concentrated on the phenomenon, implementation of Quality in Education, and the “realities” of ten principals who had been trained in and were implementing Quality in Education.

Qualitative research occurs in a natural setting, enabling the researcher to be highly involved in the actual experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003). This type of research utilizes multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic. Traditional methods of data collection include open-ended observations, interviews, and documents. Qualitative research is emergent and fundamentally interpretive. It is

conducted through intense and/or prolonged contact with a situation. The researcher endeavors to acquire data “from the inside.” The researcher may isolate certain themes to be reviewed with the informants. Very little standardized instrumentation is used at the outset. The researcher is the main instrument (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Qualitative research can take different forms. According to Creswell (2003) in a case study, the researcher explores an event, program, or person over a period of time. In grounded theory, the researcher starts with data and develops it into a theory that is the result of a process or interaction grounded in the view of participants. Researchers conducting ethnography studies focus on a particular group, which shares a common culture in a natural setting over a certain period of time. A phenomenological study researcher, however, utilizes the lived experiences of participants to identify and describe a phenomenon and tries to understand the participants’ perspectives of a particular situation.

A Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenological research seeks to describe that which is essential to an experience. Van Manen (2006) described phenomenological research as “the study of lived experience” (p. 9). According to Creswell (2003), it allows the researcher “to identify the ‘essence’ of human experiences concerning the phenomenon, as described by participants in the study” (p. 15). This approach allowed the researcher to examine the phenomenon of implementation of Quality in Education within the Calcasieu Parish School System through the experiences of principals. Van Manen (2006) suggests that this type of research supports the “methodical structure of human science research.” This structure includes seeking a phenomenon that interests the researcher (this

researcher's interest in Quality in Education), investigating the lived experience (the one-to-one interviews with principals and follow-up questions), and reflecting on the experiences described by principals as well as the emerging themes. A phenomenological approach provided an opportunity for a meaningful understanding of the principals' experiences in the implementation of Quality.

Phenomenological research entails engaging in the process of *epoche*. Epoche requires that the researcher suspend judgment, understanding, and knowledge of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In doing so, the researcher looks inward to determine personal bias and to gain clarity about any preconceptions (Patton, 2002). The researcher attains an attitudinal shift when examining the phenomenon (Katz, 1987). This shift focuses on a different way of looking at the experience under investigation. This shift, resulting in epoche, allows the researcher to become aware of assumptions and prejudices related to the investigation, while allowing a fresh point of view. This suspension of judgment, epoche, is critical in phenomenological investigation.

Denzin (1989) identifies phenomenological reduction, the second step following epoche. He describes bracketing the phenomenon as holding it up for serious investigation. Bracketing includes: 1) identification within the personal experience of key phrases that speak to the phenomenon, 2) interpretation of the key phrases, 3) acquisition of subject's interpretation of key phrases, 4) inspection of meanings and the revelation of recurring features of the phenomenon, and 5) submission of a definition of the phenomenon in terms of recurring features.

The next step following bracketing is the treatment of all data with equal value (Patton, 2002). In this process the data are spread out for examination or “horizontalized” and organized into meaningful clusters. The researcher then identifies themes within the data. Van Manen (2006) indicated that a theme is the experience of focus. It is not a thing, but rather describes an aspect of a phenomenon. It allows us to make sense of something and “is the means to get at the notion” (p. 88).

Finally, the researcher moves to a textual representation of each theme coupled with a “structural description” of the experience for the whole group (Moustakas, 1994). This integration of textual representation and structural description provides a synthesis of the significance and heart of the experience.

Role of the Researcher

The goal of the qualitative researcher is to foster understanding through interpretation of the experiences of others. This is achieved by interpreting the meaning that participants have made through their experiences (Riehl, 2001).

As the researcher, I have thirty-four years experience as an educator in the Calcasieu Parish School System; eleven of those years have been as an elementary principal. My school was one of the original pilot schools for the implementation of Quality. I have had extensive training in utilizing the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence. I have received training from Pinellas County educators, Jim Shipley & Associates, and the CPSS business partners. I attended school site visits in Florida, Texas, and New Mexico. I annually attend Quality Day and the National Quality in Education Conference. In 2002, my school received the Southwest Louisiana Quality Award for Highest Achievement as well as the Louisiana Performance

Excellence Award from the Louisiana Quality Foundation. I am the chair of the Quality Leadership Team for the district as well as a member of the Louisiana Quality Foundation Board of Advisors. I have facilitated a Blackboard leadership course for principals focusing on Quality. I have made numerous presentations about Quality in Education and have worked with several schools on this implementation.

My initial experience with Quality began with prior knowledge of the efforts of business and industry with Total Quality Management. My sister worked in the Quality Department of a major oil company, and I completed a summer internship with a petrochemical company when I was a classroom teacher working with the Quality liaison as a partner in education. There was an initial curiosity about the whole Quality process. When I became a principal, the superintendent asked for volunteers to pilot a *School to Work* initiative that would involve Quality training for schools. As a novice principal, I thought it would be a great learning opportunity for my school. After garnering support from my staff, I volunteered to participate. I had no idea how this commitment would forever change my school and my life.

Our first training experiences in 2000 were very vague and confusing. The educators from Pinellas County, who trained us, along with our business partners, who were also involved in the training, spoke at length about the Baldrige Criteria and the theory behind it. They were never specific about what we should do to begin implementation in our schools, and there were very little practical educational examples. At the time, we did not understand that this was the non-prescriptive aspect of the Baldrige criteria. My team of ten teachers and I decided that we would “experiment” with some of what we learned. Through teamwork and a trial and error process over the

course of that year, we saw amazing things begin to happen. Teachers became successful with setting mission and goals with students. Everyone began to understand the importance of involving students in classroom processes. Within the next two years, our school bought into the Quality process in such a way, that our success became a model for other schools. Even though our district went through some administrative changes, and at times it appeared that district support for the Quality effort was waning, our success continued.

For me personally, the understanding of the Baldrige criteria became a life-changing process. I believe that not only does Baldrige fit any organization, but that the criteria are a way of life. I am passionate about the results that I've seen with the implementation in my school. However, I have come to realize that not everyone has that same view about Quality.

Initially, I had a very active role in the CPSS Quality implementation effort. My teachers and I assisted in Quality training until 2005. We were called upon for the sharing of best practices, and our school was open to numerous visitors. However, once the Quality Department was established, my role in training other principals shifted from consultative to one of focusing on my own school's implementation. At that time, I began to feel as though my school was not as immersed in Quality as it had been. This was partially due to staff changes that took place during this time, but perhaps because we were no longer called upon to participate in leading the CPSS training efforts. However, I still had a real desire to understand the perspectives of other principals as they implemented Quality. I had not seen the inner workings of Quality implementation within their schools, and I wondered about their interest in the process and how it

impacted their schools. I wondered if they were just implementing Quality because it was a district mandate. I also wanted to know how other principals viewed Quality as a school improvement process. Those curiosities prompted this research study. Because there were no documented outcomes from a leadership perspective regarding this nine-year school reform initiative, I felt that there would be benefit to both the business and the education community in capturing an understanding of the experiences of principals engaged in Quality implementation.

My personal involvement with this initiative provided a background and a knowledge base for the implementation of this initiative within the district. I have an understanding of the Baldrige criteria as well as the expectations for schools and classrooms with the implementation. My background and knowledge of Quality in Education implementation in schools required use of the process of epoche, wherein any predetermined beliefs were set aside in order to concentrate on the experiences as they were described by the principals. The principals I interviewed were well aware of my knowledge of Quality. In my initial contacts with each one of them, I asked them if they would be comfortable with me interviewing them. I strived to remain objective throughout the data collection and analysis process to keep focus on the phenomenon. I was very deliberate in recording the experiences of participants as stated and remained open-minded throughout the data collection process. I was the primary data collection instrument. In order to ensure that my knowledge did not hinder data collection or analysis, thoughtful consideration was given to monitoring research bias throughout the entire study. The interview guide provided focus and consistency for all interviews. In order to minimize any researcher bias, all findings were carefully reviewed to ensure

that participants' experiences were expressed accurately and member checks were utilized.

Sampling Method

The target population for this study was principals who were involved in the implementation of Quality, a CPSS school reform initiative. According to Orr (2006), it takes principals at least three years to make progress with school improvement efforts. Therefore, only those principals who had been in their respective schools for at least three years were considered.

A stratified purposeful sample of 10 principals was chosen based on grade levels of schools in which they serve. According to Patton (1990), purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases that can be studied in depth. A stratified purposeful sample captures major variations and allows for a fairly homogeneous sample within each of the strata. The strata were defined as elementary, middle, and high school principals.

Participants were CPSS principals who had been involved in the implementation of Quality for at least three years within the same school. A list of twenty-nine principals met the three-year criterion. This list was categorized by grade levels. Elementary school principals were the leaders of schools with grades pre-kindergarten through five. Middle school principals were the leaders of schools with grades six through eight, and high school principals were the leaders of schools with grades nine through twelve. The names of the twenty-nine principals were then grouped into three school levels: elementary, middle, and high. The Quality mentors then purposefully selected ten principals from that grouping who would represent the demographic makeup of the district principal population based on school level, gender, and ethnicity. Five

elementary principals, three middle school principals, and two high school principals were selected. Five of the principals were male, five were female, and two were African American. This sample mirrored the demographics of the CPSS administrator population (Table 2).

Table 2 *Demographics of CPSS Principals Comparison*

CPSS PRINCIPALS		POPULATION	SAMPLE
Level	Elementary	56%	50%
	Middle	23%	30%
	High	21%	20%
Gender	Male	53%	50%
	Female	46%	50%
Ethnicity	Caucasian	77%	80%
	African American	23%	20%

Description of Participants

The research participants were divided into three categories—elementary principals, middle school principals, and high school principals. In Table 3, each research participant and specific demographic data relevant to the participant and the school are outlined. To protect confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used.

Table 3 *Demographic Information for Principals*

	EDUCATION	EXPERIENCE	YEARS IN QUALITY
Clarence	Master's Degree + 30	Admin. 20 yrs Principal 15 yrs	Eight years
Connie	Master's Degree	Admin. 15 yrs Principal 12 yrs	Six years
Linda	Doctorate	Admin. 9 yrs Principal 7 yrs	Seven years
Patricia	Master's Degree + 30	Principal 6 yrs	Five years
Wanda	Master's Degree + 30	Principal 5 yrs	Five years
Arthur	Master's Degree	Admin. 16 yrs Principal 12 yrs	Five years
Melissa	Master's Degree + 30	Admin. 13 yrs Principal 6 yrs	Seven years
Victor	Master's Degree + 30	Admin. 15 yrs Principal 11.5 yrs	Nine years Pilot school
Irvin	Master's Degree	Admin. 18 yrs Principal 3 yrs	Nine years Pilot school
Larry	Master's Degree	Admin. 11 yrs Principal 7 yrs	Five years

To ensure that a range of principals with varied Quality implementation experiences would be studied, a list of training opportunities provided by the district was

developed by the Quality mentors. Each participant was asked to identify the specific training experiences in which he or she had participated. Principals' training experiences ranged from five to fourteen experiences. The training opportunities are detailed in Table 4 and described in the individual principal sections.

Table 4 *Quality Training Opportunities Provided by CPSS*

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY	TRAINEES	TIMEFRAME
Training provided by educators from Pinellas County (<i>Overview of Quality processes and ideas for methods to begin implementation</i>)	Pilot schools	2000-2001
Training provided by Jim Shipley and Sandra Cokely Pederson (<i>Focus on district alignment through goal setting and action planning</i>)	Administrators Central Office	2001-2004
Training provided by business partners from the petrochemical industry (<i>Focus on quality tools and processes</i>)	Principals and schools	2000-2004
Training provided by Dr. Mary Hooper (<i>Quality deployment and PDSA</i>)	Principals and teachers	2000-2004
Training provided by the Quality Department (<i>Beginning, intermediate, and advanced level training opportunities including data-driven decisions, quality tools, & process alignment</i>)	All CPSS employees	2004-present

Table 4 *Quality Training Opportunities Provided by CPSS, cont.*

Blackboard courses taught by Quality leaders <i>(PDSA training follow-up, quality tools, alignment of school process, and data-driven decisions)</i>	Principals and teachers	2002-present
Attendance at National Quality in Education Conference <i>(Sessions related to best practices)</i>	Select principals and teachers	Ongoing
Quality schools site visit in Albuquerque, NM <i>(Gathering of best practices)</i>	Select schools	2003
Summer training for school leadership teams <i>(Interpreting data like stakeholder surveys to identify school goals and action plans)</i>	All schools	Ongoing
Application for SWLA Quality Award <i>(Writing of application narrative with outline of school/department implementation of each Baldrige category)</i>	Individual schools and departments	Ongoing
School level trainings from within <i>(Aligning school processes, deployment of Quality, and data-driven decisions)</i>	Schools	Ongoing
Participation in Quality Leadership Team <i>(Meetings of Quality leaders with topics related to district deployment of Quality)</i>	Select individuals	2000-present

Table 4 *Quality Training Opportunities Provided by CPSS, cont.*

Participation in Quality Forums <i>(Spotlighting students, teachers, principals, and district leaders with questions/answers related to Quality)</i>	Select schools	Ongoing
Visits to CPSS Quality schools <i>(Sharing of best practices)</i>	Principals and teachers	Ongoing

Interview Guide Field Testing

The interview guide was developed utilizing open-ended questions to provide maximum opportunity for variation in participants' responses. The interview guide was field tested to determine clarity and ambiguity. The field testing included three CPSS principals with less than two years experience in their respective schools. Each principal was interviewed individually (one in person and two via telephone) during March of 2009. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. This process allowed the researcher an opportunity to refine the interview guide. Two questions were changed as a result of this process. The initial question on the interview guide asked participants to "Tell me your name, the grade configuration of your school, and how many years you have been an administrator." I realized that I needed more demographic information about the school, including student population, ethnicity, and poverty levels, as well as the number of years the principal had been implementing Quality. This question was revised to provide for specific answers on demographic data. The fourth question proved to be rather

ambiguous. “How has this Quality approach changed what you do in your school?” seemed to be confusing to two of the three participants, who answered that the change was the implementation of Quality processes. I then revised that question to “How has this Quality approach impacted your role as a school leader?” The field testing helped to prepare me for the data collection process and strengthened the interview guide.

Data Collection

The methods used for data collection in this study were based on the principles of qualitative field studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This methodology allowed for a variety of data gathering techniques. Generalizations were made based on the experiences of those charged with leading the implementation of Quality within their schools, the principals.

The data collection procedure began with the formation of a committee, obtaining permission from the IRB (Appendix B and C), and gaining access to the schools through permission from the district superintendent (Appendix D). Once the principals were selected, personal contact was made with each one through email, and in three cases, in person.

The next step involved interviews of the selected principals. Although my original intent was to conduct face-to-face interviews, I had great difficulty in scheduling an interview time that was suitable for both the respondents and me. After numerous scheduled face-to-face interviews were cancelled, I realized that I might run out of time before the school year ended, and I made the decision to offer telephone interviews as an option. Every principal chose to participate in a telephone interview because of time issues. The audio-taped telephone interviews followed an interview guide and were

transcribed verbatim. All conversations occurred through speaker phone. An MP3 player was utilized for the digital recording of the interview, followed by transcription on the computer. Participants were afforded an opportunity to review all documents and provide any necessary changes or clarifications through member checking. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Telephone interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the 10 participants from May through June 2009. Most interviews occurred after school hours and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Interviewing allows the researcher to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible (Patton, 2002).

To gain deeper understanding of the experiences of the principals with the implementation of Quality, interviews were conducted with the principals' immediate supervisors, the administrative directors of elementary, middle, and high schools. These interviews occurred in August 2009, and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Two of the interviews were conducted via telephone and one was face-to-face. The protocol followed three main questions (Appendix E). The use of individual interviews as the main method of data collection allowed the researcher to enter into the perspectives of the participants.

To supplement data already collected, I realized that I needed more demographic and leadership data from the participants. I emailed a questionnaire to each of the principal participants asking for more information (Appendix F). I realized that I did not have clear understanding of their training experiences, and I had not captured information concerning their vision for their schools as well as their leadership styles, which might prove noteworthy.

The final step occurred during the manuscript revision stage with one final question asked of each participant. The question was: “Which training experience did you find most beneficial in helping you to understand your role in Quality implementation?”

Data Analysis

The process that was utilized for data analysis in this study is described by Maxwell (2005) as beginning after the first interview and running simultaneously with data collection throughout the study. Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) assert that data collection and data analysis must be a concurrent process. As interviews were completed, I transcribed them verbatim, usually within one or two days. Typed transcripts were then provided to participants through email to allow for member checks. All participants except for one were satisfied with transcripts and no changes were made. Patricia was concerned about the stilted language within her responses. I met with her and explained how those responses would be extracted and categorized as findings. She reviewed her responses and determined that she was satisfied with everything. No changes were made.

Transcripts were read several times, and categories began to stand out. As categories were developed and identified, transcripts were cut into sentence and/or paragraph segments, and these segments were placed within corresponding categories. These were developed into an organizational matrix (Appendix G), which formed a comprehensive picture of the experiences of those principals engaged in the phenomenon of implementation of Quality in Education. This process allowed me to reflect, analyze, and describe the data in terms of emerging themes.

Trustworthiness

The goal of trustworthiness in qualitative research is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Within any qualitative inquiry, four issues of trustworthiness warrant consideration: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility is an assessment of whether or not the research findings represent a truthful interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data. Transferability is the level to which the findings can be transferred beyond the scope of the project.

Dependability is an evaluation of the data collection, data analysis, and theory-generation process. Confirmability is a gauge of how well the research findings are supported by the data collected.

In this study, four methods were utilized to ensure trustworthiness of results: purposeful sampling; thick description; peer debriefing; and member checks. With assistance from the Quality Department purposeful sampling determined the ten principals for study who were able to provide thick description through their interviews. Member checks allowed the participants the opportunity to confirm the data. Peer debriefing assisted this researcher in reviewing the data and findings.

Purposeful sampling is employed when the selection of information-rich cases for in depth study are needed. Such cases can provide a tremendous amount of information that is central to the inquiry. Studies that utilize only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method (Patton, 2002). In order to provide a range of experiences with implementation, a stratified purposeful sampling determined the ten principals participating in the study.

The foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting is thick, rich description. Thick descriptions take the reader into the setting and the experience (Patton, 2002). Through individual interviews, I was able to hear the principals describe their successes and accomplishments as well as their frustrations. I talked with principals several times beyond the initial one-to-one interviews with follow-up questions or for clarification. The voices, emotions, and experiences of the participants are heard through thick, rich description (Denzin, 1989).

Peer debriefing was conducted by a secondary-level colleague, who is outside the realm of this study, for the purpose of review of insights and perceptions, as well as in assisting in the development of next steps. This person assisted me through readings of each chapter, and in focusing on Chapter 4 to determine if data supported findings. Recommendations made by this peer helped me to categorize the themes and subsequent findings.

With the use of member checks, participants had the opportunity to revise, clarify, or change any data collected during the interview process. Participants were able to review their quotes being utilized within the study as well as the accompanying interpretations that were made. All but one, were satisfied with the information they received. After an individual meeting with that participant, she seemed satisfied with her responses, and no changes were made.

The trustworthiness of this study is supported by purposeful sampling, thick description, peer debriefing, and member checks. These four methods help support the credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability of the research findings.

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher in the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people...qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches. (Patton, 2002, p. 407)

A checklist of ethical issues was employed to address ethical considerations (Appendix H). This checklist includes explaining purpose, reciprocity, risk assessment, confidentiality, informed consent, data access, and advice. All participants in the study were informed regarding the purpose and use of the study as well as knowledge of their rights to withdraw from the study. All participants of the study remain confidential.

Summary

This chapter detailed qualitative methodology. Phenomenological research design was utilized to understand the experiences of principals in the Calcasieu Parish School System who were engaged in the implementation of Quality in Education. The research question posed was: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education? The researcher used an interview guide, which had previously been field tested, to conduct one-to-one interviews with ten principals. Data collection and analysis occurred over a six month period. Issues of trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations were addressed in this chapter. It was the intent of this research to address an area of education where little research has been conducted.

Chapter 4

Research Findings

Introduction

“Each person has a unique set of experiences which are treated as truth and which determine that individual’s behavior”(Eichelberger, 1989, p. 6). The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to reveal and describe the experiences of principals who were engaged in the implementation of Quality in Education (Quality) within the Calcasieu Parish School System (CPSS). This qualitative approach focused on the individual experiences and perceptions of ten principals and the expectations of their administrative directors. The specific research question asked was: What are principals’ experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education? The researcher conducted one-to-one interviews with ten principals and their three administrative directors who have been engaged in implementing Quality for at least three years. The focus of this study was to understand the phenomenon of implementing Quality in Education, a Calcasieu Parish School System school-reform initiative, through the perspective of the school principals.

Understanding the experiences of principals as they relate to the phenomenon of implementation of Quality in Education was central to this research study. This chapter addresses Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System, the researcher’s perspective, the interviews of the administrative directors, the interviews of principals, and emerging themes as well as a summary of the findings.

Quality in Education in the CPSS

Based on information from the Calcasieu Parish School System “*District Accreditation Standards Assessment Report*” (2008), CPSS uses Quality in Education (Quality) based on the Malcolm Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence as the key process for continuous improvement. This commitment to continuous improvement was made in 2000 with the first Quality training of four pilot schools and the development of a Quality Leadership Team (QLT). The QLT, an advisory board to the superintendent, has been a driving force in the implementation of Quality and the commitment to continuous improvement in the CPSS. The QLT meets two to three times a year and makes recommendations to further the implementation of the Baldrige Framework within the district.

According to C. Chiasson (personal communication, July 7, 2009), implementation with Quality began with four pilot schools receiving training from educators from Pinellas County, Florida. Teachers and administrators from the pilot schools assisted in the redelivery of training as schools were added to the implementation list. Subsequent training involved bringing in professionals from Jim Shipley & Associates as well as business partners from PPG Industries and Louisiana Pigment Company. Sandra Cokely Pederson provided an in-service to school and district administrators. Opportunities to attend the National Quality in Education Conference have been provided to select teachers and administrators on an annual basis. Initial site visits to schools and districts implementing Quality were also part of the training. The addition of district Quality mentors in 2004 solidified the formation of the Quality Department. The mentors have provided school-based training on-site,

Blackboard training, summer training, summer refresher training, and individualized training tailored to the needs of the schools. The mentors, additionally, worked with each department and the Calcasieu Parish School Board members to develop goals and action plans that aligned with the CPSS's goals. The district has provided numerous opportunities for showcasing and sharing successes with Quality through presentations to the school board, annual participation with the business community in Quality Day, presentations on the local cable access channel, and reception of the prestigious SWLA Quality Award.

Initially, participation in Quality was voluntary. The superintendent selected four pilot schools, and as the framework became entrenched in processes within those four schools, the opportunities for training were offered to other schools. Over time, more and more schools were choosing to participate. In 2006, there was a change in district leadership, and the new superintendent mandated district-wide participation in Quality. District-level decisions had been a major factor in this implementation effort. An understanding of the role of the CPSS in this initiative is important to the understanding of the experiences of principals with the phenomenon.

Researcher's Perspective

Upon my request, the Quality Department provided a list of prospective principals for further study. Although the Quality implementation effort had been in place within the district for nine years, many of the schools had experienced changes in leadership during that time period. One of the criteria for placement on the list was for a principal to have been in place at his or her current school for at least three years. In order for any

reform effort to be successful, whether at the district-level or school-level, there must be sufficient time for implementation (Smith, 2005).

A meeting was scheduled with the Quality mentors in March 2009 to explain the research study and to ask for their assistance in the selection of the sample. The mentors first assisted by compiling a list of all Quality training opportunities provided by the district during the past nine years. This list was utilized to determine the number of principals' training experiences with the implementation. This list would also ensure that a range of principals with a low number of training experiences to a high number of experiences would be included in the sample. The Quality mentors then developed a list of principals who met the three year criterion. A list of twenty-nine principals emerged. That list was organized into three school levels: elementary, middle, and high. The Quality mentors then purposefully selected ten principals with a range of training experiences (from five to fourteen) whom they recommended for further study. A group of ten principals were selected, who mirrored the demographics of the principal population within the district.

Initial contact was made through email in May 2009 to the ten recommended principals on the list--five were elementary, three were middle school, and two were high school. All ten responded that they would be willing to participate in the study. All interviews were intended to be conducted in person at locations convenient to the participants. The pressure of preparing schools for Summer Academy forced some to decline a face to face meeting. As circumstance would dictate, the reality of a very demanding end of the year and summer school schedules, all interviews were conducted through telephone. One respondent was never able to follow through with

interviews, so the next name on the list was chosen (within the same school level), as recommended by the Quality mentors, and that principal graciously agreed to participate. By the end of June, all participants were interviewed.

The interview required participants to share their experiences with Quality implementation. Each participant was asked thirteen questions from the interview guide (Appendix I) that was developed in a pilot study in spring 2009. All of the participants were enthusiastic and eager to assist in describing their experiences. Their responses were very insightful, and all agreed to provide further information if the study warranted.

In August 2009, I contacted the administrative directors of elementary, middle, and high schools to request an interview. The purpose was to understand their involvement in the implementation of Quality as it related to their expectations of their principals. Although the interviews were not directed at answering the specific research question of this study, it was important to understand the context in which principals were working with Quality implementation. Their responses were included in this chapter because there was a direct bearing on some of the findings of the research.

Administrative Directors

Three administrative directors in the Calcasieu Parish School System comprise the leadership team responsible for supervising the 58 principals within the district. According to the CPSS Personnel Evaluation: Plan A (2002), the primary job responsibility of administrative directors is “to assist the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in providing leadership in developing, achieving, and maintaining the best possible programs, management, and instructional services to the students and staff of the assigned schools” (p. 61). Two of the administrative directors

were female and one was male. One of the directors was African-American. Two of the directors assumed their current position prior to the implementation of Quality. One of them was the principal of one of the Quality pilot schools. Each one of them supervised at different grade levels: elementary, middle, and high.

Initial contact was made to each of the directors through email asking to schedule an interview. All of them agreed to an interview, but scheduling a time that suited their schedule and mine was somewhat difficult. Two of them suggested that I call them at home to conduct the interview. The third director met with me in person after a principals' meeting for the interview. I asked each of them the following three questions: (1) How long have you been involved in the implementation of Quality? (2) What are your expectations of your principals with Quality? (3) How do you support your principals with this implementation?

Although the directors have similar roles, their approach to Quality implementation, and their expectations of the principals they supervise vary. One director said, "I have very high expectations of my principals. I expect them to be strong leaders and strong managers." This director stated, "At this point, Quality is a mandate. I expect my principals to use Quality tools for problem-solving, developing innovative ideas, and involving their stakeholders." This director went on to say that "approximately 75% of principals utilize Quality at their schools. Those schools have fewer problems and rarely require intervention from me."

Another director indicated a desire to see Quality implemented in all schools to the degree of the pilot schools. This director stated, "Time constraints are a huge barrier

with moving schools forward with Quality. Some schools are really running with it, and others have a way to go.”

The third director stated,

I don’t really use the word ‘Quality’ very much when I’m working with my principals, but Quality is embedded in everything we do. Right now we’re focusing on the balanced scorecard, and we’re working toward development of 90-Day Plans. When I see that we’re lagging in Quality processes, I have the Quality mentor teach a Quality tool.

This director articulated an expectation that all principals implement Quality. In the words of the director, “Model, model, model” is the approach that is utilized.

When asked about training opportunities and resources of the district, all three directors responded that they have been involved in Quality training and implementation since it began. They all rely on Quality mentors to assist them, not only in their monthly principal meetings, but also for individual assistance within schools. One director stated, “At every principals’ meeting, we use the Quality mentor to assist with Quality. She visits with me on a daily basis and helps me every chance we get, particularly with data.”

Another director said,

There are tremendous resources available to principals to support their use of Quality, both through professional development and the support of the Quality Department. The Quality mentor is excellent, and her schedule stays full because principals are taking advantage of her expertise.

All three directors stated that the Quality Department and the mentors are a valuable asset to the district.

The Principals

Ten principals were interviewed in this study. They comprised a sample that paralleled the demographics of the district principal population. Five were from the elementary level, three were from the middle school level, and two were from the high school level. Five were male and five were female. Two were African American. One principal's school was designated as a "High Poverty, High Achieving" School. Another principal was the administrator of a magnet school. Their experience as principals ranged from three years to fifteen years. One principal has been implementing Quality since the beginning of the initiative. Collectively, they were a willing group eager to share their Quality experiences.

For organizational purposes in this chapter the principals are grouped according to the level of their schools. The experiences of five elementary principals are reported in the next section, followed by the experiences of three middle school principals, and then the experiences of two high school principals. The principal interviews began in May 2009 and concluded in June 2009. Each principal was first contacted via email or in person. Once the principal agreed to participate, the participant letter (Appendix J) and consent form (Appendix K) were sent by email. The interviews were then scheduled. The individual interviews were scheduled for 30 to 45 minutes, however, some lasted longer. The shortest interview lasted 30 minutes, and the longest interview lasted one hour. Each interview was digitally recorded. Upon completion of each interview, the transcription occurred. The transcriptions were emailed to each participant for review, and data analysis began.

Elementary Principals

Five elementary principals were interviewed. Their participation in Quality training opportunities ranged from eight experiences to twelve. Four of the five principals had advanced degrees beyond the Master's degree required for principalship. One of them had a doctorate in education leadership. Their administrative experience ranged from five to twenty years at the time of the interviews. Four of the five elementary principals led schools that are considered high-poverty. Two of the five had student populations that were over 90% African-American. All of them had been implementing Quality for at least four years. To ensure confidentiality, each principal was assigned a pseudonym.

Clarence

The interview with Clarence took place after several attempts to schedule a time to meet. He graciously agreed to participate. When asked about his personal vision for his school, he stated that it was "to get everyone on board, including the teachers, the students, and the stakeholders." Clarence commented that "working together is the key to building a learning organization."

When asked about training opportunities, Clarence identified several different experiences that he has participated in since 2001 including: training provided by Jim Shipley; business partners; Dr. Mary Hooper; and, the Quality Department. He has participated in the leadership Blackboard course and summer training for school leadership teams, as well as school visits. He shared the fact that his school attends all district Quality offerings. Two years ago one of the first Quality mentors served in a leadership capacity at his school. He stated, "She did a tremendous amount of training with the staff."

Clarence described Quality as another responsibility that he is expected to follow. He does not perceive it as extra work, but more a part of his job. He commented that the primary benefit of implementing Quality is that it has made everyone “more responsible.” He thinks it is a good “check and balance system” that makes everyone accountable. He articulated that time is a major challenge when implementing Quality. He stated how difficult it is to bring new teachers “up to speed” each year and that there are many unanswered questions.

Clarence stated that his greatest challenge with implementing Quality is time. He remarked that the schedule required by the district this year will force his staff to look closely at what they are doing.

Connie

The interview with Connie was the first one that took place. She was a very eager participant willingly sharing her time. She described her vision for her school as “being able to provide a challenging and enriching learning environment where students are actively involved in the learning process and love learning!” She shared the fact that she emphasizes collaboration and empowerment, but she is also extremely involved in the teaching and learning that is taking place at her school.

When asked about training opportunities, Connie identified all of the experiences detailed in Table 4 with the exception of the pilot school training and the Quality Forum. Connie articulated that she has participated in numerous training opportunities with Quality. She and her staff have participated in several summer and in-service trainings through the Quality Department as well as Blackboard courses. She has attended the National Quality in Education Conference twice. She has sent school teams to Quality

Day during years past. Her school received the SWLA Quality Award for Significant Progress during their first year of implementation. She shared the fact that Quality is used at all levels at her school. Connie expressed the fact that implementation was made easier when teachers from the Quality pilot schools shared their ideas and experiences during a summer session. She also stated that the training of administrators has been an important part of the implementation.

Connie stated, "The use of Quality is embedded in the way our school operates. Data binders are used with all students to track attendance, discipline, AR, grades, GLEs attained, Scantron results, and for goal setting." She identified "increased student responsibility for learning, improved parent awareness, improved procedures and routines due to continuous input from stakeholders, alignment of school processes, teacher and student use of data, and the use of the PDSA cycle" as benefits from Quality implementation.

She identified "training of new faculty members" as the greatest challenge with implementing Quality. She also stressed the importance of having "refresher moments" and share sessions for her faculty.

Linda

The interview with Linda was one of the longest. In response to the questions about vision and leadership style, Linda articulated very lengthy responses to the questions posed. She described her personal vision for her school as

To create an environment that challenges all students, meets their needs academically as well as socially, and allows everyone to grow in a nurturing setting without fear or humiliation. I envision this wonderful learning environment

that satisfies every need of our students, and I am passionate about inspiring others to enthusiastically pursue the same vision.

Linda received Quality training in her previous role as an assistant principal at another school, so she immediately began Quality implementation upon her arrival as principal seven years ago. She detailed extensive training with Quality. She has participated in all of the district training opportunities except for the original pilot, one site visit, and the application for the SWLA Quality Award. Linda serves on the district Quality Leadership Team.

This principal uses Quality tools in faculty meetings and models for her teachers what she expects of them. Linda stated that the benefit of implementing Quality is “the importance of data for making informed decisions at every level.” As far as meeting the needs of her students, Linda articulated that “bringing the data down to the student level makes a tremendous difference.” She commented, “We won’t get the results we need until the students make decisions for themselves.”

“Turnover of staff” is Linda’s greatest challenge in implementing Quality. She said that with new staff “you have to start from the ground up” with understanding Quality, and why it is important.

Patricia

During her interview, Patricia very excitedly shared her enthusiasm for the implementation of Quality at her school. She described her personal vision “to motivate all students to perform at and above grade level in all core subjects, and to inspire all teachers to provide the best learning opportunities for all students with compassion and

patience.” In reference to her staff, she stated that she “tries to move their cheese” as often as possible. She also strives to “lead by example, and walk the walk” daily.

Patricia and her staff have participated in more than half of the Quality training opportunities provided by the district. They participate in annual summer planning, as well as learning communities. The Quality mentors have provided training and support within their school. Every year this principal and a team train new teachers in Quality implementation.

Patricia stated that “data and information are displayed” throughout her school to some degree. Students have data binders and track their progress. These binders are used for conferences and workshops with parents. From a leadership perspective, she considers the main implementation of Quality to be the focus on data. She remarked that Quality is “a friendlier way” to take a look at “where we are and where we are going.” She stated that the use of Quality “helps her school to focus on areas of strength, as well as areas in which to improve.”

Her greatest challenge with implementing Quality is “teacher turnover.” She noted that in her school it was a really big issue, and that every year she has “to interview, train, and support new teachers, while striving to bring them up to the level of everyone else.”

Wanda

Wanda’s interview was another one filled with enthusiasm. She was very proud of her school’s accomplishments with Quality implementation. She described her vision of her school as

I want all students to score proficiency or better on state accountability tests. I strive to create a school culture in which all stakeholders feel their ideas and opinions are respected and valued. I perceive our staff to be our greatest resource, and realize the need to support their instructional efforts and protect their instructional time.

Wanda received Quality training in her previous role as a central office consultant, so she began immediate implementation upon her arrival as principal. She emphasized the fact that the previous administration at the school did not involve staff in Quality training, so the school was only one of a few that had never participated in training. She expressed the fact that there was reluctance on the part of the staff to participate.

Wanda stated that the first thing she did was to enlist the help of the Quality Department to provide training for her staff during staff development days. She commented that the biggest impact of using Quality has been with “the way we use data.” She and her staff now make needed changes based on data. She noted that they do a much better job with their use of data than in the past. She went on to say that throughout the school there is “use of Quality binders, and the tracking of AR, grades, attendance, and behavior.”

She stated that Quality has had a major impact on her role as a school leader. She sees great buy-in from everyone at her school for Quality. She shared the fact that her staff has no problem going to talk to her when they have a concern. She noted that the use of Quality has made her students more aware of their own progress, and more responsible for it.

She views the biggest challenge with implementing Quality as the fact that she “has the tendency to go like a whirlwind.” She felt that she overwhelmed her staff initially and when she backed off, their stress levels decreased, and they became more receptive to the implementation.

Middle School Principals

Three middle school principals were interviewed. Their participation in Quality training opportunities ranged from five experiences to fourteen. Two of the three principals had advanced degrees beyond the Master’s degree required for principalship. Their administrative experience ranged from eleven to sixteen years. Two of the three middle school principals lead schools that are considered high-poverty. All three principals have student populations that are low minority (25% or less). All of them have been implementing Quality for at least five years. To provide confidentiality, each principal was assigned a pseudonym.

Arthur

The interview with Arthur took place when I was unable to connect with a principal recommended by the Quality Department. Arthur was a willing, humble participant. Arthur’s personal vision for his school is for his school “to reach an SPS (school performance score) of 120 by 2014.” He wants students, parents, and teachers “to be proud of our efforts and our school.” He described himself as “I am just the guy who sits in the office.” He stated that “the faculty and students make what goes here work.” He articulated that he and his staff work together along with the community and student body.

Arthur and his staff have been to a few Quality trainings offered by the district during the past five years. He sends teachers to Quality Day every year. He and his staff have also visited other schools to observe Quality in action. He also noted that during middle school monthly principal meetings, one of the Quality mentors presents a new Quality tool to the group.

When asked about how he was implementing Quality in his school, Arthur shared the fact that the district's implementation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) conflicted with his school's implementation of Quality. He commented that he and a team had attended a summer Quality training and committed to implement it the following year. He found the idea of implementing two initiatives to be very intimidating. He stated that TAP was very successful for his school, and they did continue to use some Quality tools. He remarked that his school did not implement the whole Quality process even though most of his teachers who had been trained continue to use some of the Quality tools.

Arthur commented that his school's use of Quality has helped both staff and students. He said it has given his teachers an opportunity to voice their opinions. As far as students go, he stated that it will "help them become better organized, become more accountable, and inform their parents."

Arthur's challenge with implementing Quality was the conflict with the TAP program. He chose to implement TAP, and now that initiative no longer exists. He stated that it was his decision "for better or for worse."

Melissa

Melissa was a very gracious participant who willingly shared her thoughts and experiences with Quality implementation. She shared the fact that her personal vision for her school is for it to become “a school where every child gets what he or she needs to make incremental improvement in a positive and safe environment.” She described her leadership style as “a leader, who develops leaders.” She is striving to develop leadership within her staff and put procedures into place that will enable Quality processes to continue “even after I’m gone.”

Melissa was trained in Quality during her tenure as an assistant principal at another school, and she also received training as a teacher through her previous school’s business partnership. At her current school she provided training for her staff before there was even a Quality Department. They have participated in extensive training opportunities, including site visits and the Quality Forum. She commented that her leadership team had completed several levels of training as well as “Quality Moments” in their faculty meetings. She stated that she used to provide a lot of Quality training, but “the school is at a different level now.” Most of her school’s emphasis is on the data. She did state that the school was involved in Quality implementation with the previous administration. Her school has won the SWLA Quality Award twice.

Within her school Melissa, described the main Quality implementation as occurring during weekly professional learning community meetings where elementary teachers meet in grade levels and middle grade teachers meet by content areas. She also shared the importance of Quality processes for management. She pointed out that

within her school handbook, specific processes have been spelled out, and these processes have “become ingrained” within the school.

Melissa identified the benefits of implementing Quality as shared leadership and improved processes. Melissa also stressed the importance of increased “stakeholder involvement” as a result of Quality implementation.

Melissa’s biggest challenge is “those teachers who don’t understand the big picture.” She described some of her staff, who do not want to take the time to make a decision. She noted that they would prefer for someone to do the decision-making for them.

Victor

As the principal of a school involved in the original pilot of Quality, Victor was proud to share his implementation experiences. His personal vision for his school is to see 100% involvement of his school, including custodians, cafeteria, office staff, teachers, and students with the continued implementation of Quality. When asked to describe his leadership style, he said, “I value input from faculty and staff. This information from them helps with decision-making. Decisions are made in a timely fashion, but not hurriedly. Listening skills are important to me.”

Victor shared the fact that his school was involved in major training from Pinellas County, Florida at the beginning of the district implementation. He and some of his staff have attended the National Quality in Education Conference, and have participated in all Quality training offered by the district, with the exception of the site visit to Albuquerque, New Mexico. He has developed individualized training for his school sponsored by the Quality business partners. He stated that his school has had

“extensive training,” and administers assessments within his school to determine the extent of use of Quality. Victor serves on the district Quality Leadership Team.

When asked to describe the ways that his school was implementing Quality, Victor shared the fact that “there is a lot of data posted on the walls and in the classrooms, showing how the students are doing.” All students have data binders that are utilized on a daily basis. Data binders contain “student test scores, grade trackers, and other pertinent data.” Students have jobs within their classrooms that they must apply for and interview.

Victor said that using Quality has made his job better. He commented that when teachers are using Quality, they know that principals value their input. The input from his teachers is helpful to him and guides his leadership of the school. As far as the benefits for students, he stated, “when teachers understand Quality, they act more as facilitators and the students carry more of the workload.”

Victor’s greatest challenge with Quality implementation is getting everyone on board, and actually doing it. Even though he has been involved in the district implementation since the beginning, he is concerned that his school is not at “100% implementation.”

High School Principals

Two high school principals were interviewed. Their participation in Quality training opportunities ranged from five experiences to nine. Neither of the principals had advanced degrees beyond the Master’s Degree required for principalship. Their administrative experience ranged from 11 to 18 years. Both principals lead schools that are considered high-poverty. One of them has a student population that is 87% African-

American. Both of them have been implementing Quality for at least five years. To ensure confidentiality, each principal was assigned a pseudonym.

Irvin

In his interview, Irvin shared the fact that he was the assistant principal when his school participated in the original Quality pilot. His personal vision for his school is “to create a sustained learning environment that will enable all students to achieve their potential.” He described his leadership style as

I provide the data and the opportunity for those that are most affected, to find solutions and implement changes that will improve student and teacher performance. If those affected choose not to act, then I take the data and implement the solution in the best interest of those most affected.

Irvin and his staff have been involved in numerous training opportunities provided by the district. He stated that he has a Quality team, which makes recommendations for school improvement. There is “school-wide use of data binders, and goal setting can be found throughout the school.”

He commented, “Teachers like Quality because it simplifies what they do on a day-to-day basis because students take responsibility for more of the things in the classroom.” Irvin articulated that Quality gives teachers a better use of their time. In fact, he views “time management” as one of the biggest benefits of Quality. He stated that “by taking the data and analyzing it, Quality has helped his staff to narrow their focus on the things they need to be working on.”

Irvin views Quality as beneficial at every level. With teachers, he commented that “it’s self-generated.” As far as students, “it helps us help them.” He articulated that it is a

means of school improvement because of the way it helps everyone sort through all the information. He stated that it helps a school to determine its focus.

Irvin noted that one of the main challenges of Quality implementation is the continual changing of requirements for schools especially at the high school level and the fact that it is “sometimes difficult to streamline all required processes.”

Larry

Larry cordially agreed to the interview, with some reluctance about his knowledge of Quality. He described his personal vision for his school,

It has a safe learning environment where ALL students can receive a quality education from a highly trained and caring staff; a school that will continue to push for improved test scores, increase the number of graduates and lower our dropouts; a school where community, families, and students will always feel a sense of pride and belonging.

When asked about his leadership style, Larry said, “I am a teachers’ principal.” He stated that his “door is always open to staff, parents, and students.” He makes it a goal to be aware of what is going on at all times around the school, but recognizes the ability of others to assist. He commented, “I am always open to innovative suggestions and ideas that will make his school the best it can be.” His school has a long, proud history, and upholding that proud standard is a foremost consideration for him.

Larry and his staff have participated in five of the training opportunities provided by the district. He has attended the National Quality in Education Conference and invited the Quality mentors to his school for training. A key member of his staff conducts training and redelivery of learning for the rest of his school.

The main implementation in his school is the use of the Quality folders. Chairs of each department are responsible for implementing Quality and focusing on the data. His school has developed a Freshman Academy as part of Louisiana's *High School Redesign* initiative. He stated that Quality is a major component of that initiative. "Freshmen set goals, develop mission statements and focus on data."

Larry stated that he "totally supports" the implementation of Quality. He commented that "it is something that everyone needs to do, and it needs to be expanded upon." He views the biggest benefit as "students taking responsibility." His greatest challenge with implementing Quality is the "ongoing staff development with new teachers."

Ten principals were interviewed in this study. Five of them were from the elementary level, three were from the middle school level, and two were from the high school level. Collectively, their training experiences range from 5 to 14 experiences. Six of the ten principals have advanced degrees beyond a Master's Degree. Their years in administration range from 5 to 20 years experience. Eight of the ten principals lead schools that are considered high-poverty. Three of the ten principals have high African-American student populations. Their years in Quality implementation range from four to nine years.

Data Collection, Analysis Procedures, and Emerging Themes

Individual principal interviews began at the end of May and were completed at the end of June 2009. All participants were contacted in person or through email and offered a choice of either a face-to-face interview or by telephone. All participants chose a telephone interview, and five of them specified the day and time that was most

convenient for them. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts were analyzed for similarities among participant responses. Chart paper was utilized to organize transcript sentences and quotes. Codes were assigned and similarities were grouped together based on the research question, “What are principals’ experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education?” As quotes were grouped into categories, themes within the individual experiences began to emerge, and sub-themes were also noted. This led to the development of an organizational matrix (Appendix G).

Five major themes emerged from this study: *analysis of data, narrowing the focus, stakeholder involvement, district support, and sustainability*. Quotes from participants provide a detailed analysis of each of the themes. Within the five themes, eleven sub-themes emerged. These include *data based decision-making, student data binders, “working smarter, not harder,” students’ responsibility for learning, parent communication, faculty and staff input, professional development, Quality mentors, teacher turnover, implementation of other programs, lack of faculty buy-in, and time*. Table 5 provides an organizational overview of themes and sub-themes.

Table 5 *Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes*

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Analysis of Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data based decision-making • Student data binders
Narrowing the Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working smarter, not harder

Table 5 *Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes, cont.*

Stakeholder Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' responsibility for learning • Parent communication • Faculty and staff input
District Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development • Quality mentors
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher turnover • Implementation of other programs • Lack of faculty buy-in • Time

Theme 1: Analysis of Data

Throughout the ten interviews conducted within this study, the word *data* was used by principals multiple times. Every principal referenced analysis of data as one of the ways they were implementing Quality within their school. They described understanding the data and using it to make changes within their schools. Sub-themes that emerged were data-based decision-making and student data binders.

Within the Malcolm Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence the *Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management* Category examines how an education organization selects, gathers, manages, and improves its data and information (National Institute for Science and Technology, 2009). The *McREL Balanced Leadership Framework* (2004) defines school improvement as,

using data to identify areas of student learning that need attention, understanding how students learn the knowledge or skills associated with that particular area of need, determining how to ensure that students' academic needs are met, monitoring school progress toward identified goals, and collectively learning from the actions taken. (p.1)

According to NCLB, schools are required by law to use data to change organizational and individual behavior and to change academic outcomes (Doyle, 2002).

Sub-theme 1a: Data-based Decision-Making

Making data-based decisions at the classroom level as well as at the school level was a common theme during the interviews. Wanda stated that the biggest impact of Quality implementation at her school has been the way she and her staff utilize data. She believes that

now the decisions we make are more likely to be the right ones. Before [Quality], we always had our data and put it in a nice organized binder, but we didn't do anything with it. We didn't make changes according to what the data told us. Now, I think we do a much better job. I feel like the decisions we make are more likely to be the right ones because there's a reason for that decision.

Linda and her staff use data in weekly team meetings to make informed decisions. They utilize surveys, student work, and various forms of assessment to make those decisions. She articulated,

We use Quality all the time in posting our work and analyzing our progress. We look at data, a lot of data. In our weekly team meetings we use the data to make informed decisions. Data so easily gives you buy-in when you're

trying to bring awareness about a problem. If you have the data, the information to show the staff, sometimes you don't have to say that it is a problem. You can show them the data and they will recognize the weakness and then they feel that they are a part of the solution.

Patricia described the connection between Quality and data.

It [Quality implementation] has helped us to convey or see things in a concrete way. It's a friendlier way to take a look at where we are and what we want to aim at. It helps us to get a better focus of our strengths and where we need to improve. We're tracking and looking at environment, looking at staffing and so many things as to why the data does change. We understand what the data reveals and how we drive our instruction on the data.

The dialogue with Victor supports this.

We're definitely data-driven. We always analyze our data and use it to correct the direction we're going in. Of course, we analyze our data from the school tests, Scantron (a program used for district-wide testing of students in English-Language Arts and math), and so forth. All students have data binders, [and] there's a lot of data posted on the walls in classrooms showing how students are doing. Also, the teachers use plus/deltas to determine how well the class went and what the student's opinion is.

According to Melissa, decisions at her school are based on data and utilized for staff development needs, student placement, and interventions. She is very proud of her school's ability to analyze and report data. She stated, "Within 24 hours of receiving the

LEAP/I-LEAP scores, everyone has their data broken down by classes and correlated to Scantron data.”

The other principals also referenced mission statements, goal-setting, tracking attendance, behavior, grades, data displays within the school, as well as the use of teaming, and professional learning communities to discuss data. It was apparent that the use of data for decision-making was central to the daily work within their schools. The educational leaders of today must change data into knowledge, transform knowledge into understanding and use understanding as a call to action (Doyle, 2002).

An analysis of the organizational matrix based on demographic information and participant responses confirmed that only two principals did not verbalize the use of data for decision-making. Both of these principals had participated in only five Quality training experiences and neither of them had an advanced educational degree. Considering the fact that Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management is one of the seven categories of Baldrige and two of the principals identified data-based decision-making as the major benefit of Quality implementation, it is clear that the formal education and the professional development of the leader are a critical component in a Quality implementation effort.

Sub-theme 1b: Student Data Binders

Within this research study, every principal responded with the use of student data binders when asked about ways they were implementing Quality within their schools. Nine of the ten principals stated that student data binders were used throughout their schools. Arthur indicated that his students would begin using data binders at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

While participants had varying names for the notebook that students used to organize their data (Quality folder, Quality binder, data binder), they were referencing a common Quality tool, the data binder. Data binders are organizational tools for students to track their own data (Byrnes, 2005). This tool and the process of keeping data teach students how to reflect, set goals, and develop action plans for improvement. The decision on what goes into a data binder is based on individual schools and/or classrooms. Examples of data contained within the binders include tracking charts for students to mark daily attendance, tracking charts to mark classroom behavior, tracking charts to enter and average grades, lists of grade-level expectations for different subjects, standardized test scores, formative and summative assessment results, individual as well as class goals with action plans, and other documents chosen by the class or school. Teachers demonstrate to students what data to enter, and they provide time during class to allow for updating data. These data are managed by the student, and the student is able to verbalize his or her own progress according to the information in the binder.

Irvin shared the benefit of using data binders with students. He said,

It helps them to focus on what they need to do. They set their goals. It's a point of reference we keep bringing them back to. This is "why" we're doing what we're doing. This is what you need to accomplish. This is why we're doing it as a class.

This is where we are. This is why we're here.

Victor concurred, "Quality binders make them [the students] aware of where they are.

They know where they stand and what they need to do. It helps them to develop a goal for themselves individually." Patricia stated, "The use of data with students gives them

awareness of their actions and ownership of their actions. They're setting goals and tracking them. It makes them more aware because they're looking at comparisons within that classroom or within the school." Her students take their data binders home every Tuesday for their parents to see.

Linda believes that the biggest impact of Quality on her role as a school leader is that the implementation has reached the student level. She believes that elementary students understand the importance of attendance, behavior, and grades, and they realize that

they have to do it. Nobody can do it for them. Sometimes we forget to include the kids. We say we put kids first, but we make decisions for the kids. Until the kids make the decisions for themselves, nothing will really change.

Connie said that "students are responsible for learning goals and are aware of what exactly is needed to be successful in their learning." Larry referenced his school's involvement in the *High School Redesign* initiative with the development of the Freshman Academy, and how his school's use of Quality folders is a critical part of that initiative.

The analysis of data in terms of use for decision-making and as a student responsibility through the use of data binders emerged as a major theme in this study. Based on the interviews of the ten principals, it was very evident that the understanding of data and the use of data binders by students led to increased student ownership for learning.

Theme 2: Narrowing the Focus

Five principals identified that Quality implementation helped them and the teachers in their schools to narrow their focus. Two of the five identified the narrow focus as the main benefit of Quality implementation.

Irvin stated,

What we're required to do is constantly changing, especially at the high school level. Now we've got another degree requirement that's coming down the pipes. I think the last time we checked we had eight and this may be nine. It's trying to get all of our processes and all the things we're trying to do geared in a single direction.

He said that through Quality and data analysis his staff is able to narrow their focus on the things they need to be working on.

Quality helps you sort through all the information that's out there...all the data that comes down the pipe. It helps you to know your focus and concentrate on those things you really need to work on. We've been in this [Quality implementation] since the inception, and we don't know any other way to do this. We've done a lot of other things, but this is the only thing that has endured. It's really, really helped us maintain our focus, and target the areas we need to work on.

Patricia said,

Through Quality and the use of data, it gives us a better focus and more hindsight on what we're doing versus going in circles. I think it narrows that focus on what we want to see in our students' overall performance.

When asked about Quality as a means of school improvement, Patricia responded,

In the process of Quality you have to be consistent. You can't deviate. It has to be tailored to your school and your community. It may not be a paved road always, but you're taking in the views of all stakeholders. It's everyone's voices being heard and everyone working toward common goals.

Clarence verbalized the connection between Quality and school improvement. He said,

Quality has contributed to school improvement more so than I realized. Once you present the data and see where you're going, then everyone accepts a piece of the responsibility. I think that's what the whole thing is all about—working together. It's identifying what the needs are for the school and the children, and then analyzing, making changes, and doing what you need to do. It's an ongoing thing.

When asked about the benefits of implementing Quality, Connie articulated, "Everyone is working toward common goals. Students are responsible for learning and are aware of what exactly is needed to be successful in their learning." She described Quality as a means of school improvement in terms of "a collaborative work process that is used to reach the goal of improving student achievement in the academic areas using a focus on data and best practices."

Linda described using Quality as a means of school improvement. She remarked,

We have to build relationships where it's important to everyone and not

just a few key people. We have to bring it down to every single staff member, even the cafeteria worker and the custodians. Everyone has to have that same vision and focus.

Within the Baldrige Framework, the *Leadership* Category examines how an education organization communicates with its workforce and encourages high performance. The *Strategic Planning* Category examines how the organization develops its goals and action steps and determines how progress is measured. The *Process Management* Category examines how the organization designs, manages, and improves its key processes for implementing work systems to deliver value and achieve organizational success (National Institute for Standards and Technology, 2009). Together, these three categories are intertwined in the streamlining of the system and the narrowing of the focus to create alignment. Effective alignment requires a common understanding of purpose and goals. The Malcolm Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence provides an alignment for educational processes and tracking performance over time (National Education Goals Panel, 2000). Maintaining an undeviating focus on students is vital to distinguishing and articulating purposeful intent for any school reform effort (SEDL Newsletter, 2000). With the identification of a shared focus for improvement, principals can guide their staff in developing and articulating a collective vision for their students.

Sub-Theme 2a: Working Smarter, Not Harder

Six of the ten principals responded that the implementation of Quality can lighten the workload and make the jobs easier for teachers and administrators. Three of them identified this sub-theme as a major benefit of Quality.

Wanda articulated,

It [Quality] makes our jobs easier because it shows you things you don't need to keep doing. There's [sic] times we found things that we were still doing that didn't make a difference, and we were killing ourselves to get it done. Whenever they first trained everybody that was the main thing they told everybody, "you work smarter, not harder."

Victor said,

It's [Quality]made it a lot better for me. When teachers use Quality, they know I value their input. The input from teachers is helpful to me and guides me in the school as a whole. It's made it a lot better for me. I value the opinions of the entire staff, even the custodians. I have them to ask the teachers how they're doing. I explain to them, it helps them to do their job....the cafeteria, too. The input from the staff about what we can do better, to work smarter, has helped me.

Irvin commented that it was easier to delegate responsibilities through the use of Quality. He believes that if his teachers find a "better way" to do something, that's fine with him. He believes the things are much more successful from "the bottom up rather than the top down." When asked how Quality helps him meet the needs of his teachers, he responded,

They get a much better use of their time. Time management is probably one of the biggest benefits of going to Quality. It helps them to narrow their focus on the things they need to be working on by taking the data and analyzing that it's just not a shotgun approach in developing personalities. Like first and fourth

hours—one might be proficient in things and the other is not. It's individualizing the classroom.

Connie enthusiastically stated that the use of Quality “makes school leadership easier because everyone is working toward common goals and has input into all aspects of running a school. It has developed a collaborative work environment that grows stronger each year.”

Clarence views Quality as another responsibility that he has to accept. He does not view it as extra work, but rather something he “needs to stay on top of.” He stated “it's not a hard job. It's something that's reoccurring.”

When asked about Quality as a means of school improvement, Linda said, A lot of people miss the boat on that. When I think of school improvement so many people don't want to take the time to do things the right way. They don't realize it would be so much less time if they did things the right way. I think that with everybody on the staff, we have to build leadership.

Based on the interviews of the ten principals, a key finding is that the implementation of Quality has assisted them in developing a narrow focus and common goals while lightening their workload and making the jobs of teachers and principals easier.

Theme 3: Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement was evident throughout the interview process. Eight of the ten principals referenced the stakeholder groups, students, parents, and faculty, and the fact that their input and ownership for school processes was a noticeable outcome of Quality implementation.

When asked about the benefits of implementing Quality, Patricia said, “[Quality] narrows the focus and it’s a friendlier approach. [We have] student ownership, teacher ownership, parent ownership, and school-wide it’s something to celebrate. Everyone is part of the process of achievement.” When asked about Quality as a means of school improvement she stated, “It’s everyone’s voices being heard and everyone working toward common goals.”

Connie responded,

The Quality approach has helped me to monitor the level of employee involvement and satisfaction. It has also developed a process within our school where it is a common practice for us to always tackle all events by looking at what went well, and what the challenges were in relation to how we could make it better. Looking at process problems instead of people problems is the way to go.

Within the Baldrige Framework, the *Customer Focus* Category examines how an education organization builds a student and stakeholder-focused culture and how it listens to the voice of its customers. The *Workforce Focus* Category examines how the organization develops its workforce to utilize its full potential, and create an environment conducive to high performance. The term “stakeholder” refers to all groups that might be affected by an organization’s actions and success. Within this theme, *stakeholder* refers to students, parents, teachers and school staff (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2009).

Most of the principals experienced an increase in stakeholder involvement as a result of Quality implementation. The following sub-themes will provide greater detail concerning each stakeholder group.

Sub-theme 3a: Students' Responsibility for Learning

In this study, nine of the ten principals interviewed identified increased student responsibility for learning as a way that Quality has benefited their students. They acknowledged student awareness of the data as a critical piece to improving responsibility.

When asked how Quality helps meet the needs of students, Clarence replied, "If students know where they are and we can show them using the data...then it's letting them know that these are things they have to get on top of...It's a buy-in for students." Connie remarked, "Students are aware and more responsible for their learning. They have developed goals and mission statements so they feel ownership and responsibility. Wanda commented, "I know they're more aware of their progress...and they have more responsibility for it." Linda stated, "It brings it down to their level. Once they realize the importance...sometimes we forget to include the kids. We put kids first, but we make decisions for the kids. Until the kids make decisions for themselves..."

Patricia said,

It gives them that awareness of their actions and ownership of their actions.

They're setting goals...It builds an intrinsic motivation when so often what we do is a quick fix. They just want to do better. They want to improve and reach higher goals. I think this is the process to train them to become more of an intrinsic learner.

Irvin's response was,

It helps them focus on what they need to do. They set their goals. It's a point of reference we keep bringing them back to. This is "why" we're doing what we're

doing. This is what you need to accomplish....The kids take responsibility for more of the things in the classroom. The teacher is more of a facilitator. At the end of the six weeks they have those little reflective times where they reassess their goals, look at their target, and what they actually got, [and] look at their plan of action for improving. I find that the kids expect it. It's become a part of what we do.

Teachers at Victor's school use the plus/delta tool (Appendix A) to determine how well the class went, and to learn the students' opinions. Many of his classrooms include student jobs, roles in the classroom, for which students must apply and be interviewed. He sees the teachers at his school in more of a "facilitator" role. When discussing needs of students he remarked,

Quality binders make them aware of where they are because they have to know what's in there, be familiar with test scores, and they know where they stand and what they need to do. It helps them develop a goal for themselves individually. It teaches responsibility.

Larry shared the fact that his school has an "image factor" to deal with. In discussing Quality implementation he commented,

The biggest [benefit] and what we like is that the students are taking responsibility as far as their grades. When students know their grades and they know what they need in order to make a certain thing, it's very easy for the teacher to direct the student to their (data) folder. This is where it helps us in high school. A lot of responsibility is off of the teacher and it puts it on the student. I think through goal setting, it's made a better student.

Zmuda (2008) stated that a significant barrier to improving student achievement exists in the collective way of thinking of the very students we teach. Too many students have become compliant workers who simply follow directions of the teacher who makes all the decisions. However, research indicates that students will become more engaged and more task-focused when they are allowed to make responsible decisions (Skinner, Zimmer-Gembeck, & Connell, 1998). Maslow (1976) stated that the self-actualized individual will take responsibility. Each time a student assumes responsibility, it is an actualizing of self. As a student becomes more in tune with his inner and outer reality, he can also take more responsibility for his own learning (Bacon, 1993).

As young people mature, the decisions they make as well as the consequences they receive, grow more serious. Research suggests that opportunities they have to make responsible decisions and learn from them actually decline (Eccles, et al., 1993). During school students inevitably experience difficulties with responsible decision-making. However, with support (from classroom and school), they become more comfortable with the process and actually choose responsible options (Guskey & Anderson, 2008).

A key finding from this study is that student responsibility and ownership for learning improved in all schools with the use of data binders and Quality classroom processes. An analysis of the organizational matrix based on demographic information and participant responses confirmed four principals identified increased student responsibility and ownership for learning as the main benefit of Quality implementation. Within that group were the three principals with the highest rate of poverty and African-

American student populations, two at the elementary level and one at the high school level.

Sub-theme 3b: Parent communication

Wanda, Patricia, Connie, Arthur, and Melissa all referred to the use of Quality processes for improved parent communication and involvement. Wanda shared the fact that her school hosts a Quality Night for parents. She said,

We explained to them what Quality was, and they went to the classrooms and looked at the Quality binders and the teachers explained the purpose of the binders. That was very big on our part to have the parents buy-in to the process.

Patricia pointed out that the use of Quality with students has helped with parental involvement and understanding of their role with school. She noted with tracking attendance that “sometimes the voice we need to parents—I need to get to school and I need to be on time” must come from the student. Arthur remarked that his school’s decision to implement data binders this year has to do with “helping organize students and eliminating confusion with parents.”

Melissa uses Quality processes for parent communication. Her teachers send the student data binders home every Tuesday along with graded papers, lunch bills, and the school newsletter. “‘Take home Tuesday’ is the day we do a Connect-Ed message. There are a lot of Quality processes built in to that day and parents know when to expect things.”

Connie shared the fact that increased parent communication is a benefit of Quality implementation. She articulated, “Parents are aware of goals, routines, and procedures and students are able to tell the parents about their learning using their

quality binder as a guide.” She also uses the plus/delta tool after major school events to gain input and suggestions from her parents. This focus on stakeholder involvement has led to school-wide process improvements.”

As the general public continues to expect more from schools, stakeholder engagement becomes increasingly important (Boeck, 2002). The voices of parents and community members must be heard, and they must be empowered as advocates for their children.

Sub-theme 3c: Faculty input

Increased faculty in-put emerged as a sub-theme of stakeholder involvement. The data revealed that schools had developed more processes for involvement of their faculty and staff while sharing responsibilities and in some cases decreasing the workload of teachers and principals.

Melissa described the weekly professional learning community meetings at her school as the most important implementation of Quality. She articulated,

Probably the most important thing we’re doing is we have a weekly professional learning community. During that time we look at our red children, our yellow children, and our green children. We do the field testing and talk about ways we can use the data and Scantron, and where we can move the kids. I think we are at a point where we can sit around the table, and people aren’t looking at me for direction because it’s very much shared, as far as vision.

Likewise, Irvin has a teaming structure set up within his school, which allows for vertical, departmental, and grade level teaming. He also has a Quality Team that advises him in making decisions on improving Quality within the school.

Patricia stated that Quality implementation has helped morale overall because “we’re building team. We’re working together for a common goal.” Three other principals stated the fact that they were working together for a common goal. Clarence stated,

Quality has contributed to school improvement more so than I realized. Once you present the data and once you see where you’re going, then everybody accepts a piece of the responsibility. I think that’s what the whole thing is all about-- working together.

Connie attributed stakeholder input as instrumental in implementing improvements within her school.

What a difference the Quality approach has made for me as a school leader!

Using the plus/delta after school events for the past four years has resulted in remarkable improvements in programs and procedures that most of us “thought” were very good. Opening the door for input and suggestions from teachers, parents, and staff has resulted in many improved processes for our school including morning assembly, dismissal, recess, and after school pick-up. Surveys are analyzed and goals are set for improvement. The results are shared and the goals we are going to address are also shared with all stakeholders.

She also noted that using Quality has helped her to monitor the level of employee involvement and satisfaction. Patricia remarked,

It may not always be a paved road, but you’re taking in the views of all stakeholders. Everyone’s voice is being heard. Through Quality there is student, teacher, parent, and school-wide ownership. Everybody is a part of the process of achievement.

Victor stated that he valued the opinions of his entire staff, including the custodians and the cafeteria staff. Wanda shared the fact that her staff has no problem coming to her when they have a concern. She uses the Quality quadrant in the teacher's lounge. Larry and Arthur referred to use of the issue bin [Quality tool used for questions/ideas] with their faculty. Arthur also stated that Quality has "given them [staff] a little more courage than what I'm used to as far as voicing their opinions." He also stated that it is through encouragement from some of his teachers that his school will be implementing the use of Quality binders for all students during the 2009-2010 school year.

A study by Futernick (2007) revealed that teachers feel greater personal satisfaction when they believe in their own efficacy, are involved in decision-making, and participate in collaborative structures. Principals who foster collaboration among teachers can improve teacher retention as well as teacher satisfaction (Kardos & Johnson, 2007).

Schools must rethink their structure and practice to allow for collaboration to achieve the ultimate goal of improved education (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Participants within this study shared common experiences of increased stakeholder involvement from students, parents, and teachers and staff. Most noticeable was the improvement of student responsibility and ownership for learning.

Theme 4: District Support

The data from this study determined that district support was the cornerstone of the implementation experiences of all participants. The professional development that the district provided and the support from the Quality mentors were vital elements of

their implementation experiences. Training opportunities began in 2000 with the onset of the initiative and had continued each year of district implementation. The administrative directors had been involved in Quality implementation since the beginning of the initiative. Each of the principals had experienced from 5 to 14 of the training opportunities and all were regular participants in the monthly principal meetings where Quality mentors were involved.

Sub-theme 4a: Professional Development

Lambert (2003) defined professional development as more than just teacher training. She referred to it as learning opportunities which can be found in collegial conversations, coaching, shared-decision making groups, forums, or other such occasions. A review of the list of training opportunities provided by CPSS (Appendix F) validates the professional development opportunities that have occurred for principals with Quality implementation. Training by Quality experts, Blackboard courses (online discussion board postings), Quality conferences, school visits, leadership team trainings, and Quality forums are examples of the professional development referred to by Lambert. CPSS has offered a range of opportunities for principals and their teachers to grow in their knowledge and understanding of Quality. These opportunities began in 2000 and have continued through the time of this study.

During the principal interviews, Connie was very enthusiastic about district support. She said,

The Calcasieu Parish School System has done a wonderful job with the implementation of the Quality in Education Program in our schools. Although our school was not in the original pilot training, we were trained during a summer

session and implementation was made easier thanks to the sharing of ideas and experiences of teachers who had been part of the pilot. Taking the time to train teams of teachers at the schools made it easier to implement since there were several trained teachers to help. Having the resources available and sharing materials that were developed helped the classroom teachers. Training administrators was an important part of the implementation because it is necessary to model the system at all levels for the program to have the most impact.

Patricia articulated,

I'm very grateful to our district. They have been the key, the catalyst moving us forward. What's good for us parish-wide is that when children do transfer in and out, they come from Quality schools. For the most part, every school is a Quality school. The children are Quality kids and they're familiar with the process. That's a plus, because it's system-wide.

Every principal in this study participated in professional development provided by CPSS. The organizational matrix (Appendix G) details the number of opportunities for each participant. To supplement data on professional development, each of the principals were asked to respond to the question, "which training experience did you find most beneficial in helping you to understand your role in Quality implementation." It was interesting to note the variety of responses. Two principals were part of the original pilot and received initial training opportunities that were not offered to other principals in the district. They noted those opportunities as most beneficial. Two other principals identified Quality training that was conducted by the original pilot

schools as most significant to their understanding. Two more identified school-based training by the original Quality mentors as most helpful to their schools. Three principals identified Quality leadership training led by Jim Shipley and Associates, held at the Hibernia Tower, as the most meaningful training experience they had. One principal did not identify a specific training experience. Ultimately, the range of professional development opportunities provided by CPSS, has provided meaning to the principals in this study.

Sub-theme 4b: Quality Mentors

According to the CPSS District Accreditation Standards Assessment Report (2008), the role of the Quality mentors is to “work with schools to understand data, implement Quality, and strive for continuous improvement.”

Wanda, Connie, and Patricia mentioned support from the district as critical to their success with Quality implementation. They all referred to the support provided by the Quality mentors and how helpful they can be in training school and staff. They mentioned the sharing of successes that have occurred in various trainings and the resources that are available to schools.

Patricia stated,

The Quality mentors have come in and met with us as a whole staff, as well as in learning communities, and provided professional development. We have planned (with them) in the summer and our degree of implementation has improved. We understand what the data reveals and how we drive our instruction on the data.

Wanda articulated,

We did get the Quality mentors to come during our staff development days

more than once. They really made a difference. They did a good job selling it, in a non-threatening way. I think we're fortunate to have the support that we do.

There's no reason not to feel comfortable with what you're doing. They offer to come out. Our Quality mentor will email us. That's great support.

Larry said that his school began talking about Quality after one of the mentors made a presentation at an opening in-service for his school. He commented that she has come back to his school several times since then. Arthur referred to the monthly training at middle school principal's meetings by one of the Quality mentors with a new Quality tool.

The administrative directors referenced their dependence upon the Quality mentors for support and assistance, not only during monthly principal meetings, but also in planning for professional development. One of the directors remarked,

At this point, Total Quality is a mandate. I expect the principals to utilize the resources of the Quality Department and to call on them for assistance. Our Quality mentor is excellent. She stays booked because many schools are taking advantage of her expertise.

Another director said,

We look at data. I have the Quality mentor there at every principal's meeting.

There's always something about Quality on our agenda. She visits with me on a daily basis. Every chance we get, we try to work her into the training.

Based on findings from the interviews, district support has been instrumental during Quality implementation. The CPSS implemented the Quality initiative first through a voluntary pilot of four schools. With the success of those schools,

professional development and training opportunities continued. The addition of the Quality mentors added to the support for the schools. A mandate by the superintendent in 2006 also included training and support. A key finding from this study is that support from the district through professional development and the Quality mentors has been an essential piece to the success of the implementation experience of principals.

Theme 5: Sustainability

The data from this study support the concept that sustainability is an issue for principals. The pressure associated with higher accountability requirements sometimes pushes principals to make recurrent changes rather than focus on creating optimal conditions for sustainable improvement (McREL, 2004). A study by the Center for Science Education in 1998, determined a need for “adaptability to new conditions” within any school reform effort because of the changes that regularly occur within school systems, and the external pressures on educational programs. The term “sustainability” refers to an organization’s ability to address existing educational needs and to have the agility and strategic management to plan successfully for future educational, market, and operating environments (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2009).

The *Leadership* category within the Malcolm Baldrige Framework for Performance Excellence examines how an education organization’s leadership actions guide and sustain the organization. Emphasis is placed on organizational governance, responsibilities, and support for key communities. The *Strategic Planning* category examines how goals and action plans are deployed and changed, if necessary, as well as how progress is measured. The *Process Management* category examines how work

systems are developed and key processes implemented to deliver student and stakeholder value, while achieving organizational success and sustainability (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2009).

While the overarching theme is sustainability, four sub-themes emerged from the findings: teacher turnover, implementation of other programs, lack of faculty buy-in, and time. These sub-themes all emerged in response to the question: What are the problems/challenges of implementing Quality in Education? Patricia, Linda, Connie, Clarence, and Larry all identified teacher turnover and training new teachers as a challenge. Irvin and Arthur identified the implementation of other programs as a problem in their schools. Melissa and Victor identified faculty buy-in as their challenge. Clarence also referenced time for implementation as a major challenge. Understanding these challenges and the problems that principals face in this implementation could lead to an understanding of how to continue to sustain the implementation effort.

Sub-theme 5a: Teacher Turnover

Five of the principals within this study stated that their greatest challenge with implementing Quality was teacher turnover. Victor has been involved in this initiative for nine years, and he stated that it is “still difficult to maintain the momentum.” He stated that he has just enough teacher turnover that he has to continually provide training for new people.

Larry stated that he has to be careful to make sure that “we don’t drift” from implementing Quality. He relies on his school leadership to assist him with making sure that Quality is being implemented. He articulated, “The constant staff development that

we have to do with the teachers, especially new ones is ongoing. We never get to the point [with] ten new teachers. [It is] never-ending.”

Patricia referenced the same point. She stated that as an administrator, she trusts and delegates and expects her people to keep the implementation going, but she noted, “Sometimes folks get lax.” She also stated,

Teacher turnover is really big for me. Every year, I’m interviewing and training and supporting new teachers, and trying to get them where they need to be.

You’ve got these teachers trained to a high degree and then they’re gone.

Linda also identified turnover of staff as her biggest challenge. She has experienced the movement of some of her staff into leadership positions and has had to start “from the ground up helping new teachers understand Quality and why it’s important.” Clarence expressed a need for more in-services from the district “like we had at the beginning (of Quality implementation).” He stated how difficult it is to bring some of the new teacher “up to speed.” He noted, “A lot of times they have no idea what we’re talking about. I think the part that’s missing is the ‘why.’ Why are we doing what we’re doing?”

Teacher turnover and training new staff were identified as ongoing challenges of Quality implementation by six principals. Within that group, four identified teacher turnover and training new staff as the main barrier to Quality implementation. Included in that group were two of the three principals in the most at-risk schools.

Sub-Theme 5b: Implementation of Other Programs

Victor stated, “The teachers are introduced to a whole lot of programs every year. Some of the teachers think the new programs are replacing Quality.” Larry remarked

that teachers sometimes view Quality as “something else that they have to do.” Arthur did not implement Quality school-wide after he and his team were trained because of the implementation of another school improvement program, TAP. In reference to the implementation of both programs he said,

It was real intimidating, and to make sure we had teacher buy-in I didn't feel like we could do both well. We had to concentrate on one or the other.

That was my decision after the teachers voted on that they wanted to try TAP for the extra money. For better or worse, that's one of the decisions I made.

Irvin referenced the changes that are taking place at the high school level as a barrier to Quality implementation. He stated,

What we're required to do is constantly changing. Now, we've got another degree requirement that's coming down the pipes. I think the last time we checked, we had eight, and this may be nine. It's trying to get all of our processes and all the things we're trying to do geared in a single direction. There are so many options out there. We really have to streamline what we do, and not waste course offerings that allow kids to stray off, even though they may be interested in certain courses [that are] no benefit to them down the road. That's becoming the biggest challenge for us.

Today, many schools juggle the demands of implementing several improvement programs simultaneously (Hatch, 2000). Findings from this study demonstrate that the constant implementation of new programs is not only a challenge, but perhaps a barrier to Quality implementation. It is interesting to note that elementary school principals did not identify other programs as a barrier to Quality implementation.

However, two of the three middle school principals and both of the high school principals verbalized this as an issue within their schools.

Sub-Theme 5c: Lack of Faculty Buy-in

Five principals viewed faculty buy-in as critical to the success of the implementation efforts. Victor expressed the difficulty of “getting everyone on board and enthusiastic and excited about it.” Melissa stated that there are always some on staff who don’t “understand the big picture.” She referred to the “queendoms” within her school.

A queendom is when you go into your classroom, and you shut the door, and you do whatever you want. These are the people who don’t or won’t do what the rest of your school is doing, and you have to get them back on target.

Linda stated that some teachers have to actually experience the improvement that Quality affords their students.

Our staff move into leadership positions and apply for things and they move up, and I have to start over from the ground up with new staff helping them to understand Quality, and why it’s important. Until teachers see students make improvements for themselves, they don’t understand the process. They have to experience it, and this takes time.

Larry remarked that sometimes teachers feel that this is “something else they have to do” and they don’t always take the time to understand the impact and the purpose. Clarence stated the “buy-in is the most important thing.”

School reform will be successful when there is support and buy-in from teachers (Lieberman, 1995). Within this study, faculty buy-in emerged as a challenge to the implementation of Quality.

Theme 5d: Time

Clarence, Wanda, Larry, and Linda all identified time as a barrier to implementing Quality. Clarence referenced the full schedules that teachers and principals have and the difficulty of “doing everything we are expected to do.” Larry stated, “I think it’s the idea that the teachers feel this is something else they have to do and they don’t want to take the time to see the impact that it can have on education.” Linda said, “In order for teachers to understand Quality and why it’s important, they have to see students make improvements for themselves, and it does take time.” Wanda described her early implementation efforts as being overwhelming for her teachers. She articulated,

I have the tendency to go like a whirlwind. I saw the levels of stress go up and I’d say, take it slowly. I think that first year I was throwing way too much at them. I was asking them to implement too many tools, plus we were doing the book study, so I just said, whoa, let’s back up and take it slower.

The inability to find time or the inefficient use of time can impact the opportunities that teachers and staff have to discuss issues regarding their vision, their goals, their students, and the curriculum (SEDL, 2000). This can result in a disconnection of purpose, intent, and action. Teachers and staff need time to work together.

Teacher turnover, implementation of other programs, lack of faculty buy-in, and time emerged as sub-themes within the sustainability theme. These factors give

credence to the implementation experience of principals and the finding that teacher turnover, the lack of faculty buy-in, and time are barriers to Quality implementation. An implementation barrier for middle and high school principals is the implementation of other programs.

Summary of the Findings

Although interviews revealed that each of the principals had varying levels of education, training, and years of experience in both administration and Quality implementation, there were many common threads running through their implementation experiences. These threads were organized into five major themes and corresponding sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes contributed to the key findings of this study.

The first theme was analysis of data. It was evident from the interviews that the analysis of data for decision-making at both the school and classroom levels was a key construct in principals' experiences with Quality implementation. Wanda stated that the decisions she now makes are the right ones. Linda utilized data with her staff in posting their work and analyzing their progress. Patricia remarked that she and her staff understand what the data reveals on how they drive instruction based on the data. Victor described his school as data-driven. *A key finding is that principals and their staff have a better understanding of how to use data to make decisions as a result of Quality implementation.*

Eight of the ten principals referenced the use of data for decision-making by principal and staff. Those principals had participated in at least eight training opportunities provided by the district. All of the elementary principals and the two

original pilot school principals comprise this group. The two principals who did not reference data-based decision-making had only participated in five training experiences, and neither one of them had an advanced degree beyond a Master's Degree. In this study, the principals who had received the most Quality training, and those with advanced degrees were the ones who referenced the use of data for decision-making at the school level. *A key finding is that the professional development of the principal was a critical component of understanding how to use data.*

The use of student data binders was also a primary discussion point during the interviews. The principals described increased student responsibility, as well as increased student motivation for learning, as benefits of Quality implementation. Data binders allow students to understand why they are doing what they're doing in class, according to Irvin. Victor and Patricia concurred that the use of data binders built ownership for learning within students. Linda remarked that the implementation of Quality had filtered all the way to the student level at her school. All principals interviewed referenced the use of data binders with students. *A key finding of this study is that student ownership for learning has increased through the use of data binders.*

The second theme that emerged was narrowing the focus. The use of data to narrow the focus, as well as to align and streamline the goals of students, the classroom, and the school, was also supported within this research. Patricia and Irvin concurred that narrowing the focus was important in improving student performance. Clarence stated that Quality had contributed to school improvement more so than he realized. *A key finding is that schools have developed a narrow focus and have aligned*

the goals of the students, the classroom and the school as a result of Quality implementation.

Principals expressed the fact that Quality assisted them in working smarter, not harder. Wanda, Victor, Connie, and Linda stated that the implementation of Quality made their jobs easier. Irvin articulated that time management was one of the biggest benefits of Quality. Connie described a collaborative work environment at her school that made school leadership easier for her. With the exception of Wanda, these five principals had implemented Quality for seven years or longer. Wanda had only been implementing for four years; however, she was trained in Quality when the district initiative began while she was in her former position. These principals have participated in at least nine training experiences provided by the district. *Key findings from within this study are: The implementation of Quality helps to lighten the workload of teachers and principals by helping them to work smarter. Professional development and time for implementation are necessary to attain the perceived benefits of Quality.*

The third theme was stakeholder involvement. Principals described the benefits of increased stakeholder involvement, including students' ownership and responsibility for learning, parent communication, and faculty and staff input. These emerged as sub-themes. All of the principals referenced one or more of these sub-themes in their interviews as an outcome of Quality implementation. Patricia referred to stakeholder involvement as "everyone is a part of the process of achievement." Connie stated that the Quality approach has helped her monitor the level of employee involvement and satisfaction. They verbalized the benefits of sharing responsibility with improved work processes and shared workload.

For the sub-theme, student ownership for learning, nine out of the ten principals interviewed identified it as a benefit of Quality implementation. Larry stated that with student use of data, the responsibility shifts from the teacher to the student, and he identified increased student responsibility as the biggest benefit of Quality. Patricia commented that the Quality process develops a more intrinsic learner. Clarence viewed the use of data with students as a buy-in for them with their learning. A key finding in this sub-theme was that almost all the principals identified increased student responsibility for learning as a main benefit of Quality implementation, and principals of three of the four most at-risk schools were the most descriptive in the student outcomes that resulted.

Parent communication was the next sub-theme of stakeholder input. Wanda's school hosts a Quality Night to teach parents the process. Patricia said that Quality has helped parents become more involved in their child's learning. Connie uses Quality tools when working with her parents. She views the involvement of parents as the reason for improved school processes. Four of the five elementary schools and two of the three middle school principals identified increased parent communication as an outcome of Quality.

The last sub-theme under stakeholder involvement was faculty and staff input. Melissa described the structure of professional learning communities occurring in her school. Irvin also referred to a teaming structure. Patricia and Clarence referenced the way their faculties are now working together. Several principals described the opportunity their staff now has to voice their ideas. All of the principals referenced this sub-theme in their interviews.

A key finding is that participants within this study shared common experiences of increased stakeholder involvement of students, parents, and teachers and staff through Quality implementation. Most noticeable was the improvement of student responsibility and ownership for learning particularly in the most at-risk schools.

The fourth theme was district support. This theme included professional development and the Quality mentors. CPSS provided support for the implementation of Quality starting in 2000 with training opportunities. This support had been ongoing and actually increased in 2004 with the addition of the Quality mentors. When the superintendent mandated Quality implementation in all schools, the support continued. All principals identified participation in professional development provided by the district and the Quality mentors. *A key finding is that through ongoing professional development and the assistance of the Quality mentors district support was instrumental in the Quality implementation experiences of the participants.*

The fifth theme was sustainability. This theme included the barriers or challenges to the implementation of Quality within the schools. These challenges included teacher turnover, the implementation of other programs, the lack of faculty buy-in, and time, all noted as sub-themes. The interview question that addressed problems and challenges with Quality implementation addresses issues related to sustainability. Five principals identified teacher turnover and the ongoing training of new teachers as a challenge. Four principals identified the implementation of other programs as a problem in their schools. Four others identified faculty buy-in as their challenge. Four more identified a lack of time for implementation as a challenge.

The first sub-theme under the sustainability theme was teacher turnover. Principals expressed concerns about maintaining momentum, constant staff development, and trained teachers leaving or being promoted to central office. They articulated the difficulty in training new teachers from year to year. Six of the ten principals referenced teacher turnover in their interviews. Four were elementary, one was middle school, and one was high school level. All three schools with the most at-risk student populations identified teacher turnover as an ongoing issue and a barrier to Quality implementation.

The next sub-theme was the implementation of other programs. The TAP Program and changing requirements from the Louisiana Department of Education were identified as challenges for Quality implementation. This sub-theme was referenced by middle and high school principals only. In fact, two of them identified this as the main barrier to Quality implementation.

Lack of faculty buy-in was identified as a third sub-theme of sustainability. Melissa described teachers who did not see the big picture. Linda noted that teachers have to witness the effects of Quality implementation on students for themselves before they actually understand it. Five of the ten principals referenced lack of buy-in as a challenge to Quality implementation. Two were from the elementary level, two from the middle school level, and one was from the high school level.

Time was the last sub-theme. Four principals identified time as a barrier to Quality implementation. They expressed the fact that teachers are always pressured for time and their schedules are full already. Wanda noted that she had to slow down when first implementing Quality because she was overwhelming her teachers. The other three

principals have the most at-risk student populations. They identified time as a barrier to Quality implementation.

Key findings of this study are that teacher turnover, the lack of faculty buy-in, and time are barriers to Quality implementation and significant barriers for principals of at-risk schools. An implementation barrier for middle and high school principals is the implementation of other programs.

These findings answer the research question: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education? The following chapter is a discussion of the findings and their implications for principals, school leaders, school district leaders, and education organizations.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

This qualitative study explored the perspectives of principals regarding their experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education within the Calcasieu Parish School System. This chapter contains an overview of the research study including a discussion of the findings as well as conclusions drawn from the findings, limitations, study implications, suggestions for future research, and concluding thoughts.

Overview of the Study

During the nine-year span of this Calcasieu Parish School System (CPSS) reform effort, there has been no empirical data to substantiate how, why, or in which contexts the implementation succeeds. As a result, the data and discussion from this study may be beneficial to other organizations, districts, schools, and principals who are considering implementing a Quality initiative or similar reform effort. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of the principals engaged in the district-wide implementation of Quality in Education. The primary focus of this study was to address the following question: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education?

The data collection method was one-to-one interviews with ten principals of the Calcasieu Parish School System who had been leading their school for at least three years, and interviews with the administrative directors responsible for supervising the principals. The principals shared their experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education, a school reform initiative based on the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria

for Performance Excellence. This examination of their experiences provided the researcher with perspectives of school leaders' experiences in the implementation of a nine-year district reform effort. Principals described school demographics, training experiences, and answered thirteen questions posed by the researcher. The findings in this study can be summarized as benefits and barriers to Quality implementation based on principals' experiences.

This chapter is focused on a discussion of the findings of the study, the implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

This section addresses the study's findings as they relate to the literature in Chapter 2. Five major themes emerged from the research: analysis of data, narrowing the focus, stakeholder input, district support, and sustainability. Within each theme were the following sub-themes: data based decision-making; student data binders; working smarter, not harder; students' responsibility for learning; parent communication; faculty and staff input; professional development; Quality mentors; teacher turnover; implementation of other programs; lack of faculty buy-in; and, time. These themes and sub-themes contributed to the following research findings, which answered the question: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education?

- Principals and their staff now have a better understanding of how to use data to make decisions.
- The professional development of the principal was a critical component of understanding how to use data.

- Student ownership for learning increased through the use of data binders.
- Schools have developed a narrow focus and have aligned the goals of the students, the classroom, and the school.
- Quality implementation lightened the workload of principals and teachers by helping them to work smarter. However, professional development and time were necessary to attain perceived benefits.
- Principals noted increased stakeholder involvement of students, parents, and staff. Most noticeable was the improvement of student responsibility.
- District support through ongoing professional development and the work of the Quality mentors was instrumental in the implementation.
- Teacher turnover, faculty buy-in, and time for implementation were identified as barriers to implementation.
- The implementation of other programs was identified as a barrier for middle and high school principals.

Analysis of Data

Within the analysis of data theme, these findings emerged: Principals and their staff now have a better understanding of how to use data to make decisions; the professional development of the principal was a critical component of understanding how to use data; and, student ownership for learning increased through the use of data binders.

Principals need training and support in understanding, analyzing, and utilizing data in their roles as school leaders not only for decision-making, but also to support their teachers' and students' use of data. In this age of high-stakes testing and

accountability, school leaders are challenged to continue to move their schools forward. This environment requires that principals learn to understand data as well as make decisions based on that understanding (Bennett, 2002). Professional development is central to gaining new understanding and new skills.

Every principal in this study articulated the importance of data, and their improved understanding of how to use the data, as a result of the implementation of Quality. Eight of the ten principals referenced using data to make informed decisions and to guide the direction in which they were leading their schools. The two principals who did not reference the use of data for decision-making had the least amount of Quality training experiences.

As instructional leaders, principals must understand the value of students' use of data for learning. All ten principals referenced the use of data binders with students as one of the ways they were implementing Quality within their schools.

Linda articulated the fact that this implementation had reached the student level and transferred the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student, thus increasing student ownership. She said,

Quality binders are a good way to remind them (the students). Until the kids make decisions for themselves, you can tell them all the time, wake up and get to school on time, but until they understand the importance of waking up and getting to school on time, or to do their best or to do their homework...nobody can do it for them. Whenever there's tracking attendance, behavior, grades...it makes an impact because they can see it on paper.

Jackson (2009) identified data notebooks as “a powerful way of getting students involved in collecting their own feedback about their learning.” She noted the use with kindergarteners all the way through seniors in high school. Creation of data notebooks included identification of course objectives and student created goals and action plans for achieving objectives along with data charts monitoring progress of students toward goals.

This study revealed that the knowledge and capacity for utilizing data to lead their schools increased within principals as a result of their experiences with Quality implementation. Prior to Quality, Wanda utilized data by organizing it into a binder and putting it on the shelf. Now, she makes changes within her school based on what the data tells her. Linda articulated the fact that data gives her buy-in from the faculty when trying to bring awareness of a problem. Patricia views the implementation of Quality as a friendly approach in looking at data. Victor uses data to guide the direction in which he is leading his school. Irvin described it like this,

We go back and look at 8th grade stuff and go through all their data as a class and as individuals. The kids do goal setting with teacher assistance based on the data and the information we have. We set an overall class goal. Those are the things we shoot for. We also take the test scores and look at areas of deficiency..... and try to come up with strategies to target what we need to work on.

Principals’ ability to make informed decisions based on data was a common experience within the implementation of Quality.

The analysis of data is a fundamental concept of Quality. The literature regarding analysis of data supports the connection with Quality in education. Several researchers concluded that a school or district's use of data through implementation of the Baldrige criteria can result in organizational improvement. Abernathy & Serfass (1992) identified efforts in Burlington, New Jersey Public Schools with a Baldrige initiative focusing on improvement in attendance and tardy rates. Schargel (1994) wrote about systemic change through implementation of Quality in Education. He referenced students in an inner-city school who were expected to become problem-solvers rather than rely on school leaders to come up with solutions. Schools in Brazosport, Texas noted dramatic achievement gains in reading on state assessments for economically disadvantaged students from 1993 to 2001 after implementation of a quality initiative (Davenport & Anderson, 2002).

With nationwide school reform efforts, there is one vital element that differentiates successful schools from non-successful ones---data (Bernhardt, 1998). The analysis of data is utilized for informed decision-making and understanding what to change. Schools that use data to understand the needs of their customers are more successful in implementing and sustaining change. As school leaders, principals must know how to understand, analyze, and utilize data. This requires professional development and ongoing training and support.

Narrowing the Focus

Within the narrowing the focus theme, these findings emerged: Schools have developed a clear purpose and direction and have aligned the goals of the students, the classroom and the school. Quality lightened the workload of principals and

teachers by helping them to work smarter. However, professional development and time were necessary to attain perceived benefits.

In creating a narrow focus, principals work with their key stakeholders (teachers and staff, parents, and students) to develop school vision and mission statements (Byrnes, 2006). School-wide goals are developed based on current levels of performance in subjects like reading and math. The vision, mission, and goals are clearly communicated to all stakeholders and become the driving force of the work within the school. Classroom and individual student goals are developed based on the school's goals. Connie articulated,

Each class develops a mission statement and teacher and student expectations of one another are developed at the beginning of the year. Routines and procedures are written in flow charts and posted in the classrooms.

Everyone shares ideas for improvements and students, teachers, parents, and administration use the plus/delta to work toward continuous improvement.

Students are able to report to parents about their achievements and areas of weakness.

A key finding from within this study is that when schools are able to streamline what they do with clear direction, goals, and a narrow focus, they are able to work smarter, not harder, while lightening the workload of both teachers and administrators. Patricia, Irvin, and Clarence identified a clear direction and a narrow focus as benefits to the implementation of Quality. The ability to set goals and drive a school purposefully forward with a central focus was a common experience within the Quality initiative.

Four respondents within this study commented that the implementation of

Quality actually made their jobs easier. Victor and Irvin stated that if implemented correctly, Quality lightens the workload of teachers. Connie said, “Using the Quality approach makes school leadership easier because everyone is working toward common goals and has input into all aspects of running a school.” Wanda referred to the concept of working smarter, not harder. She said,

(Quality) makes our jobs easier because it shows you things that you don’t need to keep doing...our ELA (scores) have been so stagnant. I have the ELA teacher and every year she’d be so disappointed. Now finally we’ve looked at our data and we divided ELA into reading and language. Our scores are much better now. We still do a lot of integration, but we’ve divided ELA into separate subjects. We saw a lot of improvement. We realized she was focusing too strongly in some areas.

A common experience within the Quality initiative was the streamlining of the workload of principals and of teachers and more efficient use of time in terms of working smarter, not harder.

In a study on school reform in 2000, Datnow and Stringfield concluded that key lessons for schools, districts, and teams in working together for reliable school reform include: 1) goals must be tied to long term, whole-team focus on key measures of school improvement, and 2) policy systems must be aligned in order to support reform. A school’s vision guides the direction of its stakeholders. It provides the direction in which the school is headed and a sense of what must be accomplished. Every decision, new program, and all goals should be aligned with this vision (Blankstein, 2004). This

constancy of purpose (Deming, 1994) allows leaders to provide strong, clear direction to their stakeholders.

The implementation of a new program implies more work for teachers and principals. Working longer and harder does not significantly change a school's performance. Working smarter requires a shift in habits of work (Vaill, 1991). The goal is to be more productive and devote time and energy to activities that demonstrate true benefit to students and that do not threaten to exhaust teachers and principals. Instrumental to working smarter is developing the ability to monitor what we do (Donaldson, 1993).

Narrowing the focus is a fundamental concept of Quality. Successful management of the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework within an organization requires synthesis, alignment, and integration. Synthesis refers to the whole organization and builds on key goals and actions. Alignment means utilizing the key linkages within the framework. Integration builds on the alignment so that individual components operate in a fully interconnected manner. Synthesis, alignment, and integration create a systems perspective for organizational management (National Institute for Standards and Technology, 2009). The literature regarding alignment and a systems approach with Quality is supported throughout this study. Deming (1994) expounded that a system must have an aim, and that without an aim there is no system. Warwick (1995) determined that leaders were responsible for systems improvement. Senge (1990) emphasized systems thinking as an approach for organizational improvement. An empirical study conducted by LeRoy (2004) concluded that a key

process of Baldrige implementation is that alignment begins at the senior leadership level.

When schools are able to streamline what they do with a clear direction and a tight focus, they are able to work smarter, not harder, while lightening the workload of both teachers and administrators.

Stakeholder Involvement

Within the stakeholder involvement theme, these findings emerged: Principals shared common experiences of increased stakeholder involvement of students, parents, and staff. Most noticeable was the improvement of student responsibility.

Almost all of the respondents referred specifically to student awareness of data leading to increased responsibility for learning as a key experience within the implementation. In education the most important customers are students (Sagor & Barnett, 1994). The Baldrige Education Criteria clearly identify the student as customer in the classroom learning system (National Institute for Standards and Technology, 2009). The connection stems from organizational theory and the fact that the classroom is a type of organization. When principals and teachers recognize the connection between empowerment of the worker (student and faculty) within the organization and increased responsibility and intrinsic motivation, then responsibility for improved performance will change hands. It is evident that the literature supports this construct through the works of Balfour & Marini (1991) and Safferstone (2005) on Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960), which postulates that given the right conditions workers within a system inherently want to do well.

Although the Baldrige criteria identify the student as the worker within the

classroom learning system, the voice of the principals within this study determined that increased student responsibility for learning was somewhat of a surprise for them.

Patricia referred to the increase in intrinsic motivation for learning within her students.

Larry stated that through Quality and goal setting, it's made better students. Connie said that students know exactly what they need to do in order to be successful. Linda commented that we (educators) put kids first, but we make decisions for them. She said that using Quality puts it on their level. Irvin articulated,

The teachers like Quality...the kids take responsibility for more of the things in the classroom. The teacher is more of a facilitator with the instruction. She sets up the group and analyzes the data, but the kids do the same thing. At the end of the six weeks they have those reflective times where they (the students) reassess their goals, look at the target, and then, what they actually got, and then their plan of action for improving.

The use of the student data binder in the first theme supports the notion that the focus on students and the increase of responsibility and ownership for learning is a huge outcome of the Quality implementation experience of principals.

Within this study, several respondents noted increased parent communication as an experience of the implementation. These respondents referred to the use of Quality processes to enhance parent involvement and communication. In order to learn at high levels, all students need the support and guidance of their teachers, parents, and the community. Federal and state mandates require schools to develop programs to communicate with all families about their children's education and to involve them in ways that will contribute to their success and achievement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

Faculty input and the building of team were referenced among several respondents within this study. Arthur described the increased voicing of opinions by his staff that has occurred with Quality implementation. Melissa, Irvin, Patricia, Clarence, and Connie described the structures within their schools that allow their teachers and staff to voice their opinions and concerns and contribute to school decisions. They all expressed the idea that this was a benefit of Quality implementation. Victor articulated,

I value the opinions of the entire staff, even the custodians. I have them ask the teachers how they're doing. I explain to them it helps them to do their job...the cafeteria too. Again, the input from the staff about what we can do better has helped me.

Research conducted by Ingersoll (2007) shows that although school principals and governing boards have considerable control over many key decisions in schools, teachers usually do not. Teachers usually have little input in decisions related to scheduling, class size, classroom location, and the use of school funds for classroom materials. The literature cited in Chapter 2 supports the importance of faculty and staff input in a Quality system. Scarr (1992) referenced the improvement efforts of the Lake Washington School District in Washington when they reorganized their central office staff, building administrators, and support personnel into work teams. Blankstein (1992) suggested that schools need designs that are relevant for today. They need frameworks that would include cooperative learning, team teaching, and site-based management. The findings from Hoy's (2007) study of teachers implementing a Baldrige approach support this notion. Teachers had no voice in the implementation effort and felt very frustrated by it.

Holcomb (1999) compellingly wrote about strategically aligning all elements of a school to analyze what is and isn't working to improve student learning. This was referred to as focusing "people, passion, and proof" and focused on the involvement of teachers, students, and parents. A common experience and key finding of this study was that implementation of Quality led to increased stakeholder involvement from students, parents, and teachers. Most noticeable was the increase in student responsibility for learning.

District Support

A key finding of this study was that district support through ongoing professional development and the work of the Quality mentors was instrumental in the implementation experience of the principals.

CPSS provided a multitude of professional development and training experiences for principals. As detailed in Table 4 (p. 60), these opportunities provided a range of events, including: training by Quality experts, business partners, and Quality leaders from within the district; attendance at national conferences, participation in online courses; training for school teams; school level trainings; school site visits; and, participation in Quality forums. While this research did not connect specific professional development opportunities with outcomes of Quality implementation, it is noteworthy that the principals without advanced degrees beyond that required for administrative certification were successful in their implementation efforts with the understanding of data-based decision-making when they had participated in more than nine of the training opportunities offered by the district. Connie, who has been involved in twelve training opportunities provided by CPSS said that "the Blackboard trainings have been

very helpful...and having all the (Quality) tools and descriptions on the school system webpage is also very helpful.”

The Quality mentors were mentioned by respondents throughout the interviews. The school-based supports by the mentors, as well as the district-wide training opportunities they offered, provided ongoing support for Quality implementation. Wanda articulated, “I think we’re fortunate to have the support that we do. There’s no reason not to feel comfortable with what you’re doing. They (Quality mentors) offer to come out. There’s great support.”

Craven County School District in North Carolina adopted a systems approach to improvement based on the Baldrige criteria (Rivenbark & Wheeler, 2008). This district utilized goal team managers and mentors that helped drive alignment from the district down to the classroom level, an approach that led to successful district accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement. In 2008, the Calcasieu Parish School System achieved district accreditation through this same organization.

Sustainability

Within the sustainability theme, these findings emerged: Teacher turnover, faculty buy-in, and time for implementation were identified by principals as barriers to implementation. The implementation of other programs was identified as a barrier for middle and high school principals.

Before discussing the identified barriers to Quality implementation, it is worthwhile to understand how the Quality in Education has been sustained within the Calcasieu Parish School System for over nine years. An empirical study conducted by

LeRoy (2004) concluded that implementation of Baldrige requires a long-term commitment. A review of the research gives credence as to why this school reform effort is still going strong. The Quality initiative started with a pilot of four schools and focused on voluntary participation for the first five years. The mandate by the superintendent for participation came after pilot schools had demonstrated success. The mandate included support from the district level. This initiative started “bottom up” and then became a “top down” plan.

Within this study principals identified teacher turnover, implementation of other programs, lack of faculty buy-in, and time as challenges with Quality implementation. These challenges can be categorized as issues of sustainability. Respondents viewed these issues as barriers to the implementation effort.

Six participants identified teacher turnover as their main challenges with Quality implementation. Four of these six principals lead the schools with the highest poverty percentages within this study. Recent studies have found that high teacher turnover rates have a disproportionate effect on high-poverty schools. The poorest schools would benefit most from a highly skilled teaching force, but tend to have just the opposite (Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002). High-poverty schools have higher teacher turnover rates than other schools, and teachers that leave are typically more qualified than those that remain (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Teacher turnover and the need for continually training new teachers was a common experience for the respondents.

Five principals expressed faculty buy-in to Quality implementation as a challenge in their implementation efforts. Research shows that teachers are often resistant to change what and how they teach, particularly when it comes from outside the school

(Cuban, 1993; Evans, 1996). Resistance to change is common for many leaders. It's difficult for principals to get teachers to change particularly if they don't think change is needed (Hoerr, 2008).

Three of the respondents identified time as a challenge with implementation. In the report of the National Commission on Time and Learning (1994), *Prisoners of Time*, the authors noted that education leaders continue to implement new innovations, but yet do not provide ample time for teachers to reflect, study, and apply new learning. This is substantiated by LeRoy's study in 2004, which concluded that implementing Baldrige requires a long-term commitment for implementation.

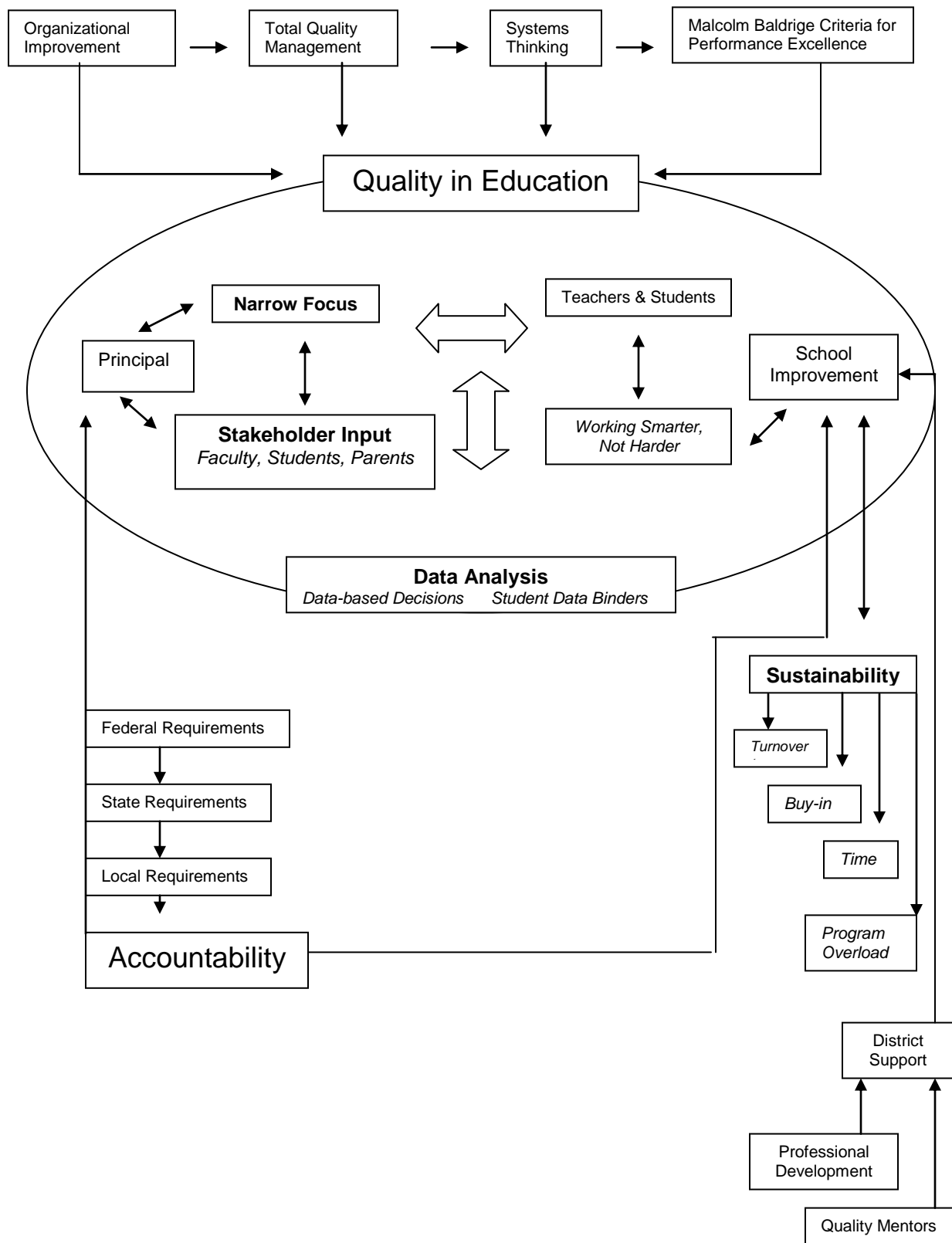
Three of the respondents identified the implementation of other programs as a challenge to Quality implementation within their schools. When educators become overwhelmed by programs, policies, and mandates, reform stops dead in its tracks (Moffett, 2000). Fullan (1999) noted that education policymakers tend to ignore timelines and strategies for implementation, but rather focus on urgent problems and quick solutions. Frequent changes in policy create program overload and clutter. Teachers will often wait for the latest initiative to pass (Moffett, 2000). A common experience of the middle and high school respondents was the view that teachers' were on program overload.

Moffett (2000) identified lessons for managing change as: developing a reform-support infrastructure, nurturing professional communities, reducing staff turnover, using facilitators to build capacity, providing abundant staff development, balancing pressure with support, providing adult learning time, and reducing fragmentation overload. The issues identified by respondents are embedded in these lessons for managing change.

The key findings in this study resulted in answer to the question: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education? Principals described an increased awareness of and ability to use and understand data not only for themselves, but also for teachers and students. They noted that the implementation of Quality resulted in a narrow focus and direction for their schools to work toward while streamlining the work of both teachers and the principal. They described increased stakeholder involvement as a key experience. They described an increase in student responsibility for learning, improved parent communication and input, and more faculty and staff input in school decisions. Their experiences validated the fact that district support made a difference in their implementation efforts. Lastly, the experiences that they identified as challenges were the continual retraining of teachers due to teacher turnover, the influx of new programs, lack of faculty buy-in for the implementation, and, time for implementation.

The original conceptual framework for this study (Figure 2, p. 20) focused on the evolution of Quality in Education as it related to school reform and accountability. The revised conceptual framework in Figure 3 is based on the findings from this study and shows the relationship between organizational improvement, Total Quality Management, Systems Thinking, the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence, and Quality in Education. The modifications to the original framework show a reciprocal relationship between Quality in Education and the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence. School reform and accountability are also separated within the map, a change from the original framework. Embedded within this revised framework are the findings from the study and their relationships to school reform.

Figure 3 *Revised Conceptual Framework*



External pressures of accountability are placed on the principal. As the leader of the school, the principal, implementing Quality in Education, utilizes stakeholder input from teachers, students, and parents and a narrow focus to drive improvements within the school. Working with teachers to improve processes and work smarter while utilizing data and making decisions based on data, the school improvement begins. The principal's challenge then becomes sustaining the improvement. Teacher training (a result of teacher turnover), buy-in from faculty, program overload, and time are interrelated sustainability issues. District support through professional development and the Quality mentors adds support to sustainability and school improvement.

Current findings and a review of the literature supports the premise that schools and districts that have adopted a Quality approach based on the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence have had varying levels of success. What is absent from the literature is information on schools and districts that have failed in their implementation efforts with Quality thus leaving sustainability issues unresolved.

As stated in Chapter 1, this study of the experiences of principals implementing Quality can give credibility to the value that educational leaders place on the model, what the impact might be for school improvement, and why there might be barriers for implementation.

Summary

This study examined the experiences of ten Calcasieu Parish School System principals who have been engaged in the implementation of Quality in education for at least three years, as well as the expectations of their administrative directors. The

study's key findings are identified as the outcomes to Quality implementation. The data from this study revealed the following outcomes: principals and their staff understood how to use data for decision-making; the use of data binders by students contributed to increased student responsibility and ownership for learning; principals and teachers were able to narrow the focus within their schools and classrooms; principals and teachers learned to work smarter, not harder; involvement of stakeholders increased, in particular, that of students whose responsibility for learning improved; district support through professional development and the work of the Quality mentors helped sustain the implementation effort; teacher turnover, implementation of other programs, lack of faculty buy-in, and time proved to be challenges to the implementation. Based on the collective experiences of the ten principals in the study as well as their individual perceptions, these outcomes can be categorized as benefits and barriers. The barriers are identified as sustainability issues. This study has advanced the understanding of principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality.

Limitations

All data were collected from one school district located in southwest Louisiana, which limited transferability. Since this study only dealt with principals, there were limitations on generalizing to teachers and district leaders. Another limitation may be the researcher's ability to shift from conceptualization to lived experience through the use of telephone interviews. While the original intent was to conduct face-to-face interviews, the extremely busy schedules of principals proved to be a hindrance. For the purpose of this study, the researcher delimited the study to explore the experiences with Quality implementation of principals only.

Study Implications

The principals within this study have described benefits as well as barriers to the Quality implementation effort in the descriptions of their experiences. This study has implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Principals identified the benefits of Quality implementation as: improved understanding in using data for decision-making; student use of data binders for goal setting and increasing ownership for learning; the school's ability to narrow the focus and work smarter, not harder; increased stakeholder involvement, in particular, that of students whose responsibility for learning improved; and district support for the implementation through professional development and support from the Quality mentors. CPSS should recognize and identify these as benefits, and utilize them in developing best practices as they continue to move forward with this effort. School districts would be wise to listen to the voice of one of their key customers, principals, as they implement a Quality initiative or any other school reform effort. Deming (1994) stated that solutions should come from those closest to the problem, the worker.

Principals viewed improved use of data for decision-making as an outcome of this initiative. Some considered it a "friendly" approach. As Bernhardt (1998) stated, principals must know how to understand, analyze, and utilize data. A Quality approach should be considered by key decision-makers in school districts as one of merit for assistance in this critical area.

The correlation between student data binders and increased responsibility and ownership for learning certainly provides a powerful connection for increased student achievement. Every reform effort and improvement initiative ultimately focuses on this

critical piece. The theoretical framework that is reinforced within this study references motivation theory. Glasser (1990), a voice in student motivation studies said,

Boss-managers firmly believe that people can be motivated from the outside. They fail to understand that all of our motivation comes from within ourselves. Boss-teachers and administrators constantly lament that students are not motivated, but what they are actually saying is that they do not know how to persuade students to work.(p. 39)

The use of student data binders is a powerful tool for teachers and administrators to help motivate students to assume responsibility and build ownership for their learning.

District support for this initiative was a critical component in principals' ability to implement Quality. The implementation of any school improvement initiative should include multiple opportunities for professional development as well as support from mentors, coaches, or facilitators.

Arcaro (1995) identified the following benefits to school districts that utilize the Baldrige Criteria as a framework for school improvement and a systems perspective:

- The establishment of a culture in education that focuses on meeting the needs of students.
- A staff that is involved, informed, and motivated to constantly improve the quality of every educational process.
- Increased cooperation at all levels.
- The creation of a better learning and working environments for all.
- Improved efficiency and productivity by all.
- Improved student and administrative outcomes.

- Effective teamwork by all stakeholders.
- Improvements in education recognized by community, staff, and students.

(p. 91)

These benefits are also evident in the CPSS initiative. The use of data with students and the increase in their responsibility and ownership demonstrates a focus on meeting students' needs, as well as improved student outcomes. An involved and motivated staff working with increased cooperation in better learning environments is evident in the increased stakeholder involvement outcome. Improved efficiency and productivity is demonstrated through the finding, working smarter, not harder.

Sustainability emerged as a key finding during the study. Embedded within this finding were issues identified as barriers. These barriers were teacher turnover, implementation of other programs, faculty buy-in, and time issues. These barriers could be addressed in the following ways.

- Teachers and administrators need access to timely and effective professional development to assist them in training not only new staff, but previously trained staff as well, on the adoption of the Baldrige Criteria and in learning to use Quality tools.
- Principals with advanced degrees and ongoing professional development are more likely to see the benefits of school reform initiatives.
- Policymakers, state level educators, and district personnel should look for ways to streamline and/or integrate the "programs" that schools are expected to implement, in particular at the middle and high school levels. Further

training in Quality should emphasize the non-prescriptive nature of the Baldrige Criteria and the fact that it is “process” rather than a program.

- In the spirit of the Baldrige Criteria, district personnel should generate a system for feedback and input from all stakeholders on the Quality implementation initiative to determine if customer needs are being met, or if additional changes need to be made as they strive for increased “buy-in” from all stakeholders.
- District personnel should look for ways to assist principals with “time” issues particularly in the areas of mandates from the state and district, training and professional development. The most at-risk schools struggle with time issues.
- Within this study, the schools with the highest poverty levels identified teacher turnover as their biggest challenge with Quality implementation. Yet these same principals also identified their biggest benefit as student responsibility for learning. These schools need assistance in addressing this issue.

Researchers should consider this as a potential area for study.

In this study, the principals who were mandated to implement a school reform initiative, Quality in Education, were the participants. Their knowledge and experiences with the implementation validate the reform effort.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study demonstrated the need to examine the experiences of principals implementing Quality in Education within the Calcasieu Parish School System. Their experiences provide data not only to CPSS on the implementation of Quality that may be useful in sustaining this reform effort, but to other education entities as well.

However, there is a gap in the literature concerning Quality implementation efforts in schools or districts that have not been sustained. Future research in this area could provide meaning and support for the schools and districts engaged in similar implementation efforts. Other potential areas of future research are listed below.

- A follow-up to this study would be informative. For the ten identified principals, a follow-up study would be informative to determine if the experiences of teachers are aligned with those of their principals.
- Students are clearly involved in the implementation of Quality. Research on how students perceive this implementation effort would add to the body of knowledge. A study of the experiences of students with the implementation of Quality could prove to be beneficial.
- School reform efforts are implemented in order to impact student achievement. A quantitative study of the CPSS implementation effort tied to student achievement is warranted.
- A study of other education and non-education organizations that have implemented the Baldrige Criteria to determine the most effective methods to facilitate the implementation of the Baldrige Criteria within an organization is warranted.

Conclusion

This study provided insight into the experiences of principals who were engaged in the daily work of leading schools utilizing a continuous improvement model, as recommended by the business partners within a school district. The results of this study are in response to the lack of information on those experiences. This study adds to the

literature that supports the use of the Malcolm Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence for school reform. Specific contributions include perceived benefits and barriers of principals who are responsible for the implementation within their schools.

The ten principals in this study described their experiences with the implementation of Quality. During this age of accountability and with the focus of No Child Left Behind and the impending “rewrite” of the law by the Obama administration, the use of data is at the forefront of what school leaders must understand. Overwhelmingly, the understanding of how to use data was central to the experiences of these principals. By their own admission, these principals gained a better understanding of data and how to use it. Perhaps what is most significant about utilizing Quality is the way Patricia referenced the use of data. She said that it was a “friendly approach” and a relatively “easy approach.” I wonder if other change initiatives are viewed in this manner. I wonder how many reform efforts focus on student use of data in such a way that students organize it into binders.

These principals experienced alignment within their schools in working toward a narrow focus knowing the direction in which they were headed. This also is a component of Baldrige and it validates that the implementation efforts of the district have succeeded if these criteria are evident within the schools. Principals and their teachers have learned to work smarter, not harder. They expressed the fact that their jobs are easier because of Quality.

The success of Quality and the theory behind it validate stakeholder involvement and the empowerment of the worker. One of the most compelling findings of this study

is the impact of Quality on the student. Not just the fact that principals saw increases in student ownership and responsibility for learning, but even deeper than that. These principals saw the building of intrinsic motivation and processes that made a “better student.” In the education arena, it seems that every new initiative, every piece of legislation, every published work is directed at student learning. Viewing students as “workers” within the classroom system and providing them with access to their personal data are directly in line with the Baldrige criteria. The indirect result is that the needs of students, who are also “customers” of school processes, are being met through their involvement in the learning process!

The principals described the issues they faced with Quality implementation, and very likely most other implementation efforts. Teacher turnover, lack of buy-in from staff, time for implementation (which could directly relate to lack of buy-in), and the implementation of other programs were all considered barriers to Quality implementation. These are common issues that schools and school districts face with any new initiative. These were considered barriers, however, the barriers did not prevent the principals from the reaping the benefits of Quality implementation. Arthur did not implement Quality because of the timing with implementation of the TAP Program. When TAP ended, his teachers pressured him to implement the use of data binders with students. He verbalized the fact that his school will move forward with Quality implementation.

Perhaps what gives strength to the Calcasieu Parish School System’s implementation of Quality may be the method of implementation. Initially, Quality implementation in the CPSS was voluntary and began with pilot schools. This voluntary

method (apparently stakeholder input was valued by CPSS) was sustained for several years. CPSS provided support and continued to lead. When new leadership came into place, the mandate for all schools was made, once again with training and support. This initiative began from the bottom-up, but as successes were achieved, they were capitalized upon, and it became a top-down initiative. Now perhaps it could be framed as a “meet in the middle” approach. More than anything, it is apparent from the voices of the principals that the support from the district strengthened Quality implementation within the schools.

Professional development made a huge difference in this implementation! Fourteen training opportunities were provided by the district. But a closer look at these opportunities shows that some of these occurred yearly. Data collected in this study only focused on the one time generic experience. The fact that the district supported ongoing training, continuous offerings of opportunities, and continued funding is a demonstration of the strength of this initiative and the fact that principals have changed what they do based on their training.

Through the voices of the principals it’s obvious that Quality is entrenched in their work. One of the Administrative Directors said that although she doesn’t use the word “Quality” very often, it’s embedded in everything she does. The Calcasieu Parish School System has much to be proud of with this nine-year effort. The Baldrige criteria are thriving within their schools and classrooms. Principals believe in and utilize the skills and strategies they have gained through ongoing, sustained professional development. Students in these schools understand their own personal data and have taken responsibility and ownership for their learning.

As a Calcasieu Parish School System professional passionately committed to strengthening educational leadership and improving teaching and learning not only in this district, but in our state and country, it is my hope that the findings from within this study will inform educational leaders and reveal opportunities to strengthen schools and school districts everywhere as they continue their journey toward performance excellence and continuous improvement.

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Appendix A

QUALITY TOOLS	
Affinity diagram	Brainstormed ideas are sorted into categories that have a relationship to each other.
Bar chart	Visual display of data; also called histogram.
Brainstorming	Participants call out ideas; used to generate a large number of ideas in a short period of time.
Consensogram	Used to identify knowledge or opinions of a group on certain concepts or issues.
Decision matrix	Used to help people see the value of individual components of a decision.
Fishbone diagram	Cause and effect diagram; helps identify contributing factors to an outcome or problem.
Flowchart	Visual documentation of a process.
Focus group	Type of survey; used to gather attitudes and concerns from a small group.
Force-field analysis	Problem-solving tool used to analyze driving and restraining forces.
Histogram	Bar chart.
Interview	Type of survey; for gathering open-ended responses.
Issue bin	Captures ideas/questions that deserve further clarification; also called parking lot.
Light voting	Way to determine consensus allowing team to cast

	weighted votes; related to nominal technique.
Line graph	Run chart
Lotus diagram	Organizes and breaks down broad topics into components; nine squares
Nominal technique	Determines group consensus by allowing team members to cast weighted votes to designate their greatest support.
Pareto diagram	Bar chart giving visual representation of data in order.
PDSA cycle	Plan-Do-Study-Act, a cycle that reflects continuous improvement.
Plus-Delta	Type of survey to determine what went well and what needs improving in any activity or event.
Questionnaire	Type of survey; used to collect data from a large group.
Radar	Visual representation of spokes on a hub; gives a picture of strengths and weaknesses of a system.
Scatter diagram	Graph showing the relationship between two factors.
Survey	Used to collect knowledge/opinions of a targeted group.

(Conyers & Ewy, 2004)

Appendix B

IRB APPROVAL NOTICE

***University Committee for the Protection
of Human Subjects in Research
University of New Orleans***

Campus Correspondence

Principal Investigator: Tammie Causey
Co-Investigator: Pamela Quebodeaux
Date: March 11, 2009
Protocol Title: "Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System:
Experiences of Principals"
IRB#: 03Apr09

The IRB has deemed that the research and procedures described in this protocol application are exempt from federal regulations under 45 CFR 46.101 category 2, due to the fact that any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Exempt protocols do not have an expiration date; however, if there are any changes made to this protocol that may cause it to be no longer exempt from CFR 46, the IRB requires another standard application from the investigator(s) which should provide the same information that is in this application with changes that may have changed the exempt status.

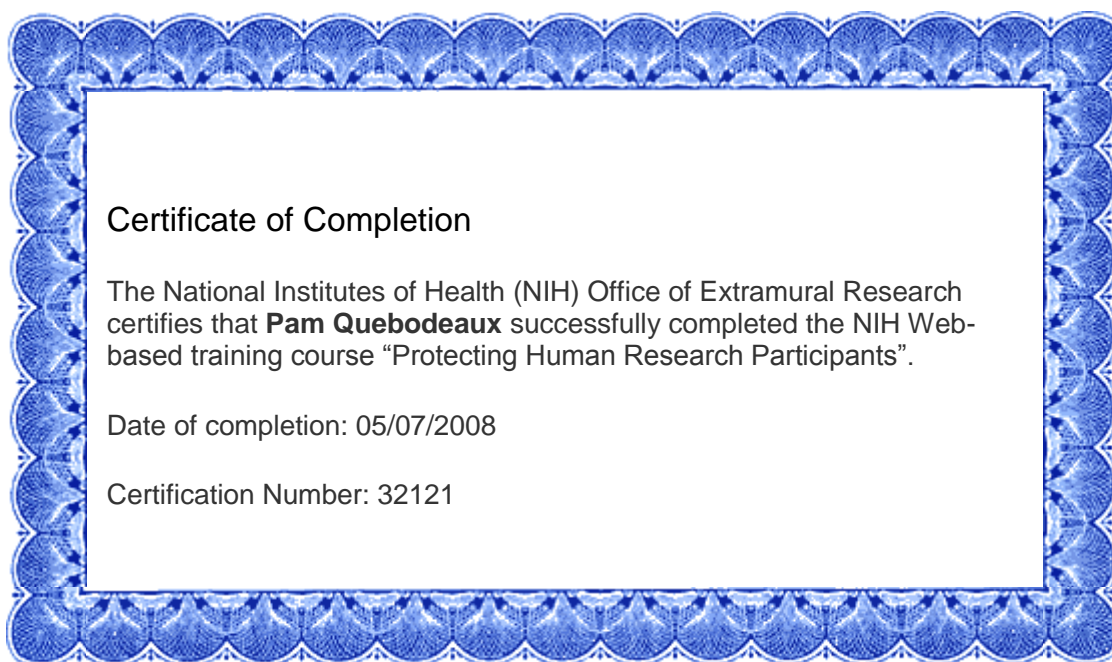
If an adverse, unforeseen event occurs (e.g., physical, social, or emotional harm), you are required to inform the IRB as soon as possible after the event.

Best wishes on your project.
Sincerely,

Robert D. Laird, Chair
UNO Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

Appendix C

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS PROTECTION EDUCATION FOR RESEARCH COMPLETION CERTIFICATE



Appendix D

Letter to the Superintendent

March 13, 2009

Mr. Wayne Savoy, Superintendent
Calcasieu Parish School System
1724 Kirkman St.
Lake Charles, Louisiana 70601

Dear Mr. Savoy:

I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at the University of New Orleans and am conducting a study to investigate the experiences of principals in the Calcasieu Parish School System who are engaged in implementation of Quality in Education. The study will address the following research question: What are principals' experiences with the implementation of Quality in Education?

I am requesting permission to contact the principals of the ten to twelve schools recommended by the Quality Department for participation in this study. There will be participation at all three levels: elementary, middle, and high school. Participation is entirely voluntary and all participants will remain anonymous in the final report.

If you have any questions regarding this study, do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you regarding your permission for me to contact identified principals. I would like to include your permission letter in my dissertation study.

Sincerely,

Pamela S. Quebodeaux
Doctoral Candidate, University of New Orleans
pam.quebodeaux@cpsb.org
337.540-5389 cell

Appendix E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTORS

1. How long have you been involved in the implementation of Quality?
2. What are your expectations of your principals with implementation of Quality?
3. How do you support your principals with this implementation?

APPENDIX F

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Quality Training Opportunities provided by CPSS			
	Who	When	Attend?
Training provided by educators from Pinellas County	Pilot schools	2000-01	
Training provided by Jim Shipley and/or Sandra Cokely Pederson	Administrators Central Office	2001-2004	
Training provided by business partners from the petrochemical industry	Principals and schools	2000-2004	
Training provided by Dr. Mary Hooper	Principals and teachers	2000-2004	
Training provided by the Quality Department	All CPSS employees	2004-pres	
Blackboard courses taught by Quality leaders (Quebodeaux, Leger, Hebert)	Principals and teachers	2002-pres	
Attendance at National Quality in Education Conferences	Select principals, teachers, and staff	Ongoing	
Quality schools site visit in Brazosport, TX	Select schools	2002	
Quality schools site visit in Albuquerque, NM	Select schools	2003	
Summer training for school leadership teams	All schools	Ongoing	
Application for SWLA Quality Award	Individual schools/departments	Ongoing	
School level trainings by own staff	Schools	Ongoing	
Participation in Quality Leadership Team (with Superintendent)	Select individuals	2000-present	
Participation in Quality Forums (<i>at Police Jury building</i>)	Select schools	Ongoing	
Visits to CPSS Quality schools (<i>to see Quality in action</i>)	Principals and teachers	Ongoing	

1. What is your personal vision for your school?

2. How would you describe your leadership style?

Principal's Name: _____

APPENDIX G

ORGANIZATIONAL MATRIX

Level	Gender	TE	AD	YA	FR	AA	DD	NF	WS	SR	PC	FI	TT	OP	FB	T	DS
Elem	F	9	√	5	57	18	√		√*	√	√	√				√*	√
	F	11	√	7	63	18	√*	√	√	√	√	√	√*		√		√
	F	12		15	27	46	√*	√*	√	√*	√*	√	√*				√
	F	8	√	6	88	97	√	√*		√*	√*	√*	√*		√	√	√
	M	9	√	20	95	98	√	√		√		√	√			√*	√
Mid	F	11	√	13	49	23	√			√	√	√*			√*		√
	M	5		16	54	14				√*	√	√		√*			√
	M	14	√	11.5	60	22	√		√*	√		√	√	√	√*		√
High	M	9		18	58	27	√	√	√*	√		√		√*			√
	M	5		11	72	87				√*		√	√*	√	√*	√	√

Column Headings:

TE- Training Experiences
 AD- Advanced Degree
 YA- Years in Administration
 FR- % Students on Free/reduced Lunch
 AA- % African-American Students
 DD- Data-based Decision-making
 NF- Narrow Focus
 WS- Working Smarter, Not Harder
 SR- Student Responsibility for Learning
 PC- Parent Communication
 FI- Faculty Input
 TT- Teacher Turnover
 OP- Other Programs
 FB- Faculty Buy-in
 T- Time
 DS- District Support

√*- Major issue for principal

Appendix H

ETHICAL ISSUES CHECKLIST

_____ 1. Explain purpose.

Use purpose statement from the proposal.

_____ 2. Determine reciprocity.

All interviewees will receive a copy of the study.

_____ 3. Identify risk assessment.

Potential risks will be discussed in informed consent letter and again prior to interview.

_____ 4. Promises of confidentiality,

Names of participants and schools will not be revealed in study. Data will be stored for one year and then destroyed.

_____ 5. Solicit informed consent,

IRB approval.

_____ 6. Data access

All participants will have opportunity to review report before publication.

_____ 7. Advice

The methodologist will be the researcher's primary confidant and counselor on ethics issues.

Appendix I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Participant Name:
Years administration total:
#Years at this school:
Years implementing Quality:
Grade configuration:
Student Population:
% Free/Reduced Lunch:
% Minority:
2. Briefly describe the training opportunities you and the staff at your school have had with Quality in Education. (*Refer to training document*)

Think about the Calcasieu Parish School System's approach to Quality in Education that you are using. The following questions ask you to describe your experiences with this implementation.

3. How you are using Quality in your school?
4. How has this Quality approach impacted your role as a school leader?
5. What are the benefits of implementing Quality in Education?
6. What are the problems/challenges of implementing Quality in Education?
7. Think about your faculty and staff. How has this Quality approach helped you to meet their needs?
8. Is this approach preventing you from meeting their needs?
9. Think about your students. How has this Quality approach helped you to meet their needs?
10. Is this approach preventing you from meeting their needs?
11. What comes to mind when you think about school improvement?
12. What comes to mind when you think about Quality in Education as a means of school improvement?
13. Is there anything else about this topic that you'd like to share?

Appendix J

Letter to Participant

March , 2009

Dear

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Tammie Causey in the *Department of Educational Leadership* at the *University of New Orleans*. I am conducting a research study to explore the implementation of Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System and to understand the experiences of principals with the implementation of this initiative.

The Quality Department identified you as a worthy candidate for participation in this study. I am requesting your participation, which will involve a 30-40 minute interview at a time and location of your choosing. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. This research study may be published, but your name will not be used and your school will not be identified within the study.

Completion of the attached form will serve as consent for your participation in the study. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Pamela S. Quebodeaux
Doctoral Candidate, University of New Orleans
pam.quebodeaux@cpsb.org
337.540-5389 cell

Appendix K

RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

Title of Project

Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System: Experiences of Principals

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of Quality in Education in the Calcasieu Parish School System and to understand the experiences of principals with the implementation of this initiative.

Procedures

The procedures for this study include individual interviews with principals who have been identified by the Quality Department as worthy participants for this study. The interview will take place at a time and location that is convenient for you. Interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will be tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. You will have the opportunity to review your interview transcript for accuracy and make any necessary revisions.

Risks

As a participant in this study, there are no risks to you. Any concerns or issues that you may have should be relieved by the assurance of confidentiality.

Benefits of this Study

The benefits of this study include providing information about the implementation of Quality in Education within the Calcasieu Parish School System that may be useful in future implementation efforts within the CPSS and outside of the district. At the conclusion of this research study, you may contact the investigator for a summary of the findings.

Extent of Confidentiality

Your identity as a participant in this study will be held confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for your name and the name of your school. Only the investigator will be able to identify you individually within the collected data. The audio-tapes of interviews and the transcripts of the interviews will remain in the primary investigator's possession. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the investigator's office and will be destroyed after one year of the completion of the study.

Compensation

No monetary compensation will be given for participation in this study.

Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to refuse to answer any question during the interview process. You are also at liberty to withdraw from participating in the study at any point without penalty.

Approval of Research

This research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of New Orleans.

Participant's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I have the following responsibilities: (a) to participate in a 30-45 minute tape-recorded interview; and (b) to review the transcript of my interview for accuracy.

Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the conditions of this study and my role within this study. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. Based on the information provided in this consent form, I give my voluntary consent for participation in this study. I understand that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree to abide by the conditions set forth in this document.

Signature

Date

Should I have any questions about this study, I may contact:

Pamela S. Quebodeaux
(337) 540-5389
pam.quebodeaux@cpsb.org

Vita

Pamela Stacey Quebodeaux was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Together with her father, who was in the United States Air Force, she and her mother and two sisters traveled throughout the United States. They lived in many different locations, and Mrs. Quebodeaux attended many different schools. She is proud of the early educational experiences she received living in varied and diverse communities. Her father retired from military service when she was in the eleventh grade. She graduated from LaGrange High School as salutatorian in 1971. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education as well as a Master's Degree in Reading Education and an additional 30 hours with certification in Administration and Supervision from McNeese State University.

Mrs. Quebodeaux began her educational career as a reading lab teacher at Immaculate Conception Cathedral School in 1975. Although she was employed at a private school, she was actually an employee of the Calcasieu Parish School System. At ICCS she assisted students in first through eighth grades who tested below grade level in reading. She served as coordinator of the school's self-study through an accreditation process. In 1985 the United States Supreme Court ruled that public school employees could no longer serve private school students on their campuses. Mrs. Quebodeaux was assigned to T.H. Watkins Elementary reading lab for one year.

The following year she transferred to Westwood Elementary in Westlake, her hometown. There she taught second grade for six years and fifth grade for five years. During that time she was involved in numerous leadership activities and was nominated

as Westwood's Teacher of the Year three times. In 1995, she was named Calcasieu Parish Elementary Teacher of the Year and Louisiana Elementary Teacher of the Year.

She spent the next two years working toward certification in administration and supervision. It was her desire to attain principalship certification. She completed the certification in 1997 and began applying for administrative positions. In 1998 she was hired as the Challenge Grant Coordinator for the Calcasieu Parish School System. She worked in the technology department for the next year and a half, and continued to direct the Challenge Grant for the next three years.

In 1998, she was named principal of Dolby Elementary School, where she continues to serve. Under her principalship, Dolby Elementary was the first school to receive the SWLA Quality Award, an honor bestowed by the Chamber Southwest. Dolby also was the first K-12 school to receive the Performance Excellence Award from the Louisiana Quality Foundation. Dolby also received several awards from the Louisiana Department of Education for Recognized and Exemplary Growth based on student achievement data. In 2009, Dolby was featured as a technology showcase school by the National School Board Association.

Mrs. Quebodeaux serves as a mentor for new principals in the Louisiana Educational Leader Induction (LELI) program and an instructor for LEADTech, a technology leadership online course, both of which are sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Education. She serves as a visiting lecturer at Louisiana Tech University and McNeese State University.

Mrs. Quebodeaux has presented at numerous local, state, and national conferences including the Teaching and Technology Conference sponsored by Region

V LACUE, the Louisiana Computer Using Educator Conference, the National Educational Computer Conference, the Association for Supervision of Curriculum Development Conference, the Southern Association Conference, and the National Quality in Education Conference.

She has served on various task forces at the local, state, and national levels including the CPSS Quality Leadership Team, the CPSS Long-Range Technology Planning Team, the Louisiana Blue Ribbon Commission, the Louisiana Accountability Commission, and the Education Commission for the American Society for Quality. She serves as a book reviewer for Corwin Press, is actively involved in professional and civic organizations which promote educational leadership and student success.